Discuss how everyone did during the past week of devotions.
As they read through the passages did anything really stand out to them?
Did they learn anything new? Or gain a new insight?
Did anyone consciously put into action something they had read? What happened?

The following is a parable that Jesus relates to his disciples to help them understand the nature of the Kingdom of God. A parable is a fictional story attempting to communicate one lesson. Hone in on the main point and be careful not to stretch lesser points too far.

Read the Parable of the Talents

Matthew 25:14-30 (NIV)
"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.

16 The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

19 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.

20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.

21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

22 "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

24 "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

28 "'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"
Matthew 25:14 (NIV)
"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them.

Understanding the Imagery:

The word “it” refers to the Kingdom of God. How would you define the Kingdom of God?
The Kingdom of God is not a geographic rule but God’s rule in the lives of people.
We are part of the kingdom of God if he rules in our lives.
Anyone who claims to be part of the Kingdom of God is declaring that Jesus Christ rules in his/her life.

Who is the man going on a journey? Jesus Christ
Who are the servants? Us

What is the property he entrusted to our care?
Everything we have. All our resources, money, time, talents and abilities are given to us for God’s purposes.
  1) to bless us,
  2) to build his business.
God's business is the Kingdom of God. He is building for himself a community of faith or a family. We are to invest ourselves into that purpose.

What are some implications of this passage with regard to our lives?
If everything we have is ultimately God’s, then it is not ours to do whatever we wish.
The resources given to us are to be utilized for his purposes and benefit.
i.e. My car, house, money, time, abilities, etc.

Matthew 25:15 (NIV)
To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.

TALENT = 34 kilograms / 75 pounds of either gold or silver.

What is the significance of the owner giving his servants different amounts of money?
God will give us only the amount of responsibility he knows we can handle and enjoy
Too much responsibility given to us is a recipe for failure. We will become burdened, overloaded, stressed and unsuccessful.
Too little responsibility and we leave us bored, unchallenged and unfulfilled.
The one with 5 talents could effectively handle that much. The one with 2 talents could effectively handle that much. It might have been disastrous for the person with two to have received five. The master knew what he was doing. That’s also why he only gave the other servant one talent.

Should the person who received two talents be envious of the one who received five?
No, because he has been given the amount that can allow him to be successful. If he does what he is asked to do, fitting with his abilities, he will find more joy and fulfillment than if he was given more. To resent what he has been given and to feel he needs more is to buy into the lie that the more you have; the more valuable you are as a person. It puts us in a constant state of never being content. It also causes us to grumble about other people, our circumstances, our jobs, our income, etc.

Philippians 4:12-13 (NIV)
I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Matthew 25:16-19 (NIV)
The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17 So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. 18 But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.

Why might the man with the one talent have buried it in the ground, rather than investing it?
Ultimately, he did not have the master’s best interest at heart. He perhaps resented the amount he was entrusted with, or resented the master himself. But when all was said and done, he did not use the master’s resources entrusted to him for the master’s purpose. He did not lose it, but he did not advance the business.

What is God’s business?
God’s kingdom is about seeing the rule of God take place in people’s lives and the realm of the evil one reduced. God is in the business of rescuing people from their sin and bringing them into his family as heirs. Since that is what he is most passionate about, all his resources are intended to be used for that purpose.

What is our normal perspective regarding how we use our resources?
We tend to view the resources we have as “ours” and that they exist for the purpose of making us feel good about life. Much of what we have is comfort oriented and has no deeper redeeming value other than appeasing our need for “more”.

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How does God fit into our perspective of our resources?

We tend to look at our resources as existing primarily for our purposes and then see how we can use what is left over for God’s purposes. **Is there a problem with this view?**

**Matthew 25:20 (NIV)**

20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ’Master,’ he said, ’you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ 21 His master replied, ’Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ 22 The man with the two talents also came. ’Master,’ he said, ’you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’ 23 His master replied, ’Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

**What do you note about the response to the two servants?**

They both are commended for doing what they were asked to do.

They both received the same commendation.

Because they were faithful with the amount they were given, they could both be trusted with even more.

Both of them benefitted when the master benefitted.

**What are the implications for us if we use the resources God has given us primarily for his purposes?**

We will be commended by God.

It doesn’t matter how much we have; it matters how we use what we have.

Even if we are given little, as long as we use it for God’s purposes, we will be blessed and enjoy God’s happiness.

If we are faithful with little, we prove ourselves capable of handling more responsibility.

**Matthew 25:24-30 (NIV)**

’Then the man who had received the one talent came. ’Master,’ he said, ’I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ’25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ 26 His master replied, ’You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?’ 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. 28 ’Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. 29 For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’
What did this servant fear? What was wrong his perspective?
He was afraid of failure and incurring the master’s wrath, so he decided to do nothing at all.

He questioned:
1) his own ability to do what the master called him to
   This reveals a lack of faith in the master and questions his discernment about what the servant could effectively handle.
   He thought he might fail, so he considered it was better to do nothing at all.

2) the master’s character.
   He did not know his master. He considered him to be harsh when in truth he was an incredibly trusting and loving master. The master wisely allotted his resources so that they could enjoy success in whatever they did. He questioned the master’s wisdom of entrusting him with his resources.

3) why he was ultimately there
   He forgot that the reason he was working for the master was to advance the master’s purposes. He lost sight of the WHY and as a result failed as to WHAT.

In what ways are we sometimes like this third servant?

Was not the master’s response a bit harsh?
Keep in mind this is a parable Jesus is using to describe the nature of the Kingdom of God.
God’s purpose is to see his rule established and worked out in this world. Those who are truly a part of the kingdom embrace this purpose and use all their resources to their fullest capacity to make this become a reality. They love the master and are excited about the resources with which they have been entrusted. They look forward to the return of the master so they can show what they accomplished with the resources they were given.

The one who did not love the master, nor embraced his purposes, nor used wisely the resources given to him, was declared “evil”. Whenever we do nothing, we actually hinder the work of God in this world. The resources God gave us could have been used by another to advance his purposes. God gives us what he knows we can handle, therefore doing nothing is actually a rejection of God’s purposes, hinders his work and allows evil to prevail.

This type of person has no place in the Kingdom of God. Instead of commendation, this type of person will face judgment and separation from God and his kingdom.
SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 7:18-20 (NIV)
A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

How do you feel you are presently using the resources God has given you for his purposes?

What would be some examples of “good fruit” and “bad fruit” when it comes to how we use our resources?

What personal struggles do we face as we try to surrender our resources to the will of God?

What are some practical ways we can ensure that we will hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant”?

Take a practical look at how you budget your resources.

How much of my time each week is devoted to building the kingdom of God?
Ministry: Is there some significant way I contribute to the church’s effectiveness?

What does my financial budget reveal about how passionate I am to see God’s kingdom built?
Can I free up more of the resources God has given me to advance his kingdom?

Am I quick to let my home resources (tools, car, rooms, etc.) be used in ways that build the kingdom of God, showing kingdom love to others?
Is there some tangible way I can share what I have to help with others who have less?
### New Testament (27 books)

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<th>History (5)</th>
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<th>Paul's Letters to Individuals (4)</th>
<th>Others' Letters (8)</th>
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<td>Colossians</td>
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<td>Jude</td>
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### 1 Timothy – Philemon

**1 Timothy:** Some false teachers have found their way into leadership of the church in Ephesus. Paul writes to authenticate Timothy’s authority to establish proper leadership in the church and to encourage him to fight the good fight.

**2 Timothy:** Paul writes his last letter from prison as an encouragement to Timothy to continue ministering despite persecution and hardship. He warns that the last days will be marked by increased godlessness.

**Titus:** Paul writes this letter to a young pastor named Titus on the island of Crete. He encourages Titus to continue establishing spiritual leadership in the towns.

**Philemon:** Paul encountered a runaway slave by the name of Onesimus who eventually becomes a Christ follower. Now Paul sends Onesimus back (at the risk of being put to death) to his master, Philemon, who also claims to be a Christ follower. Paul’s letter is the ultimate in tact and diplomacy that encourages Philemon to now consider Onesimus as more than a slave, but as a brother in Christ.
### Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22 (NIV)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 1</th>
<th>THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER</th>
<th>APPLY 1 POINT TODAY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PASSAGE</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hebrews 13:1-6 (NIV)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Keep on loving each other as brothers. 2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. 3 Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. 4 Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. 5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, &quot;Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.&quot; 6 So we say with confidence, &quot;The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?&quot;</td>
<td>TEACH&lt;br&gt;REFUTE&lt;br&gt;CORRECT&lt;br&gt;TRAIN&lt;br&gt;What can you apply?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER</strong></td>
<td>Does my life reflect a love for others?&lt;br&gt;Those in prison were believers who were put there for their faith in Jesus Christ. Do I support and encourage other believers when they are going through difficult times?&lt;br&gt;Are my relationships pure?&lt;br&gt;Do I keep wishing I had more wealth? Does that motivate me to try and get “easy” money without working for it (lotteries, gambling, etc.)?&lt;br&gt;How does remembering God’s presence help me in each of these areas?</td>
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In the space below write out the 4 New Testament letters Paul wrote to individuals.

1T  
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**Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22 (NIV)**

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<tr>
<th>DAY 2</th>
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<th>APPLY 1 POINT TODAY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psalms 23:1-6 (NLT)</td>
<td>The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.</td>
<td>If you know this passage well, it may be tempting to miss the impact it can have. Do I trust that Jesus will actually lead me? Do I trust he will provide for my every need? Do I trust he can walk me through to the other side of a dark valley? Do I really believe God is strategizing how to provide and care for me? Do I believe God wants to bless me? How comforting is it to know my eternal future is secure?</td>
<td>TEACH REFUTE CORRECT TRAIN What can you apply?</td>
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In the space below write out the 4 New Testament letters Paul wrote to individuals.

1T __________________________ T __________________________
2T __________________________ P __________________________
**Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.** James 1:22 (NIV)

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<tr>
<th>DAY 3</th>
<th>PASSAGE</th>
<th>THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER</th>
<th>APPLY 1 POINT TODAY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deuteronomy 8:10-18 (NIV)</strong></td>
<td>When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. You may say to yourself, &quot;My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.&quot; But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.</td>
<td>It is tempting to think I am the one who provides all I need. What does God have to say about this? Do I have a tendency to think I am self-sufficient? Do I tend to view my wealth as something I made happen with my own hands? Do I sometimes forget to praise God for every blessing I have? Can I confess that it is God who has given me everything and that I am fully dependent on him for life? How can I express a greater trust and dependence on God?</td>
<td>TEACH REFUTE CORRECT TRAIN What can you apply?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In the space below write out the 4 New Testament letters Paul wrote to individuals.

1T ______________________  2T ______________________

T ______________________  P ______________________
Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22 (NIV)

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</table>
| **DAY 4**  
1 Kings 3:5-14 (NIV)  
At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."  
6 Solomon answered, "You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day.  
7 "Now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties.  
8 Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number.  
9 So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"
10 The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.  
11 So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice,  
12 I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.  
13 Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both riches and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings.  
14 And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life."
| If God said you could ask him to give you anything, what would you ask for? | TEACH  
REFUTE  
CORRECT  
TRAIN |
| Why was God pleased with what Solomon asked for? | What can you apply? |
| Jesus tells us you can ask God for anything. What are you asking for? | |

In the space below write out the 4 New Testament letters Paul wrote to individuals.

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
**Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22 (NIV)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 5</th>
<th>PASSAGE</th>
<th>THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER</th>
<th>APPLY 1 POINT TODAY</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 2:3-11 (NIV)</td>
<td>I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.</td>
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<td>4 I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. 5 I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. 6 I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. 7 I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. 8 I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well—the delights of the heart of man. 9 I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me.</td>
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<td>What is my life spent building?</td>
<td>TEACH</td>
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<td>What projects have I undertaken thinking they would give me a sense of accomplishment and significance?</td>
<td>REFUTE</td>
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<td>What pleasures have I pursued thinking they would give me fulfillment, but didn’t?</td>
<td>CORRECT</td>
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<td>Is my life still focused on striving for comfort, control, pleasure or significance?</td>
<td>TRAIN</td>
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<td>What is it that gives my life meaning?</td>
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In the space below write out the 5 historical books, 9 Pauline letters to churches, and 4 Pauline letters to individuals.

**Historical Books**

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**Paul’s Letter to Churches**

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**Paul’s Letter to Individuals**

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