

Option 3 – Going Wholehearted, Part 2

(appropriate for High School Graduates)

Michael R. Daily January 2017

Other youth bible studies by Michael Daily available at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

This lesson is part 2 of a series on “Going Wholehearted” in the Christian life.

Wholehearted: *completely and sincerely devoted, determined, or enthusiastic; marked by complete earnest commitment; free from all reserve or hesitation*

To create a picture of what it means to be wholehearted we are looking at the seven churches of Revelation to understand how Jesus evaluated them. If we create a list of all the things Jesus said they were doing right and then add to the list the opposite of all the things Jesus said they were doing wrong, then we should be able to get a realistic picture of what it means to be wholehearted. In part 1 we looked at the church at Ephesus. A list of characteristics of the Wholehearted from the Church at Ephesus is below:

Characteristics of the Wholehearted (from Ephesus)

- 1) They do not leave their first love
- 2) Their deeds result from their relationship with God
- 3) They hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans – false teachers who teach licentiousness / sexual immorality.
- 4) They put to the test those who call themselves apostles
- 5) They do not tolerate evil men
- 6) They toil, persevere and endure for His Name’s sake and do not grow weary

As we continue our study of the other churches in Revelation we will add to this list as new characteristics are found but we won’t repeat those characteristics that we have already studied. When we are done studying all seven churches we will have a more complete list of what being wholehearted in the Christian life looks like.

The Church At Smyrna

Smyrna was an ancient Greek city located at a strategic point on the Aegean coast of what today is the nation of Turkey. The name of the city was changed to Izmir, Turkey in 1930 and it is now the third most populous city in Turkey with close to 3 million residents. Due to its advantageous port conditions, its ease of defense, and its good inland connections, Smyrna rose to prominence during the Roman Empire. Most of the present-day remains of the ancient city date from the Roman era, the majority from after a 2nd-century AD earthquake. The core of the late Hellenistic and early Roman Smyrna is preserved in the large area of İzmir Agora Open Air Museum.

Christians in Smyrna were experiencing severe persecution resulting in material poverty, imprisonment, and death. Note that Jesus had nothing critical to say about them!

Revelation 2:9-10

‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Characteristics of the Wholehearted (from Smyrna)

- 1) They endure tribulation, poverty, and the blasphemy of non-believers
- 2) They suffer imprisonment and testing without fear
- 3) They are faithful unto death
- 4) They look forward to receiving eternal rewards for their faithfulness to Christ

Smyrna was a large, important city on the western coast of Asia Minor (i.e. Turkey), famed for its schools of medicine and science. Most likely the “synagogue of satan” was a group of ethnic Jews who followed tradition and the Mosaic Law yet in reality did not know God. They were not Jews in the sense that they did not have the faith of their father Abraham, and they were “of satan” in that they had rejected Jesus Christ. Paul differentiates “true” (spiritual) Jews from those who can only claim a physical connection to Abraham:

(Romans 2:28-29)

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Polycarp (a disciple of the Apostle John) was martyred in Smyrna around A.D. 155. At Polycarp’s trial, the unbelieving Jews of Smyrna joined with the pagans in condemning him to death. Eusebius writes that “the Jews, being especially zealous . . . ran to procure fuel” for the burning (*The Ecclesiastical History* 4:15).

They endure tribulation, poverty, and the blasphemy of non-believers

Some people think that life is supposed to be mostly a time of smooth sailing and pleasantness with some occasional rough spots along the way. In reality, the Christian lives in enemy territory. Life is mostly tribulations of one type or another with occasional smooth spots here and there. Earth is not Heaven!

John 16:33

These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

Acts 14:21-22

After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”

Romans 8:35-39

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, “For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 12:9-13

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.*¹⁰ *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹ not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³ contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

Hebrews 10:32-34

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, ³³ partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. ³⁴ For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

Luke 6:22-23

Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. ²³ Be glad in that day and leap *for joy*, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

They suffer imprisonment and testing without fear

(Hebrews 13:3)

Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, *and* those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.

They are faithful unto death and they look forward to receiving eternal rewards for their faithfulness to Christ
You are on a tourist trip somewhere in the Middle East. Its evening and you are on a bus traveling down some city streets.

All of a sudden a large group of men come out of a 20 story building, dressed in black, with coverings over their heads and faces, and surround the bus. Each one is carrying a machine gun and is shouting "Allahu Akbar". They tell everyone to get off the bus and line up. One man starts questioning people, one at a time.

He asks a person well ahead of you, "Are you Muslim?" The person says, "Yes". The man then says, "Quote the verses you have memorized from the Koran!" But the person doesn't know any. So, two of the other gunmen take the person away, out of your site.

Its getting dark now and as the first gunman starts questioning the next person, you hear a gunshot in the distance. Then the next ten people in front of you are able to successfully quote verses from the Koran.

Now its your turn. "Are you Muslim?" What do you say? "No, I am a follower of Jesus Christ". As four of the gunmen grab you, you hear some yelling from the building. It's the group's leader. He's telling the gunmen not to waste bullets. Bullets are expensive.

The four gunmen push and pull you into the building and start walking you up the steps. While they are taking you up the steps they tell you not to worry, you will be OK, because today you will become a Muslim.

At the top of the stairs they open a door and now you are standing on the roof of the 20 story building. As you look over the edge of the roof you can see that it is a straight drop 20 stories down to the concrete street below.

"Now, you must become a Muslim." The gunman says. "Renounce Christ and worship Allah and we will be your brothers." You say, "No. Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior and He can also save you from your sins".

"If you don't become Muslim you must die. We don't want to kill you, my brother. Turn to Allah and he will forgive you, for Allah is great and merciful".

"No. Jesus Christ is God. He came from heaven to pay for your sins by dying on the cross as a man. Ask Him and He will give you eternal life as a free gift."

Two of the gunmen seemed stunned, but another one pulls out a large knife and presses it to your throat. "If you don't worship Allah right now we must throw you off the roof. What is your decision?"

What would you do in this situation? What kinds of thoughts would be going through your mind?

Isn't Allah just a different name for the same God we worship? No. It's not. What about Peter. He denied Christ and still went to heaven. Why don't you do what Peter did? Deny Christ. You will still go to heaven.

Are we willing to die for Christ? Its easy to say we would but how do we know for sure? What can we do now to prepare for such a situation? At Columbine High School in 1999, Valeen Schnurr was questioned as to her belief in God by Eric Harris (one of the two shooters) during the shooting. The world is changing. Even in the US, dying for Christ may become more likely over the next 60 years.

John 16:1-2

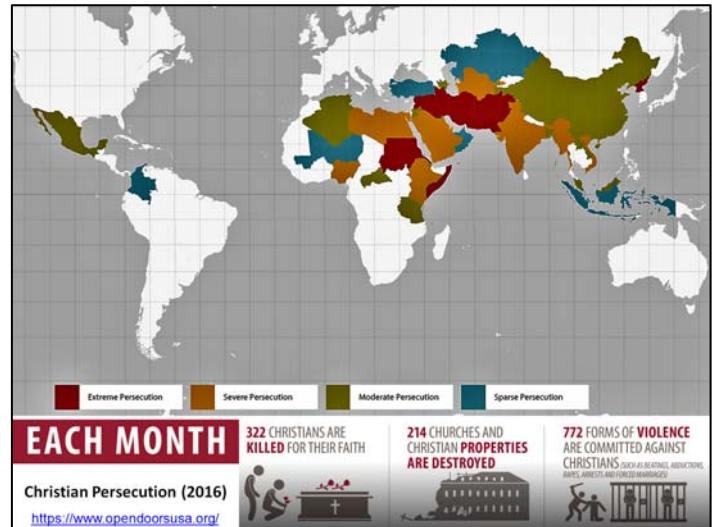
“These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. ² They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.

This prophecy made by Jesus 2,000 years ago is now being fulfilled. There are people in the world today who believe that the best way to serve God is to kill you! They believe that God will give them rewards in heaven for killing you. That’s a powerful motivation.

According to Open Doors Ministry, somewhere in the world, every month 322 Christians are killed for their faith, 214 churches are destroyed, and 772 Christians are attacked and injured because they are Christians.

The map on the right shows the countries where the more severe persecution of Christians is occurring.

<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/>



Matthew 24:9-10

“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. ¹⁰ At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.

Not everyone is going to remain faithful to Christ in these situations. Many will fall away and renounce Christ. And then they will give your name to the killers so they can come and get you too.

(Matthew 10:28)

Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

But some will remain faithful unto death because they fear God more than men, and they love God more than their own lives.

Revelation 12:10-11

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. ¹¹ And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

As we die, God wants us to be His witnesses. It is not a time to cower or beg for our lives or to try to fight back. What kind of testimony would that be? Before we die we are to share the gospel with our killers.

Romans 14:7-8

For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; ⁸ for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s.

Revelation 6:9-11

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; ¹⁰ and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” ¹¹ And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

God has ordained that some of us Christians will die for Him. Why? Because it has a purpose. It may be that the only way a radical Muslim or other person who kills Christians will ever hear the gospel is from you, during the few minutes before they kill you. You are going to be OK. You will die and go to heaven. But they are not OK. They are destined to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire without Christ. This short time with you may be a rare chance for them to hear about salvation in Christ.

How can we become people who are willing to die for Christ? We have to believe its worth it – because it is.

(Philippians 1:20-21)

according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Dying for Christ is much better for us than living with the shame of renouncing Him.

Revelation 2:10

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

There is a special “Medal of Honor” for those who persevere under trial, which includes dying for Christ. It is one of the 5 Eternal Crowns. These are special awards for faithful service in 5 areas of life. Each crown has a name. The one we are talking about tonight is called the “Crown of Life”.

For a detailed study on Eternal Rewards and the Five Crowns please see the study, “Eternal Rewards – Compilation”, available at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

James 1:12

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

Every soldier has medals, some have a few and some have a lot. But there is one type of medal that is far above every other medal. That is the Congressional Medal of Honor. Very few soldiers receive these. Every Christian will receive eternal rewards, some a few and some a lot. But there is a type of reward far above the other types of rewards. These are the 5 Eternal Crowns. One of these crowns is the Crown of Life. Not every Christian will receive a crown. Wouldn't you like to be called forward by God when you are in heaven to be awarded His equivalent of the Medal of Honor? Wouldn't you like to enter into heaven as a hero of the faith?

Revelation 3:11

I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

The crown of life is not referring to eternal life. This verse makes that clear because eternal life cannot be lost or taken away so the crown of life cannot be referring to eternal life. It is a special award given for exceptional perseverance under trial.

So, how do we know if we will be faithful unto death or not?

Luke 16:10

“He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.

Dying for Christ is a very big thing. But the Bible tells us that if we have not been faithful in little things, we will not be faithful when the big things come along.

I John 2:28

Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

If we aren't faithful to spend time with God now, praying and reading the Bible, why would we think we will be faithful to die for Him later? Because praying and reading the Bible are a lot easier than dying.

I John 3:24

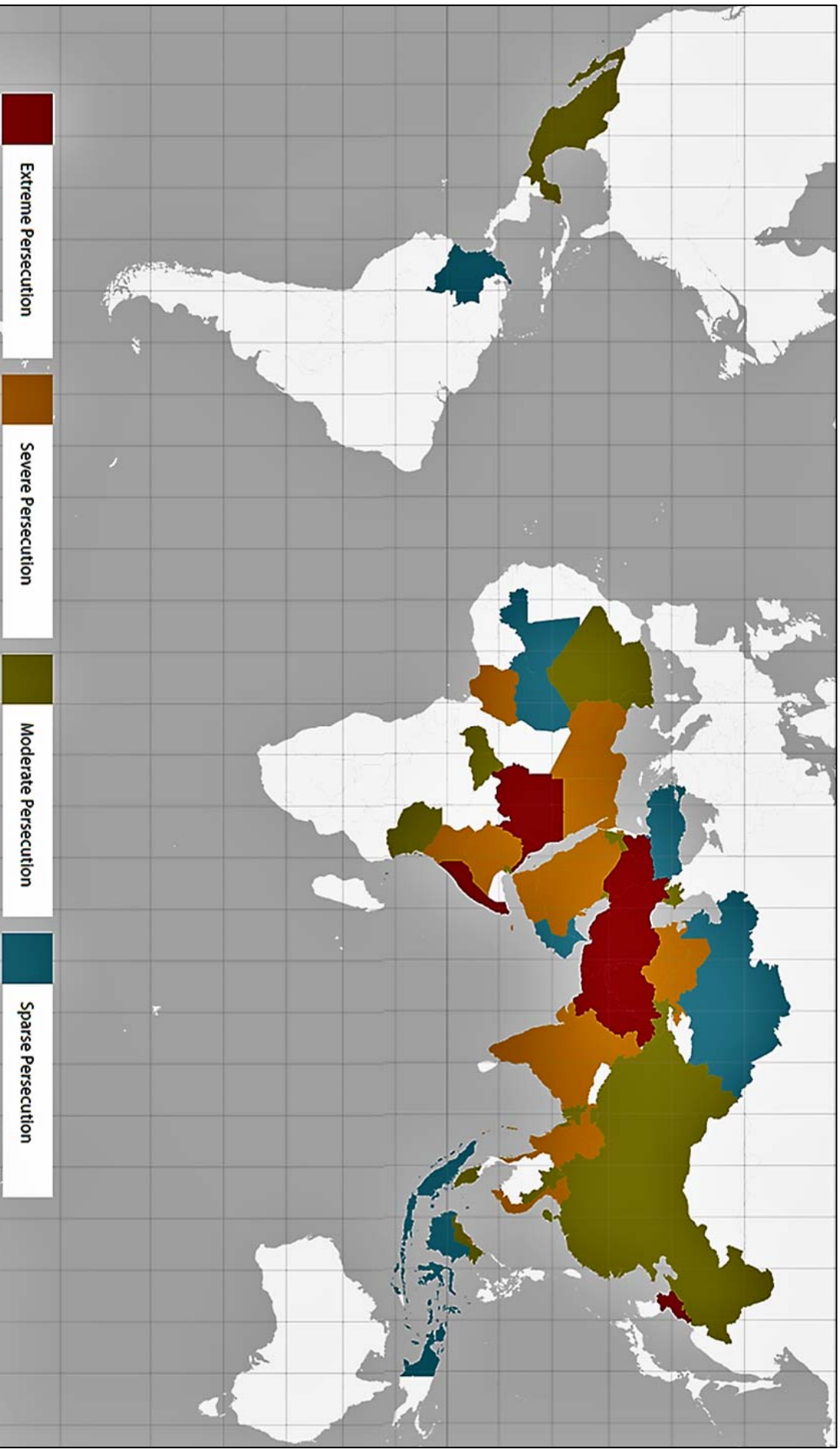
The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

If we aren't faithful now to put into practice the things God teaches us from the Bible, what makes us think we will be able to faithfully die for Him later? Because obeying God now is a lot easier than dying is going to be.

Conclusion

Our obedience in small things will ultimately determine how we respond to the bigger tests of life that are coming our way. We can be faithful unto death if we prepare by developing our relationship with God and putting Him and His Kingdom first in our lives now as demonstrated by our actions and decisions.

For a detailed study on being faithful unto death please see the study, "Willing To Die For Christ", available at:
<http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>



Extreme Persecution

Severe Persecution

Moderate Persecution

Sparse Persecution

EACH MONTH

Christian Persecution (2016)

<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/>

322 CHRISTIANS ARE
KILLED FOR THEIR FAITH



214 CHURCHES AND
CHRISTIAN **PROPERTIES**
ARE DESTROYED



772 FORMS OF **VIOLENCE**
ARE COMMITTED AGAINST
CHRISTIANS (SUCH AS BEATINGS, ABDUCTIONS,
RAPES, ARRESTS AND FORCED MARRIAGES)



QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Option 3 – Going Wholehearted Part 2*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Revelation 2:9-10, James 1:12, Revelation 3:11*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *John 16:33, Acts 14:21-22*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Romans 8:35-39*

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QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Option 3 – Going Wholehearted Part 2*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Romans 12:9-13*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Hebrews 10:32-34*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Luke 6:22-23, John 16:1-2*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Revelation 12:10-11*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Revelation 6:9-11*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I John 2:28, I John 3:24*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Option 3 – Going Wholehearted Part 2*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Matthew 24:9-10*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Matthew 10:28*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Romans 14:7-8, Philippians 1:20-21*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

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