



**SHARON**  
BAPTIST CHURCH

# JANUARY 2025 DEVOTIONS

“Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me.” - Psalm 103:2 (NLT)

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# ON JOURNEY TOGETHER WITH GOD

## ACTS 16:6-10

A new year provides the opportunity for new beginnings. As our church family begins the new journey called 2025 together, we want to begin it in prayer. We've asked several members of our church family to help us with devotions and prayer guides to get us "started off on the right foot!"

A successful journey depends upon a lot of different factors. We usually like to know where we are headed before we leave, although some more adventurous spirits like to just set out and see where the road takes them. Many will take their vehicle in for service before a trip to make sure it is in sound working order, the oil is fresh, tires are good, etc. There are always some factors out of our control – traffic, weather, accidents or road construction. However, it is still important to ensure that as many factors as we can control, we have covered. One detail that we often overlook, and it is perhaps the most important factor in any journey, is not Where or How or When, but Who! Who is accompanying us on this journey? Who are our companions? Most of the wonderful memories that we hold are precious, not just because of where we were, but because of who we were with!

As we embark on this journey together, we'll take time to reflect on and to pray about several aspects of the journey, guided each day by one of our own. Let us journey together, let us celebrate and grieve together. Let us face all hills and valleys and negotiate all the curves together. And by all means, let us pray together!

Father of us all, we thank you for your many blessings and for seeing us through another year together. We thank you for your presence with us always and your faithful leadership along our journey together. As we begin a new year together, help us to begin with hope and enthusiasm, eager to see where you will lead us and what you will accomplish among us. Help us to begin with faith, knowing that you will never leave us nor forsake us. Help us to begin with love – love for you, love for each other and love for those around us. May our love for you be lived out in faithful obedience. May our love for each other express itself in unity and encouragement and concrete acts of concern. And may our love for others reflect your grace in action. May they see in us the love that comes from you. And may all that we do be to your honor and glory, for we do all that we do and we pray all that we pray in the name of our Lord and Savior, your love come down to us, Jesus Christ. Amen.

*A devotion by Pastor Mark McCoig*

**-DAY 1-**

# COVENANT

COVENANT – an agreement between persons of parties

That sounds so simple and should be fairly easy for the involved parties to adopt and abide by. After all, a covenant only details what the parties accept as truth and agree to use as a guide. Throughout our lifetime, we enter into quite a few covenants. Parents covenant with one another to have and to raise children. Children covenant with their parents on proper behavior. Families covenant with educational systems on achievement goals. We covenant with employers on work production. When someone joins a church, they covenant with that congregation to maintain its faith and discipline. When someone accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior, that acceptance is a covenant with God concerning how one should live a Christian life.

Strangely enough, even though we enter into countless covenants, we spend too much of our life looking for the loopholes that will allow us to circumvent the truths of the covenants – even though we entered into them willingly! As we try to come to grips with our infidelity toward our covenant with God, we need to return to the basics of our faith and accept the commensurate responsibilities.

So, what does all of this have to do with missions? Everything!! What are the terms of our covenant with God regarding missions? Some that come to mind are:

- Love one another.
- Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
- Go into all the world, making disciples.
- Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick.
- Look after orphans and widows.

Do we do these things or do we spend our time looking for loopholes to justify our not doing them? It's evident that Sharon Baptist Church does indeed have a heart for missions and puts great effort into fulfilling the Godly covenant that our founders envisioned for us.

Does that mean we should rest on our laurels and be content with the status quo? Only if we are working to capacity and all members are looking for new opportunities to enlarge God's kingdom. A new year invites new resolutions. That makes this a great time for each of us to examine our "missions" covenant and recommit ourselves to God's calling – whether that's across the ocean or outside the front door.

*A devotion by Fred Massingill*

# WHAT IS WORSHIP?

*Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.*

~Romans 12:1-2

What is worship? Is worship something that we do just to fill our spiritual tank every Sunday morning and then go about the rest of our week as we always do, or is it something more? If we want to understand the truth of what worship really is, we must look at what the word of God tells us about the subject. When we read the scripture, we find that worship is so much more than singing a few songs each week: Worship is a way of life.

The book of Romans describes perfect worship in this way: offering our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. A living sacrifice, but how?! Don't panic, offering yourself as a living sacrifice is a great privilege! Put simply; to be a living sacrifice means to live every moment of your life knowing you are a child of God. This is easy when you are in a room full of fellow believers singing praises, but it might be a little tougher when you're running late for work and caught in traffic. Someone who lives as a living sacrifice sees every situation as an opportunity to bless others, to give thanks, to give praise, and to enjoy fellowship with the Father.

What an honor it is to know that we can live in a way that pleases God! Imagine if every person offered their body as a living sacrifice. Imagine if we all lived our lives in such a way that every person endeavored to bless others, give thanks, give praise, and enjoy fellowship with the Father every moment of their lives. Offering our bodies as a living sacrifice not only brings us closer to God but also brings God closer to others. This is what worship truly is.

*A devotion by Music Minister Ben Burnette*

# IMPACT OF OPENING GOD'S WORD

To say I have been blessed with wonderful Bible teachers since I came to Sharon Baptist is an understatement. From Ray and Betty Tucker, at the beginning to my present Sunday School teacher, Greg Jones, I am thankful. Bible study has helped me learn who GOD is and by finding out who GOD is, I have discovered who I am. God's word has helped me when I needed guidance, needed wisdom, and really every question I have in life. GOD's word has never failed me.

I have been fortunate to be in a Women's Bible Study on Sunday Evenings. Boy, do we have fun! We have helped each other learn to love Bible study. We get so excited when GOD teaches us something that we did not know about Him. These are treasures that we can hide in our hearts so that we might not sin against Him. We have learned how we can dive deeper into the Bible and feast on the Word. We have learned how important it is in obeying GOD and to know by obeying is for our good

The fellowship and love we have for each other in our studies have grown. Opening GOD's word to me is like a good meal. The Bible to those who love it, is sweeter than honey and more precious than gold. These ladies share and care for each other. We wrap our arms around each other and sometimes our tears wet our cheeks.

I urge you to open GOD's word daily. You will never regret the time spend with our Father! Come join us in Bible study. There is one for you! Come see how good GOD is!

A devotion by *Deborah Tapp*

# A NEW YEAR FOR THE CHURCH

*“But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”*

Isaiah 40:31 ESV

Entering into the new year always comes with certain expectations. Resolutions to accomplish, goals to achieve, and standards to fill. Will we actually follow that new diet plan? Will we actually exercise every day? Will we actually break that annoying habit? The expectations of life can be overbearing even without new resolutions to meet, but what does a new year of goals mean for the church?

One thing is certain, no matter the season we are in, both as individuals and as a church family, God will remain faithful. Our God is with us regardless of the situation we are currently experiencing, and He always has a plan for our future. Therefore, we can endure the challenges of this life with the promise that the Lord is with us wherever we go, and that He will strengthen us to endure life’s challenges.

Thus, as a church, we should enter the new year with the knowledge that God will provide for us, especially in our times of need. We have no reason to fear for the future because we have the assurance that, no matter the challenges we are experiencing, our God will be by our side. As a result, we as a church family should enter this new year with a better sense of togetherness as we combat life’s challenges.

Our challenges are more easily endured as a body of Christ, ultimately renewed by the promises of God. A new year may bring new challenges and expectations, but we as a church should remain devoted to God’s promises, because we know that His faithfulness will never falter and His love will always remain.

*A devotion by Olivia Pullin*

# NEW YEAR, NEW ....

Many of us at the beginning of each new year try to make a resolution to improve ourselves or to do something different and better. Usually, we will start out strong and then fizzle out as the year goes along. Some things are hard to stick with and continue doing, and we just don't want to do it anymore. We have good intentions, but sometimes that is just not enough.

As we enter this new year, let's make a resolution that is possible to achieve as well as beneficial for our lives and our faith. What is it you ask? Sunday School. Each Sunday morning, groups meet throughout our church campus to study God's Word. God's Word is timeless and speaks to us today just as it did when it was written. 1 Peter 1:24-25 tells us that, "As the Scriptures say, 'People are like grass; their beauty is like a flower in the field. The grass withers and the flower fades. But the word of the Lord remains forever.' And that word is the Good News that was preached to you."

It is so important for a spiritual walk with the Lord that we stay engaged in Scripture. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires."

Although the most important thing about Sunday School is studying God's Word, that is not all that is great about it. It is the fellowship with other believers. They encourage, pray, laugh, and support each other during and outside of their time together each Sunday. It is a vital part of continuing to live a Godly life each day.

If you are not part of a Sunday School class or have not been attending regularly, make this year a new start to be a part of a class. You will not regret it one bit.

*A devotion by Pastor Rick Johnson*



# A PRAYER FOR 2025

As we begin the year 2025, realizing that at its end we will complete the first quarter of the twenty-first century may be a daunting thought for some of us. But for all of us, it brings a bit of excitement, a bit of new hope, maybe an opportunity to right a few wrongs and move in a new, positive direction.

The deacons of Sharon Baptist Church have tremendous hopes for this new year. We are past the days of COVID causing havoc, and we have several very positive ministries continuing to grow. We have many things to celebrate, but at the same time, we realize that many families in our church and around our community are struggling with difficult and sometimes hard-to-understand issues each day.

As deacons in 2025, our goal is to pray daily for each other and each of our church families, their friends and neighbors. Our prayers will be to find ways to help, support, and encourage everyone. Life can be very difficult, and without God it can be impossible. We pray that each of us can be a shining light, a daily example of what a walk with Christ actually looks like. A key element will be finding new ways to reach out inviting people to join with us. A recent study shows that 4 out of 5 new church members first came because someone they KNEW invited them!

We live in one of the most prosperous areas in the entire world; yet oftentimes we find ourselves complaining about trivial things. Please take a minute to read Psalm 100 where we are told to worship with joy and gladness, to enter his gates with thanksgiving, and to know his love endures forever.

In 2025, please join us in praising God, worshiping God, and putting God first in our lives. There are hundreds of people all around us waiting to hear and to see what being a Christian, a follower of God, is all about. Are we willing to show them in 2025?

## Prayer

*Dear God in heaven, as we bow before you, please help us to find humbleness in ourselves. Help us to find good in others. Help us to learn to forgive more freely. Help us to put aside our own selfish agendas and look to the needs of others. Please help us to slow down our own lives in order to make time to support and encourage those around us. Lord, please help us to worship you in joy and gladness, so thankful for your love and the hope and promise of eternal life. Lord, please guide us through this new year and forgive us where we fall short.*

*Amen*

Happy New Year from the Deacons of Sharon Baptist Church! Please feel free to call on us!

*A devotion by Tim Hawkins*

**-DAY 7-**

# CONCLUSION

As we race forward into 2025, our prayer is that each person in our community would know that Sharon is a place that welcomes them and points them toward an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ.

We pray that all will find community and discipleship here through Sunday School, one of the many Bible studies we offer, and our weekly congregational worship.

We pray that you will find ways to serve the Kingdom, church, and community such as volunteering in our children or youth ministries, working with our Disaster Relief teams, with our Baptist Women, or one of the many other opportunities that arise throughout the year.

We pray that you invite others along with you in your faith journey! Not only inviting them to worship together here at church but inviting them to have a personal relationship with a Savior who loves them.

By connecting, growing, serving, and multiplying together we can become a church where all are loved, purpose is found, and lives are changed!



## Connecting

Bringing people into an authentic and personal relationship with Jesus Christ and His church



## Growing

Ensuring all members are growing in their faith through intentional & continual discipleship



## Serving

Providing members a variety of ways to serve inside and outside the church



## Multiplying

Equipping all members to be disciple makers where they work, live, and play