

A WEEKLY DEVOTION

That's Not What It Says

Week One: More Than You Can Handle

This week we're sitting with a phrase so familiar it feels like scripture: "God won't give you more than you can handle." It isn't in the Bible. What follows are six short readings to carry you from this Sunday to the next — not to resolve the tension the sermon raised, but to keep sitting in it a little longer, honestly.

SUNDAY

The Verse Itself

1 Corinthians 10:13

"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

Start where the myth actually starts. Paul isn't writing about grief, or diagnosis, or the weight of a life falling apart — he's writing to a church getting cocky about its own spiritual immunity, warning them not to assume they're above the same failures that undid Israel in the wilderness. This is a promise about resisting what destroys you, not a promise about the size of your suffering. Read it again, slowly, and notice everywhere the word "temptation" appears. Notice what isn't there.

For reflection: Where have you heard this verse used for something it was never written to cover?

God, help me read your word as it is, not as I need it to be. Amen.

MONDAY

Paul Corrects Paul

2 Corinthians 1:8–9

"We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our

ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.”

Same author. Different letter. Opposite claim. Paul doesn't hedge this one — he names pressure so far beyond his own strength that he wanted to die. He doesn't spiritualize it or find the silver lining mid-sentence. He simply tells the truth about what it cost him, and lets that truth exist before he says anything about what came of it.

For reflection: What would it feel like to tell someone, plainly, “this is more than I can handle” — without immediately following it with reassurance that you're fine?

God, give me Paul's honesty before I ask for Paul's resolution. Amen.

TUESDAY

Permission to Say It's Too Much

Psalm 13:1–2

“How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?”

The Psalms don't flinch from this kind of speech, and neither should we. Lament isn't a failure of faith — it's one of scripture's most-repeated forms of it. Before the Psalm turns anywhere near hope (and it does, eventually), it spends real time in the honest complaint. That order matters. The turn doesn't erase the complaint; it comes after it, not instead of it.

For reflection: What's one honest complaint you've been skipping past on your way to a more acceptable-sounding prayer?

How long, Lord? I bring the question as it is, without rushing to answer it myself. Amen.

WEDNESDAY

Held Up by Someone Else's Arms

Exodus 17:11–13

“As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up — one on one side, one on the other — so that his hands remained steady till sunset.”

Moses doesn't grit his teeth and push through on his own strength. His arms simply give out — a plain, physical fact, no shame attached to it in the text. What happens next is the whole point: two other people hold his arms up for him, for hours, until the work is finished. Scripture doesn't treat this as Moses' failure. It treats it as how the battle was actually won.

For reflection: Whose arms have you been holding up lately — and whose have been holding up yours, if you've let them?

God, when my own strength gives out, put people beside me willing to hold on until it's over. Amen.

THURSDAY

A Cord of Three Strands

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: if either of them falls down, one can help the other up... Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

One strand, on its own, snaps easily — that isn't a flaw in the strand, it's simply what one strand is. The strength was never supposed to come from a single cord standing alone. Think back to Sunday's sermon, and the line strung at the front of the sanctuary: not one strong cord, but dozens of ordinary ones, knotted together until they couldn't be pulled apart.

For reflection: What would it look like this week to tie your “thin cord” to someone else's, instead of trying to hold on by yourself?

God, thank you for the people you've knotted into my life. Help me lean on them, and let them lean on me. Amen.

FRIDAY

Preparing for the Table

Matthew 11:28–30

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest... For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Notice what Jesus doesn't say here. He doesn't say the burden disappears. He says come, weary as you are, and be given rest — and he says his yoke, the shared harness two oxen wear side by side, is the easier one precisely because it was never meant to be worn alone. As you come to

worship and the table this week, come as you actually are. That was always who the invitation was for.

For reflection: As you carry this week's readings into Sunday, what is the one thing you most need someone else to help you hold?

God, I come as I am, weary or steady, certain or not. Thank you for a table built for exactly that. Amen.