



30 DAYS WITH SAVE THE STORKS

Reimagining PRO-LIFE





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DEDICATED TO

Gabi. who chose life for her baby on a Stork Bus in Indiana.
pictured on page 8

Brienda. who chose life for her baby on a Stork Bus in Iowa.
pictured on page 33

Jasmine. who chose life for her baby on a Stork Bus in North Carolina.
pictured on page 34

Jas. who chose life for her baby on a Stork Bus in Texas.
pictured on page 43

Hannah. who chose life for her baby on a Stork Bus in Tennessee.
pictured on page 55

Kendra. who chose life for her baby on a Stork Bus in New York.
pictured on page 56

Brenda. who adopted four children in Colorado.
pictured on page 74

Roslani. who chose life for her baby on a Stork Bus in Maryland.
pictured on page 76



To all the brave men and women who have chosen life,
and to those who are on the journey of healing from an abortion.

*You are living proof that God is the provider of hope
for those in crisis, the restorer of the broken, and the author of
abundant life for all.*



DAILY
DEVO
WEEK

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“How can you say
there are too many children?
That’s like saying there are
too many flowers.”

—Mother Teresa



Welcome to **REIMAGINING PRO-LIFE: 30 DAYS WITH SAVE THE STORKS!**

Throughout Scripture, knowing God and caring for the vulnerable are interconnected. Yet often in our culture, this connection is lost and we are discouraged from speaking up for the unborn because we view the issue through the lens of politics, anger, or shame.

At Save the Storks, our deepest desire is to change the conversation around the pro-life movement. We don’t want to engage in the current debate; we want to reimagine it. As we shift the focus away from divisive language to a dialogue of hope and true empowerment, we mirror our good Father and His unconditional love. Over the next 30 days, you’re invited into a journey to rediscover this connection in a new way through *Reimagining Pro-Life*. Join us as we engage with the millions affected by abortion from a new framework, one of love, compassion, and action.

This devotional is a collaborative effort of Save the Storks and Heartwork™. Your daily experience will be divided into two sections, Heart and Work.

Heart. This consists of daily scripture, inspiring devotionals, and real-life stories. There are also several videos throughout the 30 days that further the ideas presented in the devotional.

Work. The work section is where we live it out, and connect our love for God with compassion for his people. This includes weekly and daily empathy challenges, journal prompts, and prayer guides for us to engage with the ideas on a deeper level.

Connect! All videos and blogs referenced in *Reimagining Pro-Life* can be viewed at www.savethestorks.com/reimagine

The *Reimagining Pro-Life* devotional can also be found on the YouVersion Bible App under “plans” if you or your family would like to read along on a device.

Here we go!



DAILY
DEVO
WEEK

W
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O

Letting go



DAY 1

Spend Yourself

“And if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.” —Isaiah 58:10

HEART // According to Isaiah 58:10, if you will SPEND YOURSELF, hope will become available to others, and hope will fill you, too. Darkness will recede as your light shines.

It can be difficult to live out Isaiah 58:10, though. We like the principle but tend to avoid the practice, both consciously and unconsciously. However, through *Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks*, you are turning principle into practice. Being intentional about spending ourselves for others doesn't always come easily, but as we pursue love, compassion, and action—sacrificial giving for mothers and their babies—we won't regret the cost. Let's embark on a journey that brings light and hope to one of the most complex issues in society today: the tragedy of abortion.

We want to take that journey with you. Right here, in the middle of our everyday lives, we can learn to experience God's age-old promise in Isaiah 58. By making the decision to engage in *Reimagining Pro-Life*, you are choosing to wrestle with an issue that impacts the lives of millions of people in our world. You're inviting God into your thoughts on abortion, and you're inviting the reality of abortion into your prayer life with God. As Christ followers, we choose to welcome the widow, the orphan, and the refugee into our prayer and practice of what it means to be a Christian. Similarly, we want to bring the issue of abortion into our conversations with God about how to love Him by loving others well.

One of our deepest desires is to change the conversation around the pro-life movement. We don't want to engage the current debate; we want to reimagine it. We want to shift the focus away from divisive

language to a dialogue of hope and true empowerment. We want to meet women in their time of need with the kind of love, compassion, and action that support them no matter what. Our mission is to move hearts and minds, enabling these women to see that life, whatever the circumstances, is always worth celebrating.

The miracle of God's nature is that, as we learn to bring this hope and light to others, we experience goodness in our lives, too. The temptation to ignore the serious issues that cloud the far edges of our daily lives is constant. We can easily spend all of our energy on seeking satisfaction in 'Self'—in acceptance, in security, in distractions and entertainment. But we also know that a quest focused on 'me, my, and mine' will never satisfy the longing deep within our hearts to experience the fullness of what God wants to do in and through us.

One of our deepest desires is to change the conversation around the pro-life movement. We don't want to engage the current debate; we want to reimagine it.

There is so much more to life as a Christ-follower than self-absorption. Jesus championed the 'needy,' the 'weak,' and the 'vulnerable,' and He asks us to do the same (Luke 4:13-18; Matt. 25:40). He asks us to spend ourselves on behalf of these people. Because we live in a culture that tells

us to 'climb higher,' we often isolate ourselves from those in need. However, during these next thirty days, we will work together to give God the room to grow our empathy and gratitude.

As we begin to invest the resources of our lives (things like time, creativity, money, or community) in others in the same way that God has invested Himself in us, God's powerful light begins to shine in and through us. It will also surely illuminate some dark places, like our own broken hearts or the stark reality of abortion clinics. Sometimes we would rather keep these spaces untalked about; we would rather keep them hidden. But God wants to bring us unimaginable freedom; He wants us to join Him in the mighty miracles that He has planned. During these thirty days together, we will spend time on four big ideas (Letting Go, Identity, Compassion, and Mission) that will help us to understand how we can "spend ourselves" well. We will also invite you to take on several simple activities that may be outside of your normal routine. These 'empathy challenges' are designed to help us imagine the pressures, and even *feel* the hurt, that these vulnerable women experience—and they are all around us.

This will be a short, sweet, and, at times, challenging journey, and that's exactly why we are excited to walk it with you. If we want not only to save the lives of babies, but also to serve their mothers, fathers, and families, then we have to reimagine a pro-life movement that isn't afraid of thinking, talking, and praying about thorny topics. More than this, we must *live* differently. For thirty days, let's learn to turn hate to love, judgment to compassion, and apathy to action.

WORK

Dedicate a journal or another creative space to these next thirty days. First, ask God to show you particular areas of your life that are in need of His light (confused, sinful, terribly sad, broken).

Then, write your list down!

After you do, grieve this reality that is a dim corner in our nation:

Over 2,000 babies are aborted daily in the United States alone, not to mention countless abortions every day in other nations.*

Spend at least five minutes in focused prayer, asking God to increase your awareness of not only your own brokenness and need, but also the brokenness of people near and far.

Take a few minutes to pop by the *Reimagining Pro-Life* page to watch the intro video from Save the Storks with more on the heart behind this devotional!

Find all *Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks* videos and blogs at www.savethestorks.com/reimagine



DAY 2

Living Water

“Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Will you give me a drink?’ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?’ (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.’ ‘Sir,’ the woman said, ‘you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?’ Jesus answered, ‘Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’” —John 4:6-14

HEART //

Oh, the Lord Jesus...Don't we love Him in this account, where he encounters a woman whose life is a bit of a mess (John 4:15-18)? The beauty of how this woman's life is changed by such a moment stops us in our tracks.

But let's consider—what if you were this woman's sister? Or first husband? We love the grace Jesus gives her when we are zoomed out, but sometimes the view from up close reveals the painful details of a person's choices, conversation after conversation, chance after chance, year after year. Sometimes this loving grace is hard to give.

We begin this week with the big idea of “Letting Go.” Where better to begin than with letting go of our own feelings and reactions toward those we consider wrong? Did you know that this interaction with the woman at the well is the longest recorded conversation Jesus had with any one person in Scripture—including His disciples? The length and detail God gives us highlights the importance of what we need to learn from it. It also reveals that Jesus did know all about this woman's life. He had seen failure after failure, yet His response was so very simple: His first and standing offer to her is Living Water.

When we encounter sin, especially sin due to conscious decisions that impact others (as this woman's choices most certainly must have), in our own strength our anger may rage. Our call for justice may rise up. Our shutdown-and-shutout mechanism may be triggered. But let's take a close look at the tone and reaction of Jesus in this story. Imagine His face, His emotions, His perspective, and His truth-telling. Let's ask ourselves how we can tap into His miraculous love that's available for us to receive and to give.

In light of the Bible, it is undeniable: God is against abortion. And so we, as Christians, should fight and work and plan and pray to stop it. But here is another truth that we cannot deny: God is against *all sin*. As much as abortion pains the heart of the Father, He grieves all our sinful responses to the sins of others just as deeply.

As much as abortion pains the heart of the Father, He grieves all our sinful responses to the sins of others just as deeply.

That's why reading the story of Jesus and the woman at the well early in our *Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks* journey is so powerful. This narrative gives us a Christlike framework not only for responding to the issue of abortion, but also for dealing with our own sin and the sin of those we encounter.

So, how do we respond exactly? We respond as Jesus did. *He offered the woman Living Water*. He didn't say to her, “I'm ashamed of you. How dare you? Clean up your act!” Rather, He had *compassion* for her. He recognized her need. He saw the chasm that sin, likely her own AND that of others, had created deep within her soul, and He offered to fill it up with Himself. This is an offer we must receive for ourselves, and then learn to make to those around us, no matter what brokenness they may be living in.

WORK

Throughout this month, we will be letting go of comforts that distract us from our ability to spend ourselves for others. Fasting is a practical way to let go, and as we loosen our grip on our normal coping mechanisms, we hold tight to God.

This week's fast is to go seven days (or as many as you can!) drinking only water as a reminder of the grace of Jesus, our Living Water.

Let go of all other beverages: soda and tea, juice and milk—even coffee. In satisfying your physical thirst through water alone, your actions will take on great spiritual significance. Our first empathy challenge invites you to let go of the crutch of uppers, downers, sugar addictions, and comfort drinks. Satisfy yourself in the endless well of Living Water—in Jesus alone. You can choose to fast all beverages besides water for one week while still eating as you normally would. If you're feeling physically and spiritually empowered to fast non-water beverages *and* food—go for it! Try it, even for just one day.

Every time you choose water rather than your other normal beverages, be thinking about the ways that you can turn the love of Jesus in your heart toward people who have had abortions or are facing unplanned pregnancies and the temptation of our culture to cope with a “quick fix.” If your fasting includes skipping meals, consider using that time to pray for their healing, and for this issue in our world, for hearts to change and strongholds of deception to be filled with the light of Truth. Pray for the volunteers in your local pregnancy resource center, those who are doing sidewalk counseling and praying near abortion clinics.

Pray about how you can run toward and invite others into the Living Water.

However you prayerfully decide to approach this fast, we want to encourage you to meditate on the way the woman at the well reacted once Jesus invited her to drink from His unending well: “Leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the

people, ‘Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?’” (John 4:28-29). Having been led to the wellspring of eternal life, *she couldn't help but to invite others to drink*. Pray about how you can run toward and invite others into the Living Water. The love of Jesus is as vital to our spiritual lives as water is to our physical bodies. What an image for those in our world who are thirsty to the point of desperation. Jesus is refining *you* to encounter people who need this invitation more than you know.

DAY 3

Living Outside of Our Comfort Zones

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”

—1 John 2:15-17

HEART

How many things around us daily scream, “Buy me! I will make your life better! Indulge in me! I will make you happy!” Hearing this message over and over makes it hard to resist. But today's verse reminds us that lust for more and the pride of life are real enemies to our soul. Things that we use, need, and enjoy are not a problem in and of themselves, of course. Problems arise with how we may be tempted to hold onto these things instead of to God, and how we allow them to shape us. Author and church planter Jeff Christopherson wisely said, “Jesus is against whatever we will not leave behind to follow Him.”*

As we continue practicing Letting Go, let's consider how distracted with material possessions we can easily become and how it impacts the things that matter most in our lives. We are trained by marketing geniuses to develop an appetite for more, especially with the way things can even be individualized to our personal preferences. From what we eat to how we consume media, we are becoming really good at curating our own perfectly-customized life experience. We are up to our eyeballs in this way of thinking, and usually, we don't even realize how it could be impacting our church communities, our family time, our donations, our volunteer hours, our personalities—and even our understanding of God.

Paul Isaacs, with Save the Storks, puts it this way: “Money is what we give in order to live. Time is what we give that we can’t get back. *Where* we give these things shows what we value.” Our value may be on making the futures of ourselves, our homes, our vacations, and our kids as comfortable as humanly possible. Or we may grow to have such a high value on being the hands and feet of Jesus to bring the Kingdom of God to the earth that being pleasantly secure just isn’t our highest priority.

We encourage you to prayerfully consider where you place your value. As you think of the sixty million children who have lost their lives to abortion, legally, in the United States since 1973, do you get uncomfortable? Would you ever consider sacrificially giving your time and money toward families who may be vulnerable to choosing abortion over life for their babies by supporting a pregnancy resource center in your area?

Sometimes the discomfort of the reality of abortion can cause us to react in one of two ways: fight or flight. Fighting in a way that’s reactive, judgmental, or unloving is sort of like fighting fire with fire.

This way of thinking has done some significant damage in our world, but so has another reaction: flight. Passivity, freezing, or running away from the battle usually comes from thinking, *This is a huge, complicated problem. What difference can I actually make?* In that

Sixty million children have lost their lives to abortion, legally, in the United States since 1973.

response, we choose not to enter into the redemptive story, potentially getting sucked into the stream of self-focus and wasting much of our God-given resources on our own very small story.

Instead, may we learn to react to the tragedy of abortion—to all vulnerability and heartbreak!—in a way that aligns with Jesus. It is possible! *Christlike brokenness leads to active compassion.* As today’s verse reminds us, love and passion for the things of the world and the things of the Kingdom don’t easily coexist. On one hand, we can complicate it, saying “There’s nothing wrong with wanting _____!” Truly, there are no Christian rules against any of our stuff, but with our very best interest in mind, Jesus wants our whole hearts and energy pointed toward Him. We should want to be willing to lay anything down to follow Him. And as we learn to hear His voice and respond,

compelled by the Holy Spirit, we have access to a compassion so strong that it breaks the chains of needing more and more to fulfill ourselves. Then, it leads us to pour more and more into the Kingdom of God, our Father. Our internal reactions and external actions will align with His, and the sheer joy of serving others will begin to fuel us, regardless of how much that true compassion costs.

If our possessions and our current level of comfort are satisfying us, making us feel ‘happy enough’ to ignore the needs around us, then they are an immense threat to our souls. And our good Father cares so deeply about our souls.

//WORK

Giving up tangible things that we love and enjoy—even if only for a short time, even when we know that good things will come out of it—is a major battle. You’re probably feeling the weight of that statement right now, especially after giving up your favorite drinks (and maybe even food) for just one day. We hope that today’s passage refreshes you, though. When we give up good gifts from God, like coffee or dinner, we are reminding ourselves that Christ is *the* Gift. Doing His will is more satisfying than anything the world has to offer.

Let this truth of today’s verse sink into you: doing the will of God leads to eternal life. What an invitation! It’s mysterious and impossible to quantify, but it is simple. Living like God (following His example) means living *like* God—eternal reality seeps into your limited perspective, and eternal life is yours. Today is about living outside of your comfort zone. God has a bit of a reputation of pushing us out of our comfort zones to grow us and invite us to be like Him.

Pray about how you may be able to give your time, talent or treasure to a local pregnancy resource center, even if that’s outside of your comfort zone. We all have certain spiritual gifts and limitations and we should never feel pressure that comes from anywhere but the Holy Spirit. How might He be challenging you today?

Journal about the ideas that come from your prayer time.

What could your life look like if you surrendered to God’s direction fearlessly and selflessly?

DAY 4

Backwards Kingdom

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” —Matthew 5:3-10

HEART //

What do you think of when you think of God’s blessings? It might be your current job, a healthy family, or the meal right in front of you. We all desire God’s blessings, but in His economy, blessings come in all forms, and the best are definitely not material. As we read yesterday, the world and its desires are passing away. It’s the *forever* sorts of blessings that God seems to be most interested in! What does it really mean to be “blessed”, then? In the Bible, the word *blessed* describes someone who is *happy and favored*. The riches of God center around the fact that His people are living with Him now in the Spirit while doing His will on earth, and will spend eternity with Him later...A relationship that is grace-based (favored) and joyful (happy)!

Reading today’s verse feels literally backwards, opposite, to how we, as humans, naturally pursue blessings. But it gives us such insight! Even while we wait for eternity’s doorstep, we can draw close to our indestructible destiny through sacrifice and service. We find real blessings as we serve one another, as a tribe of people who depend not just on ourselves—but on God. After all, those who taste His Kingdom are not necessarily powerful or well-known individuals.

Mostly poor, grieving, meek, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, merciful and pure in heart, we may not look like much, and we certainly don’t all look or talk the same, but we are united under the eternal promises of God.

In God’s coming Kingdom, there will be no poverty, no mourning, no hunger, no thirst, and, ultimately, no distance between us and God. We can be more sure of this than we are that the sun will set on us tonight! Because we are confident that God’s backwards Kingdom is arriving soon, we can work expectantly and determinedly for it now.

As Kingdom workers, we must learn to show and share our resolute hope with those who have none. Matthew 5

gives us a glimpse into the way our Eternal God thinks of human suffering. Even the meek, the mourning and the persecuted are blessed because He is near to the brokenhearted (Psalms 34:18). Surely, a woman facing an unplanned pregnancy feels hopeless and scared, and her fears are legitimate. As a pro-life people, the Church should seek to *bless her* in her brokenness by coming alongside with our prayer, love and resources.

We have the eyes to see how God wants to comfort her and the opportunity for Him to be strong in her weakness. We hold the light in the darkness and the key to grace-filled joy in our own lives and stories. We have hope to share! We need never worry about blessing someone too much.* That is the nature of our God!

Mostly poor, grieving, meek, hungry & thirsty for righteousness, merciful and pure in heart, we may not look like much, and we certainly don’t all look or talk the same, but we are united under the eternal promises of God.

*Some may be concerned with enabling unhealthy choices. This is valid, but ‘enabling’ and ‘blessing’ are very different. *To enable* is to prop up unhealthy behavior, while *to bless* is to make space for God to come in truth, grief, change, and peace—all of which are wrapped in sacrificial love. Blessing shows people who are hurting that they don’t need to run to solutions this world has to offer (all of the unhealthy behavior they’ve been depending on) because they are supported through community and faith in a miraculous God. Blessing others in their brokenness embodies this truth: when we are weak, we are actually strong, because our brokenness is a canvas for God’s glorious grace (2 Corinthians 12:10).

WORK

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the ways that you have been seeking earthly prominence, favor, security or purely material blessings. Pray that God would increasingly satisfy you with His steadfast love instead (Psalms 90:14). How has your water fast helped you to rely on God alone for satisfaction?

When you are satisfied in Christ, you will find yourself full of Living Water, joyfully pouring into the lives of others.

When you are satisfied in Christ, you will find yourself full of Living Water, joyfully pouring into the lives of others.

Let's practice overflowing with loving action—letting go of our expectations for fairness and need for acknowledgement.

Serve one person today without expecting the favor to be returned.

You could send a note of encouragement to someone who is sick or lonely. If it's not your normal job, you could cook dinner for your family. You could share a smile and a conversation with someone in need on the street. You could even drop an anonymous treat on a neighbor's porch or, to continue the focus on reimagining the pro-life movement, drop some notes and snacks to the staff of a nearby pregnancy resource center. There are so many opportunities to love others!

To wrap up today, enjoy a short encouragement from Ahna Cameron, Kirk and Chelsea Cameron's daughter, on using whatever we're given to serve others.

Find all *Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks* videos and blogs at www.savethestorks.com/reimagine



DAY 5

Why Generosity?

"Then he said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit their very self?'" —Luke 9:23-25

HEART

Jesus is constantly asking His followers hard questions. As we follow Him, we should find ourselves doing the same. In reading today's verse we can ask ourselves and others, *What in the world does it mean to daily take up our cross? What does it mean to lose our life for Him? How do we know that we are truly walking with God in our daily lives?*

Too often, the cultural 'need for more' hinders us from denying ourselves!

The answer can be found, in part, by asking another question: *How often do we sacrificially serve those around us?*

Giving until it hurts is what taking up our cross is all about. If our lives are characterized by a willingness to listen and respond wisely to the needs of others, we can be sure that we are following in Jesus' footsteps.

Too often, however, the cultural 'need for more' hinders us from denying ourselves! We find ourselves numbly climbing the ladder of more to do, more ambition, and more comparison. This ladder offers a false sense of security and distracts us from following Jesus. In a culture that always wants more and more of everything, we must realize that our hearts truly need less.

If we want to let go of that ladder, we may need to let go of find satisfaction in our own possessions, positions, our 'rightness,' or security. Then we will free up so much space in our lives to extravagantly love

and serve others. Let these questions and thoughts from pastor and author Francis Chan sink in: “When was the last time you sacrificed for someone else’s sake? Unless I’m mistaken, isn’t that the whole point of the Gospel? If this isn’t commonplace in your life, and you can’t think of anyone outside your family you’d sacrifice for, you need to seriously examine your life. This is what separates Christians from the rest of the world.”*

These are the types of open, honest conversations that we should be having in the family of God. Let’s offer our hearts up to the Lord, asking these challenging questions of ourselves and each other. The answers will help us to live more thoughtfully.

Sometimes the political nature of the abortion issue in our country prevents us from being willing to be generous with others. We may be all right and all wrong at the same time. Right in believing the truth about abortion, but wrong in being influenced by judgemental voices who believe shaming abortion-minded women will serve to change their minds when, in reality, it only hurts them more deeply.

We may be all right and all wrong at the same time.

We should be motivated instead by the love of Jesus, He who climbs down the ladder, looking for the lost over and over again. Many of us are so polarized by our position (even if it’s correct!) that we can’t see over to the other side to learn or to love.

You might be thinking, *So where is the how-to manual? Who do I believe? How generous is generous enough? How much of my time, money, and energy should I be giving?*

You do not need a how-to manual, because your every *How?* is answered in the God-made-Man: Jesus. You should look to Christ, who spent Himself so that you could be free from the never-ending ‘need for more.’ Go and do likewise! May every plan and ambition be refined by the Holy Spirit; inspired by Jesus; and oriented toward your calling in the Kingdom, so that you are able to use whatever education, talent, and privilege you’ve been blessed with to spend yourself for others.

WORK

Today you asked yourself a series of questions. Hopefully, your grip on ‘me’ time, ‘me’ money, and ‘me’ achievements has loosened as a result. Letting go of our ambition and need to be ‘right’ can be really challenging! But Jesus shows us the way...He broke through every cultural norm, every ‘right’ way, to show us that following Him is the only way. When we choose to give our lives to Jesus, our lives become not ‘our’ lives, but His! (Galatians 2:20) Every day we must take up our cross—the instrument of death—and follow Him into situations that may be unconventional or silly to others, all for the sake of love.

Today, take the time to reach out to one person or group that you aren’t necessarily close to—maybe even someone you don’t agree with or you’ve been avoiding—and find out how you can be a blessing to them today. Then, follow through as best you can! Maybe it’s sitting by someone at church who you usually go out of your way to avoid, bringing a dessert to a family on your block who doesn’t do things the way you do, or stopping by the pregnancy center nearest to you to find out what their biggest needs are.

Write about your experience in your journal. Yes, this is a big ask, but we have to practice facing tough situations with extravagant generosity if we really want to follow Jesus’ command to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily.



DAY 6

Pulling Weeds

“The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.”

—Matthew 13:22

HEART //

From all sides, women with unplanned pregnancies are pricked by thistles of earthly worries and lies: *Your life will become unbearable with a child in it. Besides, you can't afford to raise a child by yourself! It's better for the both of you if you have an abortion.*

In a recent study, 73% of post-abortive women acknowledged pressure from others to have an abortion, and 28% admitted aborting out of fear of losing their partner if they didn't. 66% said they knew in their hearts they were making a mistake when they underwent the abortion.*

Christian and non-Christian women alike can get “choked out”—making unfruitful choices for their lives and those of their children—from the prick of this deceptive thornbush Jesus describes in today's verse.

We, as the Church, have the opportunity to replace those thorns with the loving touch of the Savior. We must operate as His life-giving hands, speaking His truth into our culture and helping to heal the wounds of those who have been affected by the thorns of their worries. If we truly want to empower our brothers and sisters to make life-affirming choices, they need to feel God's love, like a balm through our presence in their lives.

But before we can help those who have been considering, or have been affected by choosing abortion, we too must let go of the “worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth.” We must realize that the ‘need for more’ is an itch that can never be scratched. It's an itch that distracts us from the opportunities to love others that God may be hiding for us in plain sight. God is the gardener of our hearts. When we bask in the light of His word, He pulls up the thorny weeds of self-focus and pride from our hearts. Then, He plants seeds of truth that allow us to further experience His love for us and for others.

We know that letting go is complex, especially for younger generations. With concern for young people, pastor and author Timothy Keller once said, “From their youth culture they have imbibed not only an emotional resonance for social justice, but also a consumerism that undermines self-denial and delayed gratification.”** Isn't it true—of all of us? How can we want justice for the unborn yet be unwilling to make tangible sacrifices for them?

How can we want justice for the unborn yet be unwilling to make tangible sacrifices for them?

In a society that tries to keep the thorny weeds well-watered, how do we unlearn the materialism and self-focus that so easily grow in the soil of our human hearts? How can we move beyond the consuming distraction of our own concerns and comforts? Letting go of any identity or purpose placed in worldly things is a good place to start. Instead, we must root our status and joy in God—the only source of true life.

It can be scary, but we only need to take one brave step at a time: reading His Word, asking honest questions, and making small changes in our daily lives. Wanting less, giving more, spending ourselves and our resources with intentionality, and learning about vulnerable people in our communities are all small, yet meaningful, steps.



WORK

Has this first fast, which reminds us of the all-satisfying Living Water, helped you to move in the direction of letting go? We hope that occasional or wholesale fasting from all beverages besides water (or even from all food!) has helped you to be like the seed from Matthew 13:8: “Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown.”

Likely, there are more things than your favorite beverages that are turning your focus inwards! **Ask God to show you other things in your life that consume your focus**, pulling you into anxiety, fear, or pursuit of wealth or success, preventing you from loving others well. Go back to your journal today and respond to this question: **What are a few “worries of this life” that you could let go of today?**

You don’t want to miss the video of Victoria Robinson, with Save the Storks, share about her abortion. It’s not easy to hear the heartache, but such a reminder of why we are engaging in this month of living and thinking differently together!

Find all *Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks* videos and blogs at www.savethestorks.com/reimagine



DAY 7

Letting Go of Shame

“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”

—Proverbs 28:13

HEART

We tend to believe that we are less vulnerable if no one knows what we have done. When we sin, we are often quick to hide behind walls, concealing our shortcomings. In reality, Satan is using shame from past sin to keep us swamped in current sin. God’s correction and conviction in our lives “produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret” (2 Corinthians 7:15). Godly regret (coming to terms with the reality of our wrongdoing) takes down the wall (our sin) that was separating us from God and leads us to Jesus.

As Dr. D. Clair Davis wrote, “The Lord doesn’t talk about your sin so you’ll think you’re trash. He talks about it just because you’re not. He talks about it because he made you in His own image, with an infinitely higher and brighter plan for you than the one you choose for yourself.”* In order to get to God’s high, bright plan for ourselves, we have to “confess” our past and present vulnerability, as today’s verse teaches us. We also have to “renounce” (reject) it. We must ask God to come near where we may have been pushing Him away, to hold us up where we are weak—He doesn’t strengthen and sustain us from a distance. Sometimes shame can take hold and keep us distant from God because (individually, or as a church community) we struggle with openness about the realities of sin and the extravagance of grace.

Statistically, 43% of women who have had an abortion were regular (once a month or more) churchgoers at the time of their abortion, and sadly 54% said they would not recommend discussing an unplanned pregnancy with someone at church.**

Shame keeps us silent, causing us to suffer alone and wordlessly continue in the dark cycle of struggle. Silence does not welcome the dawn of mercy and joy that God promises us with confession.

The temptation of abortion relies on lies, lies that thrive on isolation. Loneliness, insecurity in unhealthy relationships, or the ‘need’ to be completely independent lead us to believe that no one is really there for us. Lack of accountability in community fuels the twisted deception in our culture at large, that life will be easier, more fair, if there are no real consequences for sexual ‘freedom.’

The well-intentioned but misguided notion that, because women should have the right to make decisions about their own bodies, they should be able to end a life, undermines the relationship of mother and child that is a cornerstone of healthy family community. These lies come flooding in when we, as a people, are not cultivating interconnected, healthy relationships. If we, as a church, can become more inclined to tell the truth about our own sin; to confess and receive mercy; to reject shame and isolation; and to invite forgiveness and accountability, then

we will raise the level of honesty and openness in our families and communities.

Letting go of shame over past mistakes is absolutely necessary when moving toward the life of spending ourselves on behalf of others. The past should not determine how we live life in the present.

Letting go of shame over past mistakes is absolutely necessary when moving toward the life of spending ourselves on behalf of others. The past should not determine how we live life in the present. The truth that God’s love is enough to cover every past mistake—and even future failures—sets the stage for forgiving ourselves, forgiving others, and removing shame from our midst.

No matter what we have done, God’s grace and love are enough. Openness in community is vulnerable and scary because there will be mistakes. None of us will love perfectly, but shutting out community is never the solution. Fears multiply when we become distant from healthy community and wise counsel. Shame is always waiting for us in the wings, hoping that we will shut each other out, so that it can lie to us in our isolation. Will we fall into its trap?

WORK

Today’s prayer is that God will reveal to us any walls that need to be torn down in our hearts, those that separate us from God and isolate us in shame. Recognizing and becoming free from this trap is a HUGE step toward spending ourselves for others in the way that God invites us to. Will you consider letting go of the past and looking toward your future opportunities without fear?

In your journal, write down the areas in your life where you feel inadequate, ashamed, or worthless.

Then, let go. Meditate on these truths: God is gracious and loving, and He is enough. He says that we are forgiven and loved, covered by Christ’s righteousness, adopted into His family. Ask Him to download these truths into your heart, casting out feelings of shame and producing lasting change in your actions. Prayerfully consider whether to seek out a well-trained Christian counselor or pastor to help you where you are stuck. You are not alone!

After you do, take a moment to go to the *Reimagining Pro-Life* page and watch the powerful video of actress Ashley Bratcher, who plays Abby Johnson in the movie, *Unplanned*. She shares about a confession that changed her life while on the set of *Unplanned*.

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DAY 8

Untangled

“Therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” —Hebrews 12:1-3

HEART //

The author of Hebrews counsels us that the race we run is no straight line. Sin reaches out, trying to hinder and entangle us in order to keep us from Christ. As we’ve been experiencing this week, letting go can be tricky! Running “with perseverance” in the Christian life requires the kind of community support we explored in Day 7, and it requires intentional focus.

As we focus on “the race marked out for us”—thanks be to God that we are not forging our own way! Christ has already paved the path to the Kingdom for us, through His death and resurrection. To run the race well, we must focus on Christ. And focusing on Christ requires throwing off anything that is unnecessary for our race. In other words, the Christian life requires not only perseverance and community, but also strategy.

Imagine that you are at a track meet, getting ready to race. A teammate comes up to give you final words of encouragement. He tells you to take off your running shoes, and he gives you a brand new pair of snow boots to put on. He places a high-quality coat on your back, and he sets designer jeans on the bench beside you. Everything that he gives

you may be desirable in the eyes of our image-oriented culture, but it is all completely unnecessary for the race that you are getting ready to run. In short, when we clothe ourselves in nonessentials, we slow down our pace in God’s race.

Strategy in our Christian journey means listening to the Coach who knows our weaknesses and what will be best for our training. This Coach can and does strengthen us. Learning to recognize the voice of God in your life; surrounding yourself with a good team; praying and fasting; surrendering to Christ on a daily basis; and following in His footsteps by loving others are all ways to train well. God has specific methods and paths that match His plans for you, so pay attention to the details of your suffering, your past failures, your passions and your strengths—because He wants to redeem them all in a way that is unique to your story!

If you’ve made it to Day 8 of this devotional (and the last day of the Letting Go water fast), you are doing an amazing job of training well, and you’re probably gearing up to reimagine the pro-life movement in our world in powerful ways. It is a race that will require perseverance because it’s an uphill journey in many ways, but remember to keep training hard and staying strong. There is present and everlasting joy for the runner who glorifies God in the flurry of worldly distractions. One day, when we see Christ face to face, we will know that it was all worth it.

God has specific methods and paths that match His plans for you, so pay attention to the details of your suffering, your past failures, your passions and your strengths—because He wants to redeem them all in a way that is unique to your story!

//WORK

This week, through our daily fasting, reflections, and challenges, we’ve seen that letting go requires a great deal of determination and planning. The reimagined pro-life movement requires the same traits: perseverance, community building, focus, strategy. Even though the fight for life is a fierce battle, what is amazing is that we may run with a winning mentality. Jesus has already won the race!



We can have confidence in the face of setbacks because Christ assures us that all will be made right in the end. Fear and despair cannot hold us down because ALL WILL BE REDEEMED! We can already see glimpses of His victory. Four out of five women who board a Stork Bus choose life.

We, too, should work toward establishing Christ's everlasting Kingdom. Right now. Right in our own families and cities. Over the past week, we've talked about what life could look like if we made decisions fearlessly and selflessly. What remaining fear or sin "that so easily entangles" can you feel hindering your spiritual race?

Spend a few minutes journaling about your own race in this life.

Then, pray about (and then make some notes on) how your path can or may continue to connect with the reimagined pro-life movement. If you've never interacted much with the pro-life movement, here are some ideas to get you started...

- Are you a prayer warrior? You could join a group like 40 Days for Life to pray for women entering abortion clinics and that God would change their minds.
- Do you have a knack for organization? In the future, you could volunteer at a local pregnancy resource center or at other pro-life events in your area.
- Have you ever donated items for a food, clothing or toy drive? Many pregnancy resource centers collect and distribute items that expectant mothers are in desperate need of, and some even have their own thrift store and need volunteers!

Tomorrow, as we move into a new week with the theme of Identity, we pray that you may be filled with newfound strength and freedom in God, even if it means letting go of some 'normal' things that aren't serving you well on your race. God is good!

**By choosing his life,
I chose mine too.**

-Brienda



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Identity

DAY 9

Made to Love

“Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” —Ephesians 5:1-2

HEART // In today’s passage, God gives us a clear picture of what it looks like for us to follow Him: “walk in the way of love,” just as Christ did in His life and death. For those blessed with the good gift of mobility, walking is something that happens without thought, seamlessly and constantly throughout the day. Love should be like that, too. Love defines us, as children of Love Himself (1 John 4:8).

Still, loving like God is not always ‘safe.’ It’s risky! We often feel hurt or disappointed when we sacrifice ourselves for others and do not receive the same love in return. Wouldn’t it be great if we could walk in love without encountering bumps in the road? When we are tempted to believe that the easiest path is the best path, we must remember that Christ didn’t just encounter a few potholes as He walked in love. His life was filled with suffering and rejection. When Christ “loved us and gave himself up for us,” we were unlikable. His closest companions were selling Him out, reacting out of faithless desperation or running in fear (John 18)—much like we tend to do, perhaps more often than we’d like to admit.

More than this, we were in complete opposition to Him, yet He still lovingly chose to die for us when we could neither comprehend nor appreciate His sacrifice (Romans 5:8). Getting hurt or feeling disappointed can be heartbreaking, but Christ is the ultimate example of sacrificially loving others despite the context and regardless of the consequences.

The Good News of Jesus is that in Him we are strong enough to face any disregard, rejection, or even betrayal. Confidence in Him makes us miraculously brave! Security in Him makes us courageous enough to love the people in our lives who aren't necessarily life-giving, people who believe differently than we do, people who are unlikable, or people who

Being defined by love should impact every relationship, calling, job, vote, or decision in our lives because it's in the fabric of our spiritual being.

cannot possibly understand or appreciate us. ALL with healthy boundaries that promote love, of course!* Our love is supposed to be completely, ridiculously incomprehensible to anyone who doesn't have an understanding of Jesus living through us. Look for that kind of love growing in your life today!

Being defined by love should impact every relationship, calling, job, vote, or decision

in our lives because it's in the fabric of our spiritual being. As today's verse reminds us, it's the way that we walk. There will be times we need to sit down, lay down, or calm down, getting our feet under us again. But when we move, may we move in the love of Christ.

*If you haven't come to a point of knowing what healthy boundaries are in certain relationships, it's best to seek God and wise counsel for that truth before continuing in codependent un-health in the name of 'love.'

WORK

In Christ, we are "dearly loved children" of God. Because we are *beloved*, we are called to *be loving*. In your life, have you ever tried to "walk in the way of love" toward an abortion-vulnerable woman, an unborn baby, or an unwanted child? If you haven't—don't worry. Today we're going to begin our second fast, and we're sure that you'll have a bit more time to show love to vulnerable people because of it!

Make a list of the social media that you use. (Think: Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook.) Include other media that takes up your time. (TV shows, podcasts, news stations, video games, etc.) This week, you are invited to take a break. **No (nonessential) posting, checking, listening, watching, or playing.** This fast will address at least two items: identity and time.

To get started, write these two questions in your journal and try to make notes on them today, as well as several other times throughout the week. Just write whenever God gives you insight!

1. How has your media usage shaped your identity?
2. What kinds of media drive you to "conform to the pattern of this world," as Romans 12:2 warns against?

In Christ alone do we realize *our true identity*. In Christ alone do we have enough motivation and the right resources to love others well. Pray that God would allow you to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" as you take a break from media this week (Romans 12:2).

Our time is a valuable resource that we often squander. While there is much to be said for rest and relaxation, one major issue in our society today is media usage. Why? We so often go to our phones or flatscreens to 'veg out,' but it is not true rest.

A 2018 study showed that the average American checks his or her phone 52 times per day.*

Imagine how much time we are giving each and every day to nonessential, distracting, and even harmful media usage in our lives! Author Sherry Turkle says, "Technology doesn't just do things for us. It does things to us, changing not just what we do but who we are."**

Rather than getting swept away in the river of social media, news, constant work, or entertainment, let's spend just a week being more intentional than usual, giving our time to things that challenge our status quo, learning about pregnancy resource center options in our own cities, or looking someone in the eyes while listening to his or her story. Though we can often "expect more from technology and less from each other," as we use it to create the "illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship,"*** our prayer is that this week we will learn to expect more from the relationships in our lives.

DAY 10

Healed by Grace

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.” —Ephesians 1:3-10

HEART // There are so many ways to ‘handle’ the sin and shame that we collect along this journey on earth. We may try to overcome our shortcomings through self-importance and pride: we hide internal sins and shame behind external good deeds. When we live this way, we are quick to judge others, becoming angry and unapproachable. Some of us respond to our own and others’ misdeeds with passivity: we dismiss them, acting like it’s not a big deal to walk opposed to the Creator God. Or, in order to protect ourselves from the criticism of others, some of us try the approach of carrying shame around like a shield, refusing to forgive or give grace to ourselves.

In all of these reactions, we are acting as the judge and jury in our own case. Today’s verse reminds us to let God be the Judge, individually

blessing us with *His* glorious grace and corporately with *His* inevitable will for the cosmos. But often, as Ephesians 3 says, we naively deem ourselves—and our actions—as right and just.

What we need more than arrogance, passivity, or control, is *humility*. We need to bring our sins, weaknesses, and brokenness to God, so that we may walk in the light of His promises to us: “In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us.” It is God’s amazing, unmerited grace that absorbs our shortcomings, overcomes them, and makes us new.

It is God’s amazing, unmerited grace that absorbs our shortcomings, overcomes them, and makes us new.

When we are made new by the blood of Jesus, we join the eternal family of God. We can know that God cares about parent-child relationships because He is infinitely invested in them, both with His Son and with us. We are all, in a sense, orphans of this world. Left to our own devices, we end up isolated and powerless. However, as children who lift our eyes, hands, and heart to God, we are adopted into an everlasting family.

We can care as God does about the sanctity of the parent-child relationship by encouraging abortion-minded parents to make choices that affirm life. We must do more than encourage them, though. Today’s verse ends with Jesus bringing “unity to all things in heaven and on earth.” He doesn’t just *talk* about unity; Christ *enacts* unity.



WORK

As Christians, we must join God in the family business of establishing unity on earth. Let's try reaching out to help women struggling with an unplanned pregnancy who feel lonely and afraid!

Go to the *Reimagining Pro-Life* website, watch and reflect on this story of a young woman named Beth who felt shocked and confused by her pregnancy.

Find all *Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks* videos and blogs at www.savethestorks.com/reimagine

As you think about your adoption as a son or daughter of God, **brainstorm ways that you can help to establish solidarity for abortion-vulnerable moms, by being a conduit of grace and love toward them and their unborn child.** Diane Ferraro, with Save the Storks, describes a few ways that you can help to give women and children a new hope and an action plan: "This doesn't always mean being a donor. It could mean that you come alongside a pregnancy resource center, become a family that adopts, or use social media to share information with others."

Write down the ideas that you come up with in your journal!



DAY 11

An Inseparable Tribe

"Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else."

—1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

HEART

As we read about in Day 10, once we're healed by the blood of Jesus...*we join the family of God.* In his first letter to the church at Thessalonica, Paul twice calls the people gathered there "brothers and sisters." Their church wasn't made up of one family of believers though. It wasn't one group of Smiths or Johnsons who all met up in grandma's house. In fact, the people that gathered to read his letters were beautifully diverse—"brothers and sisters" in a much fuller, more long-lasting, and absolutely wondrous sense.

Something far stronger than DNA binds us together: the blood of Christ! In Him, we become a spiritual family, an inseparable tribe. Today's passage gives us a vivid picture of what that looks like for us. It looks like...encouraging pastors and elders who lead the church near and far; living peaceably among not only the believers who regularly sit next to us on Sundays, but also Christians who disagree with us (perhaps especially online, where all the world can see). It also means counseling those who lack motivation, direction, or joy; and gently warning those who stir up trouble in the church. And Paul ends by saying, "Always strive to do what is good for each other."

Can you imagine what our spiritual family, what our tribe of believers, would look like to the watching world if we always worked to do good to each other? One thing is certain: people facing unplanned pregnancies would be much more likely to look at the church and say, “I am safe here.” Or, “I want to be a part of what’s going on in *there*. If they love each other like that, I bet they can love me and my unborn child that much, too...”

Those who are abortion-minded or post-abortive may already be a part of the family of God, or may yet need to be invited. No matter where they are, the question is, *are we loving them well?* Are our hearts, attitudes, and actions toward them one of genuine inclusiveness to our Tribe? If so, true healing can begin and the precious life of a child can be saved!

Paul’s words in today’s verse remind us that things will not be perfect in the Family of God. Implicit in his words of counsel, we remember that there will be those who are disheartened, weak, or requiring patience! We will do wrong! Sometimes we will fail! But just like in any healthy family, failure is not the end of anything. It’s an opportunity to grow and love well.

So let us remember not to be surprised that weakness and discouragement find their way into the hearts of people facing unplanned pregnancies. In our hearts, our words and our actions, we are called, to do good. We encourage all vulnerable, afraid and disheartened people to draw near to the inseparable family of God.

//WORK

Today we want you to show the watching world what it looks like to be a part of the Body of Christ. Not online, but in your real life. **Choose one of the things Paul talks about in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15 and put it into practice.** Are you in disagreement with a fellow believer? Send them a text that exudes peace. When was the last time that you encouraged pastors or leaders in the church? Send a few of them notes of encouragement and pray for them. Practice supernatural patience today in your home, with difficult family members or co-workers. Do you know someone who is disheartened? Ask that person to meet up for coffee, text him or her a Psalm that speaks of God’s sustaining grace. Bow your knees before God on his or her behalf, but make sure to listen for how you can be the hands and feet of Jesus in their life today.



“When I boarded the Stork Bus, I wanted an abortion. I was scared out of my mind, but the mobile staff helped me feel comfortable enough to express my fears. Seeing my son on the ultrasound was like a breath of fresh air. My fears vanished and I just wanted to keep him and be his mother.”

—Jas

DAY 12

In His Image

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” —Psalms 139:13-16

HEART //

When the psalmist reflects on the marvelous intricacies with which God created humans, he doesn’t bow at the feet of the next passerby or even praise the massive and incredibly crafted universe. No! *The psalmist immediately praises God.* As Christians, we do not worship created things. Christians worship Christ, in whom all Creation has being and breath (Colossians 1:16-17). Christ is the only ‘human’ worthy of worship because He is “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Hebrews 1:13).

In human life, we glimpse the image of God: “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). In the garden, God chose to create one single thing in resemblance of Himself. Humanity is that one thing. *You*, reader, are that one thing! The psalmist writes that God has “knit” us together in a fashion so remarkable that, if we really stopped to think about it, we would stand with mouths open, hands raised, in absolute reverence of His awe-someness. Plus, we would see others as beings made in the image of God. We would use our gaping mouths to encourage and bless, our upraised hands to help and uphold God’s most beloved creations!

We don’t really stop to think about the way that God has made us, though. At least, not enough. We know this to be true because of the way that we treat each other. Pause, just to think for a moment about the ways that you may have treated the people that you have come into contact with today. Have you gossiped about someone? Have you cut another off while driving down the highway? Have you ignored a request that your family member made or ignored a need as you walked down the street in a hurry? Jesus teaches us (Matthew 5:22) that the heart is what truly matters and we sin against God when we sin against the people that He has created in His own image. When we practice seeing all people as God sees them, we are kinder and more gentle in all our interactions.

Pause, just to think for a moment about the ways that you may have treated the people that you have come into contact with today.

//WORK

One tangible way that Save the Storks celebrates and protects human life is by providing abortion-vulnerable women with access to free ultrasounds. Storks Buses are driven to strategic places within communities to be able to serve women where they’re at: outside of abortion clinics, on college campuses, and in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Everyday, these services are being used to help them to make informed, life-affirming decisions. There is something about seeing an ultrasound image and hearing your baby’s heartbeat that cannot be shaken. It’s a witness to the miracle of human life.

In your journal, reflect on this question: Do the images that you put in front of your eyes and the things you hear everyday have an effect on you? Here’s another way to put it: Does your favorite social media, TV show, or video game *help* you to see every human being as an amazing creation of God? Often, media has the opposite effect. It makes us culture-centered, rather than Christ-centered.

Media affords us the opportunity to compare CONSTANTLY, and, in doing so, it may sometimes encourage us to put others categorically above or beneath us—rather than seeing them simply as diverse, beautiful people that reflect God in incredible and unique ways. It is believed that President Theodore Roosevelt once wisely pointed out,

“Comparison is the thief of joy.” That’s why we have to be careful with what we regularly put in front of our eyes and into our ears.

There is one image that we know has a positive, life-changing effect, though: the ultrasound. Have you ever had the opportunity to see one in person? It is truly humbling and a breathtaking reminder of how we are fearfully and wonderfully made!

What would it look like if I decreased my media usage long-term?

Ask yourself and then journal about this:

What would it look like if I decreased my media usage for the long-term? Could that help me to see more consistently that I am made in His image vs. what culture dictates?

How could the gifts God has given me, the way I reflect *His* image, be used for the Kingdom? (Perhaps I could support the work of a pregnancy resource center that is helping to educate pregnant moms about the life being knit together in their womb?)



DAY 13

Adopted

“Sing to God, sing in praise of his name, extol him who rides on the clouds; rejoice before him—his name is the Lord. A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.” —Psalms 68:4-6

HEART //

Four times in Psalm 68, we are called to worship God. Inwardly, our hearts should rejoice in Him. Outwardly, our lives should sing His praises. What reasons does this particular passage give us to rejoice and sing? God is the Father to orphans; the Defender of vulnerable women; the relational Refuge for lonely individuals; the Liberator of prisoners. Every human soul needs this Father, this Defender, this Refuge, this Liberator. Worship is the most natural reaction to the reality of who God is and how He loves us.

We, as His children, know the wonders of being a part of His family. And so we rejoice, and so we sing, and so we praise—worshipping so unashamedly that His glorious presence would be made known to every soul in every nation on earth! Every single person needs to be spiritually adopted by God.

One way for us to make God's truth known is through a willingness to consider adopting a child or supporting those who do. The more open we are to adoption, the more we encourage abortion-minded women to make life-affirming choices. The more open we are to adoption, the more we provide hope for both children *and* women. The more we champion adoption, the more we mirror the way that God lovingly took us in.

The more we champion adoption, the more we mirror the way that God lovingly took us in.

In short, to adopt a child in desperate need of a family *is to worship*.

You may be thinking, *There is no way that I have the right resources for adoption*. We want you to ponder this quote from Paul Isaacs, with Save the Storks: “It’s better to ask God, ‘Is this what you want me to do?’ than ‘How could I ever do this?’”

Paul and his wife decided to focus on the first question, asking God to reveal His will to them. The resounding answer was that they should adopt. With that answer in mind, they knew that God would take care of any anxiety-producing *how?* questions. God was faithful: they were able to adopt a little girl from Southeast Asia in 2008. Paul describes adoption as an amazing picture of the gospel. “We went to her, chose her, when she could never have made her way to us. And that’s exactly what God did for each one of us.” Their little girl, who, left in the orphanage would, statistically, likely be a victim of trafficking today, is now finding her passions in life and growing up in a safe home. He says he never misses the word “adopted” in the Scriptures anymore, he hears the word “orphan” in songs and it strikes his heart in ways he never could have understood before adopting. “If I am pro-life, I must be open to adoption or support those who do,” he says.

So as you worship, whether it’s in your quiet time, at church, or as you drive around today, “sing in praise of His name” like today’s verse reminds us to do. It is such an honor to speak out into the world today the truth about who God is. He is a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, He cares about the lonely and imprisoned. It’s an amazing reality! And it is also such an honor to live out that truth, learning to jump into this stream of redemption with our Father, caring for the most vulnerable in our world.



WORK

Check out our video of Ahna Cameron, Kirk and Chelsea Cameron’s daughter, sharing about being adopted by a loving family. As she beautifully articulates her personal experience of Isaiah 68:6, she reminds us, “You *can* create something good out of a crazy, sometimes horrific situation... It’s *your choice* to choose the good.”

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As children of God, we all have something to offer to this world. We offer hope in Christ! Together as the Body of Christ, our resources really are abundant, and one tangible way that we can extend their reach far and wide is by considering adoption. **Spend some time asking God if it is His will for you to worship Him through adoption.**

If you know adoption isn’t God’s plan for you, consider finding and supporting adoptive families in your community! God invites us to be His hands and feet. There are so many ways to do this! Financially supporting adoptions; providing meals, gifts, or childcare for foster parents; looking for organizations that support adoptive parents on a larger scale...Collectively, we have all of the resources we need to care for every orphaned child.



DAY 14

Transformed

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.” —1 John 3:1

HEART //

The Christian life is a great series of transformations. When God lavishes His redeeming love on us, we become His children. As His children, we seek to share our newfound freedom with others. Once we know the power of God’s love

to provide healing and hope, we cannot help but bring others to the Living Well that is Jesus Christ! Our Father sets us on a transformative adventure, growing us

Our Father sets us on a transformative adventure, growing us closer to Him and giving us opportunities to bring others close to Him!

closer to Him and giving us opportunities to bring others close to Him! Where the abortion-minded are concerned, there are a variety of ways that Christians can bring them much-needed spiritual/physical/emotional water.

Surely, some of the earliest members at Save the Storks had to be quite adventurous when they began their journey. They had a vision to save lives through the use of mobile medical units that would provide women with access to free ultrasounds. What would they call these units? How about—*Stork Buses*. They imagined these units would be owned and operated by local pregnancy clinics, those who best know the needs of women who are navigating an unplanned pregnancy in their communities. Can you believe this dream began in a renovated van? Their story might just encourage you to adventure where God leads you—no matter how crazy it might seem. Check out the video of a Save the Storks return to the Bronx, where it all started!

It’s no small secret that people are more likely to receive the Good News as “good news” when its messengers seek to provide for their physical and emotional needs alongside their spiritual ones. Today’s verse describes God’s love as “lavish.” It’s generous to the point of being considered excessive. And that’s what Stork Buses are! An over-the-top, beautiful, safe, loving blessing to women who are in desperate need of a glimpse of the life growing within them.

In order to increasingly encourage and provide for abortion-vulnerable women and their unborn child, the pro-life movement needs to be continually reimagined and regularly innovated. It’s got to be readily transformed by its already-transformed members. Think about your own life. If you are in Christ, you have experienced God’s love enough to pour that love out onto others. As you continue to spend time in His presence, contemplating His glory, you are being transformed into His image (2 Corinthians 3:18). Plus, though your identity is firmly rooted in Christ, your life branches and blossoms in utterly unique ways! To promote the reimagination of the pro-life movement, we must all cultivate a spirit of innovation in order to impact the current culture of abortion and save the lives of the unborn.

//WORK

In what ways can you use the story and particular gifts that you have received from God to further flavor the pro-life movement? It’s time to get thinking.

Jot down the ways that you can be a transformative member of the new pro-life movement. Quite literally, Save the Storks wants to partner with you to introduce creative ideas!

Email your God-given vision to reimagine@savethestorks.com. God wants to use you—your story, your gifts, your ideas—to transform the lives of women and children, fathers and families, everywhere.

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DAY 15

We Are Not Alone

“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”

—John 14:15-18

HEART //

Imagine how the disciples of Jesus must have felt when they first realized he was giving His life up rather than conquering and ruling here on earth as they may have imagined. They had given up their normal lives, given their reputations, their ambitions, everything for Him! They had lived with Him and seen incredible miracles, surely the worst thing they could imagine was being without Him (see Matthew 16:21-23 for a peek). And Jesus, in John 16:6-7 says his disciples “are filled with grief” about Him leaving, but that it’s actually better if He leaves and the Holy Spirit comes! What a statement about the incredible nature of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Better than Jesus in person, here on the earth? That’s got to be pretty good.

Are we fully realizing what this means for our lives?

The Holy Spirit is our assurance that we are not alone. Jesus says in today’s verse, “I will not leave you as orphans.” We are His. In Him, we are safe. Even in this wild and crazy world, when we are with Him, we are okay. That’s probably how the disciples felt about being with Jesus, right? As long as they were with Him, as crazy as circumstances got, things always seemed to work out. And that same presence of God, of goodness, of real greatness is with us in the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit.

As we have learned throughout Identity Week, only God can give us wholeness in who we are. We are made in His image. We are healed whenever He lavishes His grace upon us. Our rescue and adoption transform us: instead of being lovers of ‘Self,’ we become lovers of God and want to help bring rescue to others. God calls us to live a righteous life, but He does not ask us to do it alone. The Father—in His perfection!—has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit, our Advocate, to steer our hearts away from sin and toward Christ.

The Spirit enables us to obey God, which is to act like His kids, because we are! After all, the best way for us to determine *who we really are* is by looking at *what we consistently do*. As children of God, we have been “created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). Christianity is not a club or a hobby—it is a new life to live. As we move into Compassion Week tomorrow, we want you to keep this truth in mind: because we are children of God, He has prepared Kingdom work for us to do. And we can do all things through Christ! (Philippians 4:13)

//WORK

Today, ask the Holy Spirit to point out a person to whom you can show out-of-the-ordinary kindness. If you’re a young person, maybe you can eat lunch with someone who usually eats alone. Maybe you can play outside with a younger sibling who usually gets left out. Adults, maybe you can visit an elderly neighbor, or you can bring dinner to a sick friend. In a nutshell, pause the hustle and bustle of your life for a moment and remember the best of who you really are. Consider how you can brighten someone else’s day.

Pause the hustle and bustle of your life for a moment and remember the best of who you really are.

In showing genuine kindness to someone, we usually have to meet that person wherever he or she is at. We have to get up close and personal. That can be scary, but let God encourage you. Not only did the Son come to dwell among us, but the Holy Spirit has also come to dwell in us. It doesn’t get more up close and personal than that! He knows the needs of everyone in your life and wants to meet them through you. It’s not your strength, insight, or compassion that can transform a life—it’s His!

As we wrap up Identity Week and move into Compassion Week tomorrow, remember that you are defined by God. He is love, and He willingly meets us right where we are. As a pro-life people, it is essential that we are the same way—especially toward abortion-vulnerable women, who often feel voiceless, alone, and without options. Tomorrow, we're going to begin to look at the ways that we can lovingly meet these moms where they are. We meet others with love because we have been met with Love!

Your media fast is now over! We hope that it has helped you to reconsider what you take in, what images influence you. As you jump back into media, whatever that looks like, keep listening to the Holy Spirit inside of you to guide you in what to look at, listen to, and how your identity can be influenced by your eyes and ears!

Pray that God would continually keep your identity in line with how He defines you in Scripture.



**When I boarded the Stork bus,
not only did I find a huge support system,
I found God.**

**When I saw the love of God
through Save the Storks
and the Pregnancy Resource Center,
I found LOVE for myself.**

**They showed me who I was
through God's eyes.
They showed me
my unborn child,
the child who needed me
to be strong
to choose life.**

-Hannah



DAILY
DEVO
WEEK

Compassion

DAY 16

Co-Suffering

“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

—Romans 8:16-17

HEART // How incredible it is that God would call us His children! Because of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, God has brought us into His family and has given us true life in Him. As a family, we have the privilege of being co-heirs with Christ. One day, when we see Him face to face, we will finally see and savor Him fully as we share in His eternal inheritance (1 Corinthians 13:12).

But we don’t have to wait until we reach the Kingdom to share in and shout out His glory. Today’s verse reminds us that suffering for His namesake is a necessary part of the Christian life, as much as the ‘good stuff’ is. If Jesus is the exact replica of the glory of God (Hebrews 1:3), and the crescendo of His life was a victorious death on the cross, then we can share in God’s glory today by dying to ourselves, serving others, and anticipating resurrection in areas of our lives!

In other words, for Jesus, compassion IS the good stuff.

Let’s break the word *compassion* down a little bit. Its original definition comes from the idea of shared suffering: the compassionate person is someone who ‘suffers with’ another person. Truly, no one is more compassionate than Christ—who suffered *for* us! Though we cannot bear the sins of others (which only Jesus can do, and only He has done), we can bear the *burdens* of others.

How does the Bible call us to ‘suffer with’ and bear the burdens of one another? Think about the second great commandment that Jesus gives us in Matthew 22. He calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves. This means that we should be willing to feel what they feel, and we should be willing to put ourselves in their place, and alleviate any suffering they may be experiencing! As followers of Jesus, our hearts should be consistently touched and moved by the suffering of fellow humans.

We are God’s children, and He has given us everything we need to be His hands and feet to those He has called us to serve. We become more like God when we engage our hearts with His and begin to care about the people that He cares about. Putting others first doesn’t *a/ways* mean giving up life as you know it, or giving thousands upon thousands of dollars to orphans, widows or unborn babies. It can mean leaning into the lives of young people in your church or volunteering time at a local pregnancy resource center!

However, when we open our hearts, caring about the vulnerable people in our world, we will be driven to live differently. ‘Living differently’—compared to the self-focus so prevalent in our world—is a very good and godly thing.

WORK

When our hearts become engaged passionately with an issue as serious as abortion, often it can cause feelings of anger and hopelessness.

That’s why we need to ask God to help us to respond to men and women facing an unplanned pregnancy as Jesus does—with compassion. Speaking with compassion doesn’t mean that we become afraid to tell the truth about abortion. It means our words are filled with supernatural kindness, and it means that love and action always follow close behind our conversations.

Speaking with compassion doesn’t mean that we become afraid to tell the truth about abortion. It means our words are filled with supernatural kindness, and it means that love and action always follow close behind our conversations.

Real compassion means co-suffering with others. It means paying attention to the needs of abortion-vulnerable women in our communities—even when it might feel overwhelming.

This week we want you to take on the empathy challenge of fasting all negative speech...No gossip. No complaints. No criticism. No judgment or bitterness. **Let’s practice letting go of these words,** just for a week. Let’s practice being further defined by love and inviting the compassion of Jesus to fill that empty space in ways we may have never imagined.

As you process what this week’s challenge may look like for you, think back to how Jesus spoke to the woman at the well in John 4. He didn’t hide from the truth. He told her the truth about her sins. But even as Jesus did so, He gave her a new way to live: a life based on Himself, the Living Water. **Pray that God would make you truthful, gentle, and kind in your speech this week. Ask that He would make you willing to co-suffer and act with compassion.**



DAY 17

Touching the Need

“A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, ‘If you are willing, you can make me clean.’ Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’ Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.” —Mark 1:40-42

HEART //

All throughout Scripture, Jesus was drawn to human beings in need. Not only did he see the needs of those around Him, but He was also willing to act on their behalf. We take our cue from Christ: compassionate people do not only see the need...compassionate people *touch* the need.

During the time that Jesus walked the earth, it would have been considered ‘defilement,’ like pollution or contamination, to touch a person with leprosy. Christ embraced the risk that touching the man posed to His reputation, though. He cared more for the man than He did about cultural norms or what people would say about Him. He lovingly engaged in the suffering that the man faced at great risk to Himself, healing the man as a result.

We, too, must embrace taking risks if we want to follow Jesus. It comes naturally for us to close our eyes to the needs of the people around us. We can be overly concerned with ourselves—with what people think

of us, with how they perceive us, or with our hope to serve others “not working” or being too costly. Jesus asks us to love one another as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39), and He says that the

What does the world see when it looks at your life?

world will know that we are His disciples by the way that we love one another (John 13:35). Ask yourself: *What does the world see when it looks at your life?* It should be struck by your willingness to love others well, regardless of the risk!

We have the opportunity to reach out and touch one of the most difficult, socially-complicated needs of our time with hope and healing. When we encourage an abortion-minded woman to make a life-affirming choice, we must realize that we are asking her to take a ‘risk.’ Abortion can be tempting. It just seems less risky: less money, less effort, and less hardship. We, as the church, have the opportunity to make parenthood slightly ‘less risky’ for these women. Of course, pregnancy and parenting are costly and that cost should never be underplayed, but it can definitely be (and is meant to be!) supported. In love, we can help mothers to see the actual risk of abortion—that they may go in hoping they’re doing the right thing, but the enemy of their soul will likely change the tune to one of accusation, guilt and shame on their way out. What a trap.

Touching the need starts with simply building trust—being willing to love without judgment, to step into uncomfortable spaces and to risk our own resources (time, emotions, money, and more) right along with those we’re serving. Not one of us can solve this issue, but together we can do our best to reach out of our comfort zones to ensure that these women really do have the opportunity before them to make a life-affirming choice: the funds, the resources, and the community necessary to help them value and uphold the life within them. It’s a life that God so values and so wants to uphold.

As Christ equips the church, His body, to be His own hands, this question is monumentally important: *Are we willing?*

Watch, at the *Reimagining Pro-Life* page, the video of Ashley Bratcher, who plays Abby Johnson in the movie *Unplanned*, share about her “yes to God”.

Find all *Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks* videos and blogs at www.savethestorks.com/reimagine



//WORK

Let's keep our eyes open for opportunities to say our own "yes to God"!

A Barna study shows that 70% of women choosing abortion identify as Christians.*

We may feel like the abortion issue is "out there, in the world", but the reality is that there are abortion-vulnerable women in our churches, our families, our family of God who are feeling a real sense of panic, anxiety, loneliness, and fear at the thought of keeping their babies.

How can you use your words (both in person and on social media) to extend Christlike compassion to them? As you empty your words of unproductive anger, judgment, hopelessness, and complaining this week (and hopefully always!), try to fill your words up with Christlike compassion and love instead.

Christ didn't say, "Because I have to." He said, "I am willing." Remember: Christ didn't say, "Because I have to," when he reached out His hand to heal

the man. He said, "I am willing." The world will know that we love Him when we are willing to be healing conduits for others—just as Jesus was—regardless of the consequences.

Pray about and act on just one 'risk'* you can take today to touch a need in the world around you.** It can be small or large, but make it something that shows you value someone else's needs over your own comfort.

Write about your experience in your journal, along with answering these questions: *Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like someone cared about you more than he or she cared about reputation? How did that feel?*

***Healthy risks include risking your own popularity, comfort or certainty for the sake of another. If you are young, please run your 'risky' business by a trusted adult before doing anything that could be damaging to your life, well-being, or to others.

DAY 18

Great Love

"Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." —Lamentations 3:21-23

HEART //

God is in the business of hope and love, compassion and faithfulness. Even in a world filled with much vulnerability and despair, God's nature gives us reason to hope. And as we hope, His open-handedness toward us prompts us to live more generously! The kindness that we experience *vertically*—from God to us—should always become a *horizontal* act of sacrificial love—from us to others.

In our effort to love others well, we can be tempted to either take on too much or too little. When we tend toward taking on too much in our own strength, it's not sustainable. We all know this feeling—relying on our own power, not plugged into the Source, we begin to fade and eventually break down. But when we tend toward taking on too little (or even nothing at all), we miss the incredible opportunity to engage in His work in the world. Sometimes finding the right balance is tricky! There is a better way! We can *be like God*.

Matthew 5:48 says, "Be perfect, therefore, *as your heavenly Father is perfect*" (emphasis added). Perfection, in this sense, means to be simply reflecting the reality and nature of our Father, who is perfect. Though we will undoubtedly stumble, God still calls us to be like ("as") Him—because it is He that will compassionately sustain us day in and day out! We can live compassionately *because of His everlasting compassion toward us*.

We position ourselves rightly when we work for the Kingdom not on our own strength, but on *His*. We receive His grace every morning, an abundance that makes us both willing and able to live with the good of others, and not just ourselves, in mind. God wants to direct our steps, filling us with the hope, love, compassion, and faithfulness necessary to live abundantly for others.

The reality of generous compassion isn't just that those who "have it all together", or have an abundance of material possessions—those who the world may label "perfect"—are those who should be helping others.

Even the most materially poor or brand-new Christians are invited to give and love generously, and Scripture assures us that with selfless generosity comes indescribable joy.

It's that Christians need to be like their heavenly Father. We are invited, by Him, to do what He does. When we simply respond to His compassion toward us, we overflow with relentless compassion. Even the most

materially poor or brand-new Christians are invited to give and love generously, and Scripture assures us that with selfless generosity comes indescribable joy. (See John 12:1-11 for a bit of encouraging proof!)

If you're reading this devotional, you may be a woman who is suffering the trauma of an abortion; you may be someone who has worked tirelessly against abortion and feel out of steam and discouraged; you may be a pastor who knows that this is a serious issue, but has no idea how to engage it. Wherever you are, whatever you have to offer, whatever shame you may currently be carrying—know that it is no accident that you are here. God wants to remind you that "because of His great love, we are not consumed," and He has something for you to learn about *and* to give in the fight against this enormous issue facing our generation.

WORK

Write down your thoughts on this question: *What is one area of your life that you feel you would be "consumed" if it weren't for the Lord's great love?* Be encouraged that God's compassion for you never, ever fails. What does your morning routine look like? **Today's challenge is simply to consider rearranging your morning tomorrow.** No, not your entire day—just your morning. **Plan to wake and pray, worship, journal or meditate on a verse and tap into the compassion of your perfect Father before doing ANYTHING in your own strength.**

DAY 19

Loving the Stranger

"Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering."

—Hebrews 13:1-3

HEART

It's a good and godly thing to love and care for friends and family members, but God doesn't want us to stop there. He asks us to love and care for strangers, too! We should be as loving, as caring, and as provisional toward those that are different from us as we are toward those that are like us. We are called to serve people that look, live, speak, and think differently than we do.

After all, Christ loved us unto death even while we were alienated from Him! Romans 5:8 tells us that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." There couldn't be a bigger difference between two people—between the sinner and Jesus—at the moment when He died on the cross! He is infinitely holy. We are infinitely frail. Jesus loved the stranger to an incomprehensible degree: "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:4-5).

If we, as God's people, really want to establish justice for the unborn, then we cannot be satisfied with only helping people that we know.

If we, as God's people, really want to establish justice for the unborn, then we cannot be satisfied with only helping people that we know. We must be ethnically and socioeconomically diverse with our love, care, and provision. Remember, all people are made in the image of God!

The unsettling facts are: The abortion rate of women on medicaid is 3 times higher than other women. The abortion rate among women of color is 3.5 times that of caucasian women.*

Whatever our neighborhood, social status or skin color, we must all be willing to reach outside of our comfort zones to encounter and support one another—even those who seem like strangers to us. Even though we don't always know first names, God has counted the number of hairs on the head of every passerby (Luke 1:27). He values and attends to all human life. *Will we?*

There is always the temptation to go into a 'camp' mentality, choosing one camp or another and pitting ourselves against those who haven't joined our side. But Jesus is the Lord of all, and He loves and knows those in the other camp! Think of the imagery that God gives us of a body: the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27). There are major differences between an eye and a toe! So many differences in function—and distance, even—that they may feel like strangers to one another, but they are nonetheless a part of the same body.

What better strategy of the enemy than to get parts of the body to work against one another, fighting each other—rather than moving forward in their own gifts and unity? God commands us to love the stranger. Sometimes that's someone who doesn't know Him, and sometimes it's people who are a part of our own body who we just haven't noticed before. Either way, it will take us all, moving forward together, to make an impact on our world.

There's no way for us to know the wonderful plans that God has for women who, in your city today, are considering an abortion. Many are mistreated or feel completely unsupported. What are God's plans for their precious unborn babies? It should be enough for us to know that our Lord made them all wonderfully, that we link arms in order to help them become the people God wants them to be (Psalms 139:14). Let us be people who love like Jesus does, refusing to ignore the stranger.

//WORK

One way that you can support people facing unplanned pregnancies is by supporting a local pregnancy resource centers. The staff members may be strangers to you, but you can still partner with them. By encouraging them with your words, you can bring them a breath of fresh air. The truth of the Scriptures; gift cards; a sticky-note reminder that their work matters to you and to your community—any of these could be exactly what they need on a tough day. Many workers at pregnancy resource centers are bombarded by discouragement in the face of such a huge and complicated problem.

So, in addition to fasting negative speech this week, **send an encouraging note to a pregnancy resource center near you.** As you empty yourself of many unhealthy words, you should also be filling up with Christlike goodness. So, you have encouragement to pour out! Use the power of your words for good. If we really want to effect change in the abortion crisis nationwide, we have to build a tribe that supports each other in a unified, reimagined pro-life voice expressing love, compassion, and action toward those who may be in the crux of making that decision or having already made it.

For encouragement, **check out the blog** of Police Officer Jesse Whitten and wife Ashley, former Save the Storks team members, who share their personal testimony of connecting with a homeless woman and later adopting her baby!

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DAY 20

Knowing God by Living Like Him

“*[Josiah] defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me? declares the LORD.*” —Jeremiah 22:16

HEART //

At this point in the book of Jeremiah, God steps in and speaks to the kings (Jehoiakim and Josiah) that are leading the nation of Judah. He rebukes Jehoiakim for the unrighteous, unjust means that he is using to build his palace. Josiah, on the other hand, has begun to fight for the weak, the needy, and the vulnerable people in Judah, revealing his desire to establish righteousness and justice throughout the land. And so God declares that it is Josiah who knows Him, for all human righteousness and justice stem from the nature of our Creator, God.

God defends the weak, the needy, and the vulnerable. It is *what He does* because it is *who He is*. We, too, must defend these people. It is *what we do* because He is the One *who we worship*. If we know and love God, we can't help but help those in need.

Could there be a weaker, more needy, or more vulnerable human being than an unborn child? Could there be a soul more anxious, a heart more conflicted, than that of a mom who feels like she has no choice but to end the life of her own baby?

Could there be a weaker, more needy, or more vulnerable human being than an unborn child? Could there be a soul more anxious, a heart more conflicted, than that of a mom who feels like she has no choice but to end the life of her own baby?

God grieves the fact that women and children everywhere are hurting in many ways. He doesn't stop at heartbrokenness, though. In the story of Josiah, we see that God's grief always drives Him to action!

Describing the way that the early church honored the image of God, intrinsic to all human beings, author and pastor Tim Keller says,

“They were not [a] one-issue people.” They tried to alleviate the suffering of every group of people. “At that time, most people said that if you are a widow, you've got to remarry. [Believers] were champions of women; they were champions of orphans; they were champions of the weak; they were champions of the poor. And they were against abortion. And they put the rest of the culture to shame because of their belief in the sanctity of life.”*

Surely, the issues of injustice in our world are deep and complex, and it may take generations of change to make a dent in the problems at large. Still, Christians must take action. Because we believe in an all-powerful, compassionate God, we must serve the weak, the needy, and the vulnerable. We defend unborn children and their mothers because that's what God does.

//WORK

There are many ways that we can take up the cause of others. We can be educated on the issues in local communities, around the nation, and throughout the world. We can joyfully adjust our consumerist ways, prioritizing the needs of others over our own luxuries.

Let's take up the cause of abortion-vulnerable women today in a practical way. **Share an online resource that champions mothers.** It could be one of our blog posts, like the one on real freedom of choice (found at the *Reimagining Pro-Life* page), or an article that another pro-life ministry has published.

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You could share it publicly via your favorite social media, or you could simply text a link to a close family member or friend. You don't even have to send it digitally! You could read an article aloud to your kids or a neighbor.

Here's the point: as you forego negative speech this week, make sure that *love*, that *encouragement*, is flowing from your lips. The opposite of negative speech is not silence—though the Bible does commend the ability to be slow to speak! (See passages like James 1:19.) As we saw in today's verse, *speaking like Christ, in defense of the defenseless* is part of knowing God more! What a joy and honor!

DAY 21

How to Love Christ

“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 25:37-40

HEART //

There are a lot of astonishing things going on in this passage. First, Matthew tells us that Jesus will come back. Of that, we can be sure. We can also know that His arrival will be glorious because He is already victorious! Though sin assails us, though perfectly righteous lives evade us, “thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:56).

In the fight for life, we *can* and *should* have a winning mentality, like we discussed in Day 8. Jesus reigns now and always! When we extend compassion to men and women facing an unplanned pregnancy, we can stand resolutely hopeful—regardless of the outcome of our efforts. One victory sustains our every pro-life endeavor: Christ defeated sin and death on the cross, and then He rose to His appointed seat in Heaven beside the Father (Romans 8:2-4; Ephesians 2:6). There is a battle between life and death, and in the end, life wins!

What part is there left for us to play? Loving the vulnerable people that He made in His image is our honor and joy. (Remember Psalm 139?) Pastor Mike Dsane says that “if we’re not careful,” we would read this text and respond by saying, “Okay, if I feed enough hungry people and give away enough clothes and let enough people sleep on my couch, then I’m going to earn the kingdom.”* That’s not what Jesus says! Human effort does not purchase a *ticket* to heaven. No, the

blood of Christ purchased *us*, as Christ alone—not our own righteous ‘doing’—can grant us eternal life.

On the other hand, we may think that our compassion won’t make a difference, but that’s simply untrue. No matter your age, income, amount of free time, number of resources—God wants to use all of it for His Kingdom. We simply our lives at His feet in prayer, asking Him to provide us with the wisdom to know how and where to use our time, money, and resources compassionately for the hungry and thirsty, for strangers and needy people, for the sick and the prisoner. Jesus does not hesitate to identify Himself with the lowly, and we should be quick to see and help others as does the King of the universe. Whether their words and actions declare that He is King or not, their *makeup* does! We can love Christ by loving the people that He made in His likeness.

Jesus does not hesitate to identify Himself with the lowly.

//WORK

Today, make a plan to gather with friends or family to pray together.

An essential aspect of fasting from negative speech is filling our minds and our mouths with the word of God, which always leads us to prayer!

Before your prayer meeting, consider doing some research on the pro-life ministries in your area. God is at work in the lives of the vulnerable and needy. *What are a few things that you and your community can do throughout the rest of Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks to help the pro-life ministries in your area?* Maybe you can give up something that you would normally buy so that you can begin to spend yourself for women facing an unplanned pregnancy and their many needs. Maybe you can volunteer, supply donations, or simply ask them what needs they have!



DAY 22

God's Rescue Strategy

“Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

—Psalms 82:3-4

HEART //

The world esteems the wealthy, the influential and the privileged. In God's economy, it is exactly the opposite. Over and over again in Scripture, God commands His followers to honor and defend the most vulnerable people in society. The Lord doesn't love and fight for us because we are powerful or good. (In fact, we are all poor when it comes to our own righteousness!) The Lord

loves us because it's who He is. Similarly, we actively love others because it's who we are in Christ.

Over and over again in Scripture, God commands His followers to honor and defend the most vulnerable people in society.

The people who cannot speak up or fight for themselves are special in His sight. Jesus urged us to

treat our hungry and needy neighbors with dignity. Why? Well, just think back to yesterday's verse. What we do to “the least” of the people in the world, we do unto Him (Matthew 25:46).

As Christians, we are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). We should be so astounded by what was purchased on the cross that we want to bring this Good News to all people. When the world looks at us, they should not remember us in terms of the sports that we play; the universities that we attend; the quality of our pictures on social media; or the sizes of our houses. The world should be struck by the way that we spend ourselves on behalf of the weak, just as Christ spent Himself on behalf of us—we who are weak apart from Jesus.

Psalms 140:12 tells us that God alone secures justice for the poor and upholds their cause, and today's passage calls *us into that work*.

Often, God secures justice through us. We are to defend defend the unborn by proclaiming the truth about the value of life, beginning with conception, and to speak that message with love, compassion and action, while praying that those who have ears will hear. A message delivered in this manner is able to speak to the abortion-minded as well as those who have had abortions, or support or perform abortion and, by the beautiful grace of God, hearts and minds can be changed.

Jesus calls us out of passivity. In our sinful selfishness, we often want to separate ourselves from the brokenness around us. God calls us to be different. He wants us to see people, and then He wants us to meet them with compassionate action. God so loved the world that He GAVE (John 3:16). When we call ourselves by His name, we must urgently do the same.

//WORK

How profound has it been for you to fast negative speech? We hope that it is starting to hit you how differently the world would view the pro-life movement if compassion and love—rather than anger, judgment, and gossip—flowed from our mouths. It's heartbreaking to think that many abortion-vulnerable women do not feel as if their lives are valued by the those in the church. Our words and actions can change that.

Today, as Compassion Week comes to a close, write down your thoughts about your experience fasting negative speech. Do you feel like you have made any necessary moves from judgment (of others or of yourself) to compassion when it comes to abortion? How about other areas of your life or ministry?

Please, watch the video of Victoria Robinson, with Save the Storks, who works diligently to bring hope to expectant (and unexpected) mothers. Her testimony reminds us that there are women and men suffering from the repercussions of abortion all around us—in our churches and communities—and how powerful reaching out with love can be.

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Faith with Action

DAY 23

Faith With Action

“Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” —James 2:15-17

HEART // Imagine that you have a friend who calls herself a musician. She is constantly talking about music. She goes to concerts almost every week and frequently reads magazines and articles that detail the makings of a great artist. Even after years of knowing her, though, you have never actually seen her play an instrument. You start questioning if she is even a musician at all! She may be highly educated and passionate about listening to the hums and strums of others—but she isn’t really a musician if she does not create music for herself.

As Christ followers, we often find ourselves in a similar conflict. We surround ourselves with the *sounds* of Christ-following—diligent devotionals, moving music, prayerful podcasts, spirited sermons. These are good and godly things, but in order to live on-mission for Christ, we have to get past mere head-knowledge of Him. We must also overflow with the *acts* of Christ-following! If we never actually do what Christ did, how can people possibly know that we are His followers?

If we never actually do what Christ did, how can people possibly know that we are His followers?

Love, like faith, manifests itself in what we do. We cannot say that we love the lost or that we care for abortion-minded women and the unborn if we do no nothing to meet their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs (1 John 3:18).

As we enter this final week and final challenge of *Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks*, let's review just a bit from our previous weeks! Letting go of our preconceived notions, judgments, past mistakes and fears gives us space to engage with this issue of life in our generation with love and compassion. As Christians, we are defined by love and compassion. This means being willing to “suffer with” another—seeing and staying with them in their process or pain.

We will spend our last week together remembering the various ways we can truly impact lives when we live with intentionality, on a mission to love others, as the collective Body of Christ!



//WORK

In matters of faith and love, there is no such thing as a ‘passive Christian.’ This week, we want to encourage you to put your faith into action by empathizing with women who have found themselves in the predicament of an unplanned pregnancy, in particular.

For these women, the burdens that accompany this dilemma are real, but they are mainly social and economic situations* that, as a church, we can strive to impact in our own communities through generosity, teaching and discipleship. Many times someone facing parenthood when they don't feel ready can't shake feelings of loneliness, possibly being at odds with their partner, family or communities that had once stood by their side. They can also feel fear, not knowing how to navigate this unexpected turn of events, or experience great anxiety, questioning how they will be able to provide for their child. Can you imagine the burdens these babies would carry if they could understand the gravity of their parent's decision to keep *or not keep* them—like the weight of being voiceless, unwanted, and without a defender.

So, here's your fast for this week. To empathize with families considering abortion, **acquire an assortment of stones, rocks, or bricks.** Make sure they're large enough to write on, because you'll **write on them the specific burdens that abortion-vulnerable mothers carry.** Include anything that has come to your mind and heart over the course of your *30 Days with Save the Storks* so far. (Look back over your journal!) **Then, fill a backpack or bag of choice with the stones, rocks, or bricks you've named with burdens. Carry that bag with you wherever you go!**

It could be for an hour, for a day, or even for the remainder of our thirty days together—if you're feeling strong and brave, that is! The point is to **stand in solidarity with women facing an unplanned pregnancy and the child they carry.**

As you do this, journal about what it would be like to spend every day carrying these physical, emotional, mental, relational, and/or spiritual burdens.



DAY 24

Bear Each Other's Burdens

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ...Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” —Galatians 6:2, 9-10

HEART //

If you’ve resolved to put your faith into action, as yesterday’s verse (James 2:15-17) counsels all believers to do, then you’re probably asking yourself, “So, what’s next? How can I myself go on mission for Christ today?”

Today’s verses provide an answer fitting for all believers, on any day of the week. Even if you have little in your bank account, even if you’re running low on steam, you have the grand, life-giving privilege of bearing the burdens of others. Now, to the world, that statement is paradoxical. It’s downright crazy! Yet we know that “the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight” (1 Cor. 3:19), and so we cling to the truth that we find life when we give our lives away.

The apostle Paul’s challenge here makes so much sense when we see ourselves as part of the Body of Christ. Whenever one part of the family of believers is suffering, the health of the whole Body is impacted! Jesus gives us insight into the reality and power of this image when He prays for us, for all believers, near the end of His life on earth in John 17:20-23. He emphasizes unity for all believers, in the same way that He and the Father are unified. If we take these words seriously, then carrying the burdens of our fellow believers (and those we hope will become believers!) is of utmost importance.

In a 1983 sermon on Galatians 6, pastor and author John Piper said, “Here is a vocation that will bring you more satisfaction than if you became a millionaire ten times over: Develop the extraordinary skill for detecting the burdens of others and devote yourself daily to making them lighter.”* Now *that* is a special calling.

Devoting ourselves daily to detecting and lessening the burdens of our brothers and sisters (literally, or in the Body of Christ) can be as simple as the classic example of walking an elderly person across the street with their groceries. But it can also mean looking for the deep, systemic flaws in the systems of our world and working toward lifting those burdens, in any way we can, and encouraging others to do the same. If we truly believe that spending ourselves on behalf of others—in obedience to Christ and in line with His perfect law of love (John 13:34-35)—is the path to everlasting joy, then any opportunity to see a need and meet it is a beautiful gift.

//WORK

Yesterday, you began to develop this extraordinary skill, stepping into a Spirit-filled calling, as you acknowledged the burdens (in your rock-writing) with which a woman considering an abortion contends. As you continue to empathize with her physically, carrying that heavy bag throughout our last week together, we pray that you would not become weary. **Rather, ask God to open your eyes to the unique opportunities He has placed before you to bear the burdens of others.**

We want to invite you to do one other thing today, and it’s going to be good. **Make a plan to talk to a mature believer sometime this week.** Make sure it’s someone who’s counsel you trust! When you meet with him or her, **ask that person about the ways that he or she lives out Galatians 6. Then, pray with that person,** asking God to guide you both toward more and more opportunities to bear the burdens of others.

Before you go, check out our short video of Thomas Kim, with Save the Storks, and his wife, Soo. They are a beautiful example of mature believers who show us through their passion and story that there are so many ways to serve! They remind us that as followers of Christ, we believe that every child deserves life and a loving family. It is our duty and honor to carry the burdens of those who have had the opportunity to be born, but are suffering in a system still lacking that loving family.

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DAY 25

Follow Me

“Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.’ At once they left their nets and followed him.”

—Matthew 4:19-20

HEART //

When Jesus called the first disciples, He asked them to give up everything that they had ever known. And there must have been something incredibly compelling about His presence, His call, His invitation...because they immediately “left their nets and followed Him.” Here, a net symbolizes one’s career, income, ambition, and resources. In essence, for a first-century disciple to drop his net was for him to destabilize his entire life.

Why did Jesus’ first disciples risk everything for Him? Because any plans (even great ones!) we make, or we fall into, pale in comparison to the invitation to follow Him. There’s just nothing like the joy of being with Christ! (Phillipians 3:7-9)

Following Jesus has life-changing implications for everyone. He calls us to die to ourselves, finding a new identity and life in His Kingdom. After all, God sent His Son to the world on a rescue mission: Jesus came to bring hope to the hopeless, He came to seek and to save the lost, and He came to gather His people.

When Jesus called the first disciples, He was offering for them to join Him on this mission. He asks us to join Him, too. It’s an invitation to join Him on His rescue mission, and there could be no brighter, higher, or happier journey for anyone to take! Why? *Because we get to be with Jesus.* The Great Commission reassures us of this glorious truth. Jesus says, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

Have you dropped your net just yet?

So often, we only follow Jesus when it works for us. Sure, we enjoy glimpsing His glory in Scripture—but just on days that we have enough

‘free time.’ Yes, we pray—mostly when our pastors give us five quiet minutes before receiving communion. These are good, necessary aspects of the Christian life, but think about this for a moment: Could it be that we are compulsively grasping onto our nets, only going on mission when it feels safe enough for us?

If our obedience to Christ includes going to church, reading our Bibles, and regularly praying, yet we do not willfully sacrifice our lives for the good of others, then we are not following Jesus to the fullest capacity. He welcomes us to follow Him in doing crucial redemptive work in the most difficult of places.

As you carry a bit of an extra burden around this week, ask yourself: Have you followed Christ to every place He may be inviting you to bring light? Maybe to pray outside of an abortion clinic—asking the Holy Spirit to minister to those hurting women and impact their decision to end the life inside of them? We sometimes think, *That’s for activists, not Christians.* By now, we hope that you have begun to see the way that championing the unborn is primarily Kingdom work. During the next few days of Mission Week, we want to explore with you what it means to walk with Christ and *like Christ*—leaving our nets behind us and stepping in love toward people who are hurting, or even people we may not relate to or agree with.

//WORK

Today, spend a few minutes looking through the Gospels in your Bible (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) and find a few things that Jesus called His followers to do. **Make a list of His commands in your journal so that you can keep adding to it throughout our last week together.** (If you need a headstart, check out Matthew 5-7 and John 13-15.)

Have you given your life to Jesus the way the disciples in the New Testament do? Many still worked, lived with families, and did all of the ‘normal’ things that those of us who do not live a life of full-time ministry do. Dropping your net doesn’t always mean giving up the path God has you (and your family) on, but it at least means being willing to follow Him anywhere He asks. He may lead you into places that get the head-nod: vocations of choice, business success, generosity, and healthy relationships. He may also veer you toward the things this world may not understand—like personal sacrifice, costly compassion, and high standards of purity. The invitation is yours. Today Jesus is saying to you, “Come, follow me.” What a moment, what a call, and what a King.

DAY 26

Bring Your Loaves

“Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, ‘Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?’ Jesus said, ‘Have the people sit down.’ There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.” —John 6:8-11

HEART //

When Jesus fed the five thousand, He took ‘not enough’ and made it into *more than enough*. At first, all that the disciples could see was a huge problem. Jesus saw an opportunity. He used the tiny offering of a little boy to make a monumental difference. The little boy had what we like to call ‘youthful enthusiasm’—the imaginative energy that children and young people often possess, even in the face of gloomy circumstances. He didn’t know what could come of his underwhelming offering, but he did something that many of us miss: he simply stayed close to Jesus. Carrying around his simple lunch, that mundane thing he was given, or worked for, or that he

needed for his day, *plus following Jesus* equaled a miracle.

It’s easy to feel like we do not have ‘enough’ to offer to Jesus: enough time, enough resources, enough energy, enough money. We often compare ourselves to others and ask why we even matter. What we

He didn’t know what could come of his underwhelming offering, but he did something that many of us miss: he simply stayed close to Jesus.

must realize is that He alone takes our short (and often, seemingly insignificant) lives and uses them in His cosmic plan to change the world! All that Jesus asks of us is to be willing. We must stay close to Him and readily give all that we have to Him, fully confident that He

is capable of doing great things with ordinary people. There is always enough to go around when Jesus is around. Because of the great God we serve, abundance can and should be our attitude—even if what we have to offer doesn’t look like much!

All throughout Scripture, God uses normal—and even inadequate!—people to carry out His mighty works. He used a shepherd boy to lead Israel in His ways; He used a teenage girl to birth His own Son; and He used some common fishermen to start the early Church. Look to the Bible when you need a strong reminder of God’s ability to make ‘meager’ into ‘mighty.’ He can take the most normal things in our hands and turn them into a miracle for us and for others.

So, what’s in your hands?

//WORK

Often, God uses the overwhelmingly ordinary to bless the many. What small or ordinary things of yours—your talents, resources, or gifts—might God want to use as a blessing in the lives of others? Make a list in your journal. No matter how inadequate you may feel, you can be sure that God can and will use your small ‘loaves’ for the Kingdom. All you need *to DO* is *to BE* willing!

As you carry around your bag of burdens this week, remember how blessed you are. **Ask God to reveal the ways that you can give whatever simple gift you may be carrying in your life to help abortion-minded people or pregnancy resource centers in your area.** In order to best encourage women to make life-affirming choices, we have to be willing to come through for them practically. Being willing means our desire to offer hope and love leads to bringing ourselves and our resources into the lives of those in need. We encourage them to make a choice for life because we will come alongside them in that decision, by helping to sustain life through the variety of life-affirming options available at pregnancy resource centers and even through our own sacrificial giving. Get to know the pregnancy center in your community! Many offer more than just free ultrasounds and pregnancy tests, but

also diapers, baby clothes, formula, parenting classes, counseling or budgeting classes. Some even do free or low-cost prenatal care. How can you offer whatever is in your hands to whatever good work God may have already planted in your city?

Be encouraged—you won't be the very first 'ordinary' person that God will use to do extraordinary things in the fight for life. Read the story of Hannah, a mom who received a terminal diagnosis for her baby, and how simply caring for her child, come what may, is a powerful example of dignity, life, and love for all who hear their story.

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DAY 27

Hope for Two

“When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him, ‘My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.’ So Jesus went with him... While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. ‘Your daughter is dead,’ they said. ‘Why bother the teacher anymore?’ Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe.’” —Mark 5:21-24, 35-36

HEART //

Can we really offer hope someone navigating the challenges of an unplanned pregnancy? Can we really make a difference in the lives of the unborn? Can we even make a dent in the abortion crisis? Often, these are the kinds of questions that pop into our minds as soon as Christ begins to soften our hearts toward the suffering of others. Negative statistics quickly overwhelm us, and we feel as if we cannot possibly effect change.

But, progress is being made!

The proportion of teen pregnancies that end in abortion has declined by a third from 1986 to 2008, from 46% to 31%. In 2013, the abortion rate among 15- to 19-year-olds was the lowest rate since abortion was legalized.*

And based on a recent survey, Roland C. Warren, president and CEO of Care Net, a Christ-centered pregnancy resource network said, “While much work needs to be done to equip the church to help women and men with their pregnancy decisions, there are positive signs that many churches will be receptive to efforts to implement programming that addresses this need.”**

Hope is alive. Jesus tells us, “Don’t be afraid, just believe.” In Mark 5, we watch Him make a life-changing difference for two different individuals: Jairus and his daughter. Even though a large crowd was pressing in all around Him, He zeroed in on Jairus’ plea on behalf of his daughter. Jesus could have been overwhelmed by the raucous of the masses or the busyness of His wider ministry across Galilee. He chose to focus instead on just two people in need. To them He gave His attention, and even when another need popped up along His path, and the timing seemed off and all seemed lost, Jesus was not too late to do what He wanted to do in Jairus’ family that day.

Every time that we provide hope to a woman who is tempted to believe that abortion is her only option, we are actually administering compassion-for-two, just as Jesus does in today’s verse. We *can* make a difference in the lives of others, even just one or two people at a time! God may not be calling you or your family to adopt ten children or to build a flourishing pregnancy resource center from the ground up. He *has* given you the resources to bring His hope and His healing to at least a few scared and confused pregnant mothers, though!

The award winning song, “When You Believe” (from the 1996 movie *The Prince of Egypt*) says, “Though hope is frail, it’s hard to kill.” As we reimagine the pro-life movement in our generation, we have much to celebrate, much to grieve and much to hope for in the future. Whether in the issue at large or in our own lives, sometimes hope can seem frail. When we miss an opportunity, make a mistake or feel the darkness creeping in as our light flickers, we may wonder where God is. But the answer is always the same. He is near. Even when Jesus was “not near enough” from Jairus’ perspective, and despair overwhelmed him, Jesus came through. Hope in Him and we may sometimes be frail, but total loss is truly impossible. Our timing may not be His, but in one way or another, He always comes through.

WORK

Instead of getting bogged down by the seeming impossibility of countering the abortion crisis of today, we want you to focus on the words of Jesus in Mark 5: “*Don’t be afraid; just believe.*” With Jairus, let’s be fearless. Let’s believe that Christ is fully capable of doing miraculous things despite grave circumstances. After all, graves have nothing on our God.

Pause to watch the inspiring video of Hannah*, a young mother who made the brave choice to let go of unhealthy patterns, find her identity in God, and walk in unconditional love for herself and her child.

*This is a different Hannah than yesterday’s blog post

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Remember that for every abortion-vulnerable woman in the world who faces anxiety, loneliness, helplessness, or despair—God has a unique story for her as well as for that precious life that she carries.

Pray that God would remove your fears in the face of the travesty of abortion, replacing them with lasting hope and belief in Him. Light will rise in darkness. Hope will come. You are simply called to receive this sometimes frail hope in your own heart and then share it with others.

Bring light and hope to others today through prayer. **Open up the bag that you have been carrying around, and remove a few rocks, stones, or bricks from it.**

As you do, pray over the specific burdens that you wrote down on them, fully confident that God can and will bring light and hope to abortion-minded women around the world.



DAY 28

Speak Up!

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

—Proverbs 31:8-9

HEART //

Speaking up for both the unborn and abortion-vulnerable moms is one way that we value all human life. Standing in the gap for the poor and needy means more than social media posts and going to the polls. It’s being the hands and feet of Jesus through the work of the local church and responding to the needs of our brothers and sisters facing unplanned pregnancies with the passion, forgiveness and love of Jesus.

Historically, the Church and those involved in the pro-life movement have struggled on top of a slippery slope—sliding down one side into hateful speech and judgment, or toppling down the other side, trying to please all parties with hopeless passivity. This balance can be hard to find, but is so important. In the early pro-life movement, we can look back and see that while our intentions were honorable, the aggressive methods used may have had unintended consequences of pushing people further away.

Dominick Brignola, Esq, Founder of Alight Care Center in Troy, NY beautifully and graciously shares his experience in finding this balance:

“The pro-life rescue movement of the 80s energized us to employ civil disobedience to close the doors of abortion clinics. At the time it was what we thought was needed to awaken the soul of our nation to the horror of abortion. There was never any hostility in our hearts or actions towards women seeking an abortion, but the way we went about closing clinic doors was confrontational and resulted in closed hearts. After a legal battle with Planned Parenthood and contemplating next steps for pro-life activists, I came to understand that if we were going

to follow Jesus’ example, we had to figure out a way to start opening doors—not closing them. He said of Himself: “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” (John 10:9). That just stuck with me as something to model without exception.”

“...if we were going to follow Jesus’ example, we had to figure out a way to start opening doors—not closing them.”

Now, in partnership with Save the Storks, Alight Care Center uses a mobile ultrasound van, and its sliding door is meant to be opened!

Dominick continues, “Behind that van door lies truth and nonjudgmental support from a dedicated staff looking to assist anyone facing an unplanned pregnancy.”

While we pray that abortion clinics doors will continue to close by the power of God, an attitude *exclusively* focused on “closing doors” can miss the opportunity to open doors to conversations, friendships, and changed hearts.

Today’s verse reminds us that we are called, as followers of Christ, to defend the rights of those in need, but we are not alone! Jesus who died and was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also “interceding for us” (Romans 8:34). He is present with us even as we do the hard work of speaking up for justice in love.

Let’s show up and speak up, like a light on a hill (Matthew 5:14). We shine most brightly as humble children of our Creator, who simply cannot stay silent on the topic of life in the womb.

//WORK

We outwardly defend what we internally champion. Today, we want you to speak up, showing the God-given value of life in the womb. **Start a humble and open conversation with someone—one of your friends or family members about the burdens of moms and babies vulnerable to abortion.** You could share a statistic or an encouraging story. (We have plenty available on savethestorks.com) Use your voice, your words—and be sure it isn’t on social media this time. As you carry the bag of burdens today, you could even use it as an opportunity to tell people about what you are doing and why you are doing it.

Pray that as people hear these things, you would learn something—and so would the other person. Pray that they too would be moved to value the voiceless. **Pray that they would be moved to act as advocates, just as today's verse instructs us to.**

Check out the follow up story on Hannah, who we met in yesterday's video! Her youth group is an amazing example of speaking up and serving in a meaningful way!

Find all *Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks* videos and blogs at www.savethestorks.com/reimagine



DAY 29

Finish the Race

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.” —Acts 20:24

HEART // When Paul spoke these words in Acts 20, he surely did not mean that human life is worthless. Humanity bears a distinct mark of the Creator (Genesis 1:26–27; Psalm 139), and our bodies are vessels capable of worshiping Him (Romans 12:1–2). Rather, what Paul expresses is the overwhelming value of the Lord Jesus in comparison to everything else! For him, Christ is all-satisfying. And so Paul wants to do nothing more than to show others that Christ is all-satisfying. That’s his only aim: to share the Good News.

All Christians are Gospel (‘Good News’) messengers. It’s a task that comes with both honor and humility. Honor, because there is no greater or more joyful duty for a human being. Humility, because ‘the Self’ has to get out of the way so that the glory of Christ can shine. We must take our work seriously (*honor*), but we must not take ourselves too seriously (*humility*). As Rick Warren once famously said, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less. Humility is thinking more of others.”*

As Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks comes to a close tomorrow, we pray that you leave entirely serious about taking the Good News of the Gospel to the most broken of places—spaces like the anxious minds of abortion-vulnerable women, or the pain-soaked hearts of post-abortive mothers or fathers.

President Theodore Roosevelt once said, “Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.”** There is a race being run in each of our lives. It’s a task given to us by Jesus Himself. As you practice that task of sharing the Gospel, discern specifically how that plays out in your life and run with a perseverance that can easily forget the cares of this world. Anticipate the joy of joining Jesus in work worth doing (Hebrews 12:2)!

WORK

As we come to the end of our journey, on which we have learned to spend ourselves, one question probably remains for you: “How can I continue to go on mission for God once *30 Days with Save the Storks* ends?” Well, just read Acts 20:24 again! Be encouraged that no matter what your life looks next week, your task remains the same: share the Gospel.

Not only should we want the Gospel to spread far and wide, but we should also want it to expand for a long, long time! Therefore, we should be eager to impact current and future generations. Lord willing, young people have a lot of life to live, so they have much Good News to give.

How have the fasts changed the eyes of your heart? What have you learned about the reimagined pro-life movement? In what ways do you plan to continue your Kingdom work with the unborn specifically in mind?

Spend a few minutes journaling about your experience throughout the last thirty days. How have the fasts changed the eyes of your heart? What have you learned about the reimagined pro-life movement? In what ways do you plan to continue your Kingdom work with the unborn specifically in mind? After you’re done, **share your thoughts with a person younger than you. Ask how he or she has typically thought about abortion.** Through just

one conversation, you could positively impact a young person’s views on pro-life. Like a relay race runner, you can pass the ‘speaking-the-truth-in-love’ baton onto someone. Even after your race is complete, you can help another to continue running! Only God knows how many people he or she could bring His hope and light to in the future!

Enjoy our video of Thomas and Soo Kim sharing about the perspective and passion that come through experiencing a “culture of death”. Thomas’ work in the military, recognizing the importance and value of life in dangerous life and death situations fuels their involvement with the pro-life movement and has prepared them for serving the pro-life message with the Body of Christ in both the United States and in Korea.

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DAY 30

Mission Possible

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

—James 1:27

HEART

Our prayer is that today, as you wrap up *Reimagining Pro-Life: 30 Days with Save the Storks*, you would be *brave enough* to open your eyes and to continue asking yourself hard questions: “How can I remain pure in my devotion to God, willing to *let go* of all that hinders me? How is my *identity* influenced by the love of God? What people in my life and the world can I serve with *compassion*? How would my specific *mission* in life look if I were not so afraid or self-focused?”

It takes courage to open our eyes. As Karen Swallow Prior, professor at Liberty University points out, “One must be vulnerable to suffering some kind of injury in order to be considered courageous. If facing difficulty were the only thing required of courage, then all a would-be hero would have to do is create obstacles to overcome, and voilà!—courage would be born.”*

The many cultural and political opinions that surround abortion make it vulnerable for Christians to grapple with. Regardless, God *must* rule and reign over the issue. We hope that He has shown you how to be thankful for the truth and hope that He has given you. We also pray that you remember the ways that He has called you to be *compassionate* at the same time. Whenever we open our eyes to the complex world around us, God—His Word, His love—must remain the lens through which we look.

God has placed you where you are for a reason. He has given you gifts, talents, and passions to display His glory and to do good to those around you. Go to the office, study at school, and do work around your home with *your eyes fixed on Christ* and *your service centered*

on others. Stay energized and innovative in your efforts to bring Jesus Christ, who is the Living Water, to women—or men—struggling with an unplanned pregnancy. Continue to ask pro-life ministries near and far how you can use your life to bless them. Keep having those conversations with other believers about what it means to be and to act in a Christ-like pro-life manner.

We believe that you can stand up against the wave of cultural norms and political pressures (from either side!) that try to overtake you. You can help create a 'new normal' within your generation. You can

You can help create a 'new normal' within your generation.

let go. You can be secure in who you are in God—rather than needing to look successful or powerful in order to feel good about yourself. You can be strong enough to co-suffer with those in different circumstances than yours.

You can love well, serving God's Kingdom, rather than just building your own. You can do all of this as a child of God—because in your weakness, He is strong (2 Corinthians 12:9). *This* is pure religion. It is giving life to the vulnerable and receiving a greater life than you could have imagined in return.



WORK

What are the big ideas God has taught you during your *30 Days with Save the Storks*? **Journal about them!** God has called you to a life that is spent on behalf of others. (Remember Isaiah 58:10 from Day 1?) How do you plan to take the lessons you have learned these thirty days and implement them in your life?

How do you plan to take the lessons you have learned these thirty days and implement them in your life?

J. I. Packer once said, "Knowing God is a relationship calculated to thrill a person's heart."** As you have gotten to know more

of His heart through the reading of His word, we hope that your heart has been thrilled with energy, innovation, and truth. Throughout the past thirty days, we hope that God has inspired you to live differently. We pray that you feel ready and eager to bring His light, His nourishment, and His guidance to the people in our society that need Him the most.

It's up to you to take the next step. We challenge you to continue laying down your own life (that others might find life), all the while inviting others to do the same. We invite you to remember to prioritize truthful, loving speech that seeks to build others up amidst a culture that praises self-aggrandizing talk. We hope you will answer Jesus' call to bear the burdens of those caught in the trap of believing that abortion is the only option for dealing with an unplanned pregnancy by speaking the truth to life: that the child that is inside of them is fearfully and wonderfully made and is worthy of being given a chance of life on this earth, and to do that not just for thirty days—but for a lifetime. Together, let's reimagine a pro-life movement that inspires our culture to serve and celebrate every life, no matter the circumstance, through love, compassion and action.

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APPENDIX

Day 1

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Back Cover

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