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Bethany Barr Phillips.**

Facing Your Fears is a 40-day devotional that is all about allowing the Lord to reveal where fear has taken hold of your life and putting an end to these strongholds. If you're tired of your fear keeping you on the sidelines of what God wants to do through you, let *Facing Your Fears* lead you to a place where you're able to actively engage in God's calling on your life.

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FACING YOUR FEARS

A 40-DAY DEVOTIONAL

BETHANY BARR PHILLIPS

Published by: YM360

To:

A – You lead fearlessly, and for that I am forever grateful, humbled, and inspired. Thank you for encouraging me to pursue His path fearlessly.

& Isaiah Jewel – Live fearlessly because of who Jesus says you are.

Facing Your Fears: A 40-Day Devotional
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INTRODUCTION

I've struggled with what to write for some time now. I knew this was the next step in my own personal ministry, because the Lord has placed too much on my heart for it not to be shared. But I didn't know how it would look. The Lord called me to ministry at 16. I always knew there was something different in my heart. That didn't mean I was the only one who could do it, but it did mean that I would spend my whole life searching for meaning if I didn't follow Him.

What is a call? It's when you know. It's when you know why you were created. It's when you know what you were created for.

If you really think about it, people spend their entire lives chasing these very things. I'm learning that we as the human race make a really big deal out of a "call," when in all actuality, we may be amazingly talented at something that we find insignificant. And because we find it insignificant, we write it off as not good enough or not big enough to have a call from God.

Why is that? Isn't it funny how, when it comes to the call on our lives, all of a sudden we become the experts on what is significant? How is it that as believers we have all kinds of insight into faith and direction and how to view God, but when it actually comes to trusting Him, we all of a sudden take back the wheel and begin deciding what's good enough. It's in that very moment that we take faith and throw it out the proverbial window (since we're going with the driving analogy here).

I'm so guilty of this, guilty of thinking that I'm capable of deciding what's good enough. What I'm qualified for. What's the best scenario for everyone? Only to realize that I was way off base because my car got off on some exit long ago because I had decided to take the wheel . . . you see where I'm going?

There are times when I find myself coming back to a place that I don't like, because once again, I begin to try to sit back in the driver's seat. A seat where I'm restless, which leads to unhappiness, which leads to comparison, which leads to jealousy, which leads to failure (because I'm too busy looking at what others are doing and what I'm not doing), which leads to frustration, which leads to trying to force things to happen that were never meant to be.

I lived much of my 20s in one of two different states of mind. I was either so vocal that it got me nowhere (I realized that people don't like hearing the plain, honest truth very much), or I was succumbing to situations around me because I felt it really didn't matter. No one was going to listen, or I would be reprimanded and told once again that I wasn't fit for my calling . . . which was not true.

I'm turning 34 today and realizing that there's so much left for me to understand about these things, so much left for me to see come to pass, and so much left to do when it comes to my own personal calling. And I'll never do that if I choose to see all the obstacles in front of me. I'll never see any fruit of any calling if I choose to let what's happened in the past and what's happening in the present dictate my future. I live for, serve, and am in love with the God of the universe. Nothing is impossible.

My heart for you as you walk through these next 40 days is for you to really soak up what God has to say about you. Fear is almost always the root of what's holding us back from realizing who we are in Christ, which in turn affects our faith and our response to our calling. The only way we demolish that fear and do not let it cripple and ultimately destroy us is to know what God's Word says. Friend, please don't breeze past that statement. Who we are in Christ is everything when it comes to how we live and love. If we can't function outside the realm of fear, then we can't possibly think that we have the faith to move mountains (Matt. 17:20), which is the place where our calling becomes an action, not just a word. And the only way we have that kind of fear-destroying faith is by knowing God's Word.

In Matthew 17, we see where a boy's father took him to the disciples to have a demon cast out that had been tormenting him to the point of physical harm. The disciples could not do it, so his dad then took him to Jesus. Jesus then not only drove out the demon, but He also rebuked the disciples for their unbelief (vs. 17). For the disciples, this had to be a tough pill to swallow. Those guys were with Jesus every day. They saw everything He did, heard every word, and yet they were still caught in the midst of unbelief.

This tells me that I could see all the miracles I want, I could hear all the sermons and messages and even see Jesus' face in my morning toast, but if I don't believe what He says He came to do and will do (and I can only know that by knowing His Word), then I'll always find myself at the breakfast table waiting for the next sign.

“Truly I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you” (Matt. 17:20).

This is where I want to be. This is where I want you to be. We can’t live in an “impossible” place with Jesus. The mindset of impossibility, frankly, is a bit of an insult to the one who walked on water and raised a few folks from the dead. You see, it’s not enough for us just to live, but it’s God’s intent for us to live in relationship with Him. That means we know what He says about us, we believe it, and we’re able to truly live in freedom (Gal. 5:1). This plants the desire and courage to share His freedom with the world around us, because we no longer believe the lies that hold us back. We have that faith that moves mountains—not because we’ve earned it by merit or action, but those mountains in our lives only move by faith.

All God has ever asked of us from the very beginning is to believe. When we believe, we don’t fear. Dare I say, we cannot fear. When we believe, we begin to walk in our calling like never before, because we know that the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead lives in us (Rom. 8:11). This begins to light up the world around us for Jesus - the call for all who believe. I want to challenge you in these next 40 days to declare, speak, and believe: We will not fear.

I want you to take next 40 days and dive into God’s Word like never before. Ask Him what He wants to show you through the Scriptures presented. Challenge yourself. It’s time we stop living like we can do nothing when the God of angel armies has the power to do anything - and He’s for you. Some days will have much Scripture while other days will only have a few. Meditate on those words. Allow them to penetrate your heart. Surrender to letting God change your very being through the power of Holy Spirit. Don’t let this be another devotion or another study or another self-help book. Let the words of God permeate your very being so that you can never be the same.

Let your heart face your fears. Destroy them. And then go change your world in Jesus’ name.

BBP



WEEK 1: THE CALL

WEEK 1: THE CALL

DAY 1: WHAT'S YOUR CALL?

SCRIPTURE READING: PHILIPPIANS 3:14; EPHESIANS 4:1; GALATIANS 6:5

Let's start plain and simple. In the introduction, we talked about the call—what it is, and what that means to us. (If you didn't read it, it's OK. Here's your chance.)

What I love about God is that He's creative. Not just in His sunsets or the purple mountains' majesty, but also in His calls to people. He's constantly orchestrating this grand design for our lives, and often we're too busy to see it. We've got our head down in a phone or behind a desk. Our eyes and minds are fixed on what we don't have or what someone else got. All the while these callings tug our heart strings from the very one who created it all.

Some are called to lead, some to follow. Some are called as caretakers, others as administrators. Some cook. Some clean. Some teach. Some talk.

Moses, a grown shepherd, was called through a burning bush. We find him working and being right where he was supposed to be, and God showed up. Naturally the bush spoke (spoiler alert: it was God), and thus we begin to see the deliverance of the entire nation of Israel from slavery in Egypt. (You can ready about it here: Exodus 3.)

Samuel, the kid that lived at the Temple because he was called as a boy—he heard his name called multiple times while he was sleeping until he realized (with Eli the priest's help) that it was the voice of God. He was where he was supposed to be, doing what he was supposed to be doing. (You can ready about it here: 1 Samuel 3.)

David, as a teenager, showed up on the scene during a battle between Israel and the Philistines. He was delivering food to his brothers and their camp as his father had instructed, and he realized that the Israelites were actually allowing someone to taunt the armies of the living God (which was the Israelites). We know what happened after that—Goliath ended his day headless, and the Philistines ran for cover. (You can ready about it here: 1 Samuel 17.)

One visit from an angel and young Mary's life was altered forever. In one night she was told that she would have a child without doing things one normally does to get said child. Meanwhile, she chose to go live with a cousin, and there was probably some family embarrassment when they found out (and everything that goes along with that). Her response: "Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). She was where she was supposed to be, doing her normal day's activities, and then life changed. (You can read about it here: Luke 1.)

Do you see the common thread? They were all where they were supposed to be, and they were doing what they were supposed to be doing. Does it ever occur to us that what we are doing now is preparing us for what's to come? That includes waiting, repetitions, and other words we don't really like hearing because they mean we aren't moving forward as we think we should. Fear begins to breed here because we aren't doing what we want to do, so we begin to settle for easy.

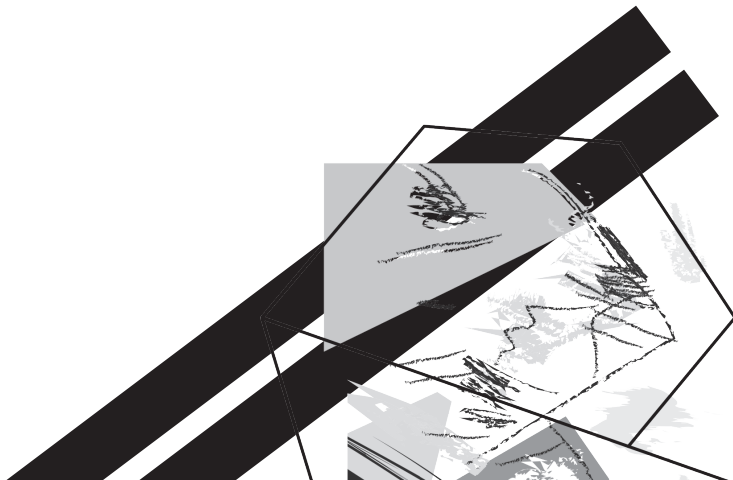
Easy begins to mean that we get ahead of ourselves. Easy begins to decide what we are capable of accomplishing and act on that instead of taking the harder, more narrow road that ultimately makes us stronger and prepared for the call. That strength we glean from those times of preparation is ultimately what is allowing us not to just walk in our calling but flourish in it. It was never meant to be easy. It was meant to make you more like Jesus. That's the call.

DIGGING IN

1. Do you know what your call is? Write it down in the space below.

2. How do you think God will use the call He has put on your life to impact the world around you?

3. Spend some time in prayer today, asking the Lord to show you your call, and to guide you in pursuing it. Ask Him to show you the “narrow road” so that you can be fully equipped to live out your calling (James 1:4).



WEEK 1: THE CALL

DAY 2: BURN BRIGHT

SCRIPTURE READING: EXODUS 3:1-18

So if you were anywhere near a Sunday School as a kid, you remember the burning bush story. It's seemingly one of the Bible's "greatest hits." You would come in and have those tiny red pieces of spicy candy and the felt board was riddled with giant felt pieces of red and orange over brown lines (which represented the bush, of course).

For some reason, the only thing most people can tell you about this story is the part where God told Moses to take off his shoes because he was on holy ground. Why in the world are we not at least making reference to the fact that a real, live bush was being consumed with fire but not burning up? And then this: Moses starts moving in to check it out!

What a picture of the Gospel at work. That may seem a little far-fetched, but think about it: When we as believers in Jesus burn bright, meaning we are where we're supposed to be and attempting to walk faithfully where the Lord has us, the world begins to take notice. What happens next is the next step: the Lord began to call Moses' name. And Moses answered.

So many times God is calling our names, but do we hear it? And when we do, do we have the courage to answer? All alone in his smelly shepherding garb in the middle of the night, Moses did. And he didn't just follow that with "Here I am." (Side note: Moses, it's God. He knows where you are.) He began to go closer to the flames. Moses acted.

"Do not come any closer," the Lord warned. "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Ex. 3:5). The line we all remember. And it's one we should never forget. God is to be feared. He is to be revered (Psalm 33:8). When Christ died for our sins, He gave us access to God, but that doesn't mean we walk into His presence like we deserve to be there. We are creatures of curiosity, but our curiosity about God doesn't give us the right to do anything we want.

God gave Moses instruction at that very moment, and Moses obeyed. That obedience turned into God calling Moses to lead God's people, Israel, out of

slavery in Egypt. This shepherd. This lowly, unqualified, dirt-under-his-fingernails shepherd. God just told him to lead His people.

Moses' response was a series of questions as to how all this would go down. I think at this moment, deep down Moses knew who he was and who he wasn't. I know I feel like this at times. I see the path in front of me and it becomes daunting. We can actually let our call become the very thing that overwhelms us. That's where fear will step in and begin to tell us we can't do it. It's too much.

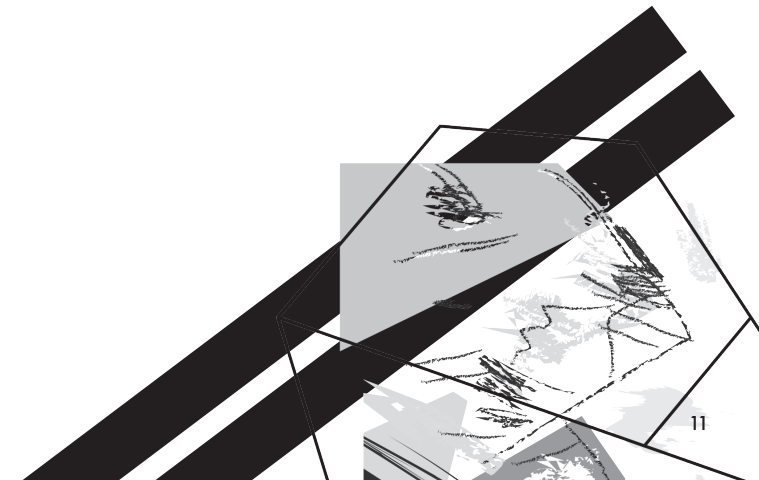
The good news about all of this is it's supposed to be overwhelming. It's supposed to be something only God can do through you. But it's not supposed to be something fearful. The enemy would love nothing more than to have you believe that your calling is too much for you to handle. Your calling is something that burns bright inside you, and the world will begin to take notice. They will take notice of the Light inside you that isn't burning you up, but it's burning you bright. So put those fears to rest today, and approach the Fire with your shoes off ready to obey.

DIGGING IN

1. Put yourself in Moses' shoes: How would you have reacted to seeing a bush burn but not burn up?
2. Think about this in light of your own life: How can you, or how do you burn bright?

3. In what ways can God's call on your life sometimes be overwhelming?

4. Take a moment and meet God in prayer. Ask Him to give you a fear for Him—a reverence that comes from spending time with Him and realizing just who He really is. Listen to what He might say to you today.



WEEK 1: THE CALL

DAY 3: HIS PRESENCE

SCRIPTURE READING: 1 SAMUEL 3; PSALM 38:15; PSALM 130:5

As we mentioned earlier, Samuel grew up in the Temple. There's a reason for that:

Samuel was born to Hannah (whom we will talk about later). After his first few years, Hannah took Samuel to the Temple to dedicate him to the Lord (which here means she took him to live there). Amazingly enough, the Lord had placed a calling early on Samuel's life, and the Bible says he worshiped the Lord there. Meaning, when Samuel moved into the Temple as a boy, he worshiped as soon as he got there.

I have nine nephews. Trust me, none of them were thinking about worshiping the Lord in this way at this age. They always seemed to be thinking, "What can I do to annoy someone but not get in trouble?" But I digress. (Nephews, I love you guys, but you know this is the truth.)

One evening, the Bible says that Samuel was sleeping and was awakened by the calling of his name. He then ran into where Eli was sleeping and asked what he needed (because he thought Eli was calling his name). This happened twice, and on the third time, Eli realized that it was the Lord calling Samuel. So he instructed him to go lay back down, and when he heard his name again, to say, "Speak, your servant is listening."

Oh, to have people like Eli in our lives! Friend, don't ever discount having older and wiser people in your life who can help you discern what you cannot see. Let me take this moment to encourage you: If you don't have someone like this, find someone. Like yesterday. No matter how old you are.

We see in this story that once again, obedience opens the door to calling. The Lord begins to share some pretty intense things with this young boy about Eli's family. When Eli asks about what the Lord said, Samuel was honest with him and spilled the beans. Eli was receptive, and thus Samuel began to grow in the Lord. He would eventually take Eli's place.

Scripture tells us: "As Samuel grew, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground" (1 Sam. 3:19). Meaning, Samuel walked in obedience to his calling and the Lord began to grow people's trust in him.

Here's the deal: Samuel walked in obedience because he knew the presence of the Lord. He spent time with Him. He possibly got to see people coming in and out of the Temple each day that were hopeful or hopeless, and over time, he got to see those very people have needs being met through prayer. It would've been easy for Samuel to take this role and use it for himself, but I like to think he knew better. When we spend time with the Lord as Samuel did, we begin to realize just how amazing a relationship with God really is. If we neglect that time with Him, we begin to trade all that we know to be true about ourselves for the lies of the enemy.

They won't come in all at one time; the enemy is too crafty for that. Little by little, "I can't . . ." will permeate your thoughts until you are swimming in a sea of struggles with your call. Believe me, I know this to be true.

Today, recognize that the same God that called out Samuel's name in the Temple that night is calling yours. He's calling you to meet with you, to tell you things, to surround your life with love that will breed confidence in your call. Spend time with Him. Wait for Him. He always shows up.

DIGGING IN

1. Do you have an Eli in your life? If not, who could that be? If you aren't sure, pray and ask God to show you.
2. What do you let get in the way of your moments with the Lord?
3. Set your heart and mind at this moment to carve out time to spend with God each day. Write that time down and stick to it. Go to God in prayer and ask him to give you a burning desire for his presence, to spend time with him, and to long to wait for him.

WEEK 1: THE CALL

DAY 4: HE SAID WHAT?

SCRIPTURE READING: 1 SAMUEL 17:20-50; MATTHEW 19:26

David and Goliath. Even if you don't know the Bible that well, you know this reference. When I think of David, I think of a 14-year-old with wiry arms, three hairs on his chest, and ginormous feet, and who smells something awful. He reminds me of one of those internet videos where the baby deer is standing for the first time. (My apologies to all of the 14-year-old guys out there.)

However, there's one thing about David that one can't miss—that attitude. I think our attitudes can be shaped over time, but I also think there's a little bit of one born into all of us. Not the kind of attitude we have about doing housework or things that frustrate us, but the kind that reflects a little swagger. (Confession: I had to look this word up to make sure I spelled it correctly. You're welcome.)

As we said in day 1, David came into the Israelite camp to deliver food to his brothers and their commander and found that the Philistine army had a giant named Goliath. This mammoth of a man was taunting them. David's response to the army and their nine-foot giant:

"Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Sam. 17:26).

In David's mind, I hear him thinking, "He said what?" This is a moment where the label "young and dumb" would be easy to use, but remember at this point David had already been anointed and probably went back out in the fields to keep the sheep. Due to his shepherding experience, David had faced some intense battles, not with people (who can be predictable and easier to anticipate, because you're fighting someone like you), but with lions (giant teeth and paws) and bears (again, giant teeth and paws). When David got the opportunity to speak to Saul about Goliath, David compared the giant to the lion or bear, and let him know that the giant was no match for him, because he knew that Israel was the army of the living God (vs. 26).

David had perspective. He knew who God was in his life. He knew that he wasn't able to rescue his flock from lions and bears alone; he knew that that

kind of strength came from God. He had perspective in knowing who God was in comparison to an entire army, even a nine-foot giant. David knew he was called. And by the time he heard everyone around him talk about how scared they were, he realized that he was the only one who could do something about it—because he believed.

The call to follow Christ isn't always going to be easy. In fact, more times than not, it won't be easy at all. It may be fear-filled because the opposition can look like an army with a nine-foot giant. Tough decisions will have to be made and followed through. Stands (in love) will have to be made. Some people are not going to like the fact that you may have more faith in God than they do, so they will try to shut you up (like Eliab did in vs. 28). Fear is the enemy's greatest tool to hinder you from walking in your call.

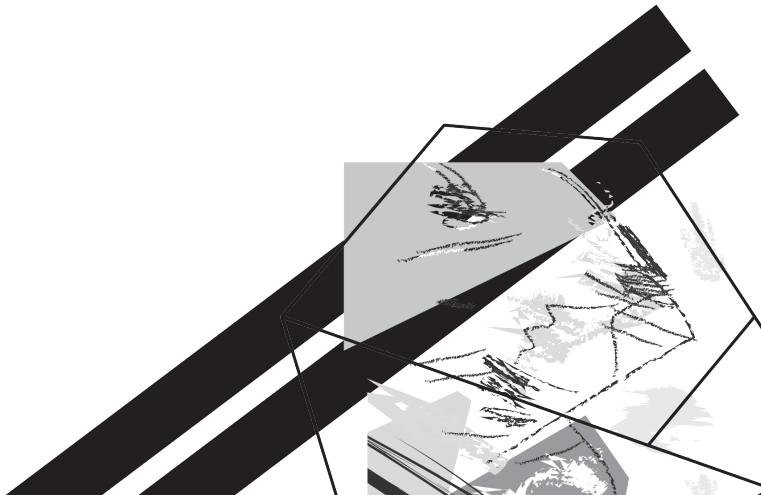
So the question today is are you willing to follow the call to follow Jesus even when it seems dangerous? Do you believe that God can do anything? If you have a relationship with Him you must, because you believed that He could save you. If you doubt your call, start there today. If you know Him, you believed enough for the relationship, so know that you are now worth fighting a giant because of the cross and all of the wonder that comes with it. Don't be afraid.

DIGGING IN

1. What kind of attitude do you have about the call God has put on your life?
2. Is it hard to step up for God when it seems dangerous or impossible? Why or why not?

3. We must set our minds on how we're going to react in difficult situations so that we're ready to face opposition and not give fear room to creep in. List some situations in which it's difficult to stand up for what you believe, and list how you should react:

4. Pray that God will give you courage and strength in the face of fear for the call. What did He say?



WEEK 1: THE CALL

DAY 5: CHOSEN

SCRIPTURE READING: LUKE 1:26-39

Chosen. There are days when I feel like I'm the chosen one to get behind every car in the United States of America that wants to go at least 20 miles under the speed limit. There are days when I feel like I'm chosen to encounter every person in my city who's angry simply because they're breathing air. Then there are those times when I have the honor of sharing a meal with someone and get to listen to their stories and thoughts on the Lord, and my heart becomes warm again. It begins to make all of the "Sunday drivers" seem like they're just enjoying their day or being careful (when they're probably on their phones). But I'm feeling it, you know?

Mary was engaged as a young teenager, which was completely normal for that culture in that time. Joseph, her fiancé, didn't come from any kind of "somebody's." He was a carpenter, which was hard labor. They were straight outta Nazareth (with deuces up)—that wasn't saying much. We never learn about Mary's parents or read other juicy details involving her. She makes her biblical debut being called. Being chosen.

Gabriel, God's highest messenger angel, appears to her and calls her what she is: "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" At this point, the Bible hadn't recorded any miracles happening for hundreds of years. Now, all of a sudden, an angel comes and calls a regular ol' girl highly favored. Funny enough, he follows it with "Do not be afraid." Let's think about this.

Put yourself in Mary's shoes: You probably swept the dirt floor that morning, made some date cakes with oil and flour around lunch time, did the laundry at the creek a half mile away, and then all of a sudden an angel appears and calls you highly favored. What doesn't sound quite right in this scenario? But God. He always has something greater when we least expect it. This was true in Mary's case. I like to think that he told her not to be afraid because in her heart she knew that she didn't have much to bring to the table, so why would an angel meet with her?

Mary was doing what she was supposed to be doing at the time she was supposed to be doing it. It's easy to take our daily routines and count them as

nothing. We go to work or school, make a snack, work out, and we sometimes never slow down or stop to think that we're exactly where we're supposed to be because God wants to use us for something greater. He took a teenage girl from a one-stop-light town and chose her to miraculously conceive the Savior of the world!

I think Mary's response is the mindset that we should all live in: "Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). Mary was chosen and she didn't back down from what seemed impossible. She didn't complain about the inconvenience of it all. She thought of who she really was (vs. 34), and she realized that if anything miraculous was going to happen through her, it was going to have to be done only by God. She would do nothing but obey.

We're all called. We're called to be faithful where we're planted. We're called to be open to whatever God is revealing. Fear would have you choose to believe that you won't ever make a difference because of where you are or who you are. But what if where you are is exactly the place God would have you make a difference because of who you are? What if you just don't see it yet?

DIGGING IN

1. Do you ever feel like you are stuck where you are and unable to make a difference? If so, why do you think you feel this way?

2. Have you ever thought of yourself as blessed by God? Why or why not?

3. God sees you this way. When you're called, you're blessed and favored with God's love and grace. There's nothing you can do to earn it or possess it; it's the gift that happens when you give your life to Christ. Have you given your life to Christ?

If you have, you're called. If you haven't, I'd like to invite you to do so realizing that you are a sinner (as we all are, incapable of meeting the standard of an almighty God) and in need of a savior, Jesus. Turn to page 132 for how to do this.

Fear would love for you to stay where you are and lie to you, telling you that you can't be used by God or you aren't worthy. Spend time asking God to give you the courage to say what Mary said: "Let it be to me according to your word." Let your heart be open to what God has to say to you.