SIX-DAY DEVOTIONAL

Great Joy in the City

Rooted deeply. Reaching widely. Overflowing with the gospel.

A Six-Day Devotional Based on This Week's Sermon

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Acts 8:4-8 - "So there was great joy in that city." (NIV)

Over six days we follow the sermon from strengthening and deep roots to welcome, witness, prayer and Spirit-empowered ministry. The journey asks whether what God places in us will remain as notes, or overflow until others experience the joy of His kingdom.

Based on the Sunday morning sermon preached by Gill Patterson
at The Bridge Church on 12 July 2026
Introduced by Grant Askham

READ SLOWLY. REFLECT HONESTLY. PRAY PERSONALLY.

Each day is designed for about 15 minutes, including Scripture, reflection, three memory questions and prayer.

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DAY 1

Refuelled for the Mission

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON

Grant Askham introduced Gill Patterson with the picture of a fighter aircraft being refuelled in flight. He connected it to Romans 1:11-12: spiritual gifts strengthen the church, and believers mutually encourage one another through faith. The image set the direction for the sermon. God does not strengthen His people so that they can remain parked safely; He strengthens them so that they can continue the mission. Gill then gave the week its first challenge: do not allow what God has said to remain as notes from a good weekend. Let it become a lifestyle that overflows at home, at school, at work, and wherever God places us. The question for this week is simple: Will what God has poured into me stop with me, or will it flow through me until others encounter Jesus?

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Romans 1:11-12 (NIV)**
>
> *11 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong - 12 that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

The refuelling picture is powerful because the fighter aircraft does not leave the battle. It draws close, receives what it needs, stabilises in the turbulence, and is filled so that it can continue. Grant used that picture to explain the purpose of the gifts Christ gives to His church: they build, strengthen and equip us for the battles and mission God has called us to.

Gill immediately turned that picture into a personal challenge. A church can receive rich teaching, prophetic encouragement and moments of ministry, yet still return to ordinary life unchanged. Notes can be neatly stored. A memorable weekend can become a pleasant story. But that is not the purpose of being strengthened.

"Let it become a lifestyle," she said. "Let it come out of you and let it overflow."

I need to hear that personally. God may encourage me through a sermon, a word, a prayer, another believer or a fresh encounter with His presence. But receiving is only the beginning. What has been placed in me must begin to shape the way I speak, serve, pray and respond to people. The strength I receive on Sunday must become faithfulness on Monday.

Romans 1 also reminds me that encouragement is mutual. Gill came to strengthen The Bridge Church, but she also spoke of being encouraged by the congregation's hunger and participation. Ministry is not a performance flowing in one direction. God builds His people as we receive from one another, honour one another's gifts and bring our own faith into the life of the church.

So the first step in this devotional journey is not to ask what dramatic thing I can do. It is to ask what I have already received from God that now needs to become visible. Where can His encouragement become my encouragement to someone else? Where can truth become obedience? Where can prayer become action?

I have not been refuelled merely to feel full. I have been strengthened to continue the mission.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What picture did Grant use to explain how ministry gifts strengthen and equip the church?
2	What did Gill say must happen to the teaching and ministry received over the weekend?
3	Why does God strengthen His people - merely for personal encouragement, or so that they can continue His mission?

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for every way You strengthen and encourage me through Your Word, Your Spirit and Your people. Do not let what I receive remain as notes or memories. Turn truth into obedience and encouragement into action. Show me where Your life must overflow through me today. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

I have been strengthened so that what God has placed in me can overflow.

DAY 2

Deep Roots Before Wide Reach

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I saw that God strengthens His people for mission. The refuelling image reminded me that spiritual gifts are given to build and equip the church, while Gill's opening challenge was not to leave the message as notes. What God pours into me must become a lifestyle that overflows.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Psalm 1:1-3 (NIV)

1 Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, 2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. 3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither - whatever they do prospers.

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Gill submitted a prophetic picture to the elders: a large tree with a strong trunk, thick and thin branches, deep roots and many kinds of fruit. She was careful to say that the word should be tested. That humility matters. Prophetic encouragement is not meant to bypass Scripture or church leadership. It is received, weighed and tested.

The first movement in the picture was downward. The roots did not immediately spread across the surface. They went deeper and deeper into the soil before they began to

move outward in every direction. Gill connected those roots to God and His Word. She affirmed that The Bridge Church had searched for the living water of truth and had been strengthened by it.

This is also a word for me. I often want reach before roots, influence before depth and visible fruit before hidden formation. But a tree survives storms because of what is happening beneath the ground. Gill described the rugged parts of the trunk as difficult seasons that had developed strength. The storms had not destroyed the tree; they had driven and strengthened its roots.

Psalm 1 places this responsibility on every individual. The future of a church is not carried only by its elders or visible leaders. Each person must become like a tree planted by streams of water - delighting in God's Word, meditating on it and drawing life from it. A base church cannot be built from spiritually shallow people who depend entirely on someone else's roots.

Gill explained a base church as a place that stretches out to people, churches and regions - a place where others come to receive, gain and grow. That outward calling is exciting, but the order of the picture cannot be reversed. First the roots go down. Then they spread outward. First the church is grounded in truth. Then it becomes a place of strengthening and sending.

The challenge for me is therefore not only to celebrate what God may do through the church. I need to ask whether my own roots are deepening. Am I living from God's Word, or merely visiting it? Have the storms made me bitter, or have they driven me deeper into God? Is there hidden strength beneath the visible parts of my life?

Before God widens my reach, He wants to deepen my roots.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What did the strong tree, deep roots and rugged trunk represent in Gill's prophetic picture?
2	What did she mean by saying that God was growing The Bridge into a base church?
3	Why did Gill apply Psalm 1 to every individual rather than only to the church's leaders?

PRAYER

Father, plant me deeply in Your Word. Use even the storms I have faced to strengthen my roots rather than weaken my faith. Make me steady, fruitful and available, so that I can play my part in the wider work You are doing through Your church. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

Before God spreads my influence, He deepens my roots.

DAY 3

Make Room for the Fruit God Brings

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I reflected on Gill's picture of the strong tree. The roots went downward before they spread outward, showing that wider influence must grow from depth in God and His Word. Psalm 1 made the calling personal: every individual must become rooted, steady and fruitful.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 61:5-7 (NIV)

5 Strangers will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards. 6 And you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast. 7 Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

The tree in Gill's picture did not carry one kind of fruit. It carried many kinds - different colours, shapes and sizes. She understood this as a picture of people from different cultures, backgrounds, upbringings, gifts and talents being brought into the church.

That kind of growth is beautiful, but it will also require something from me. Gill did not merely say that different people would come; she asked the church to open its heart

and welcome whoever God brings through the doors. Diversity cannot remain an attractive idea. It must become hospitality, patience, understanding and practical service.

Isaiah 61 speaks of strangers and foreigners taking their place in the work of God, while God's people are called priests and ministers. Gill connected this to a future in which more people would be needed to help and serve as the church expands. The branches of the tree represented every person - different sizes, different shapes, different gifts and different talents - all to be used for God's purpose.

This challenges the temptation to believe that meaningful ministry belongs to a small group of visible people. Gill repeated that all individuals need to be included, not just some. A large harvest cannot be gathered by spectators. A base church cannot function if most people remain consumers. The church grows strong as ordinary believers become servant-hearted and offer what God has placed in them.

She also spoke about Ephesians 4 gifts - apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers - helping the church to develop, sow, reap and prepare for the harvest. These gifts do not replace the ministry of the congregation. They equip the congregation for ministry.

I need to ask myself whether I am genuinely open to the fruit God chooses to bring. Do I welcome people only when they look, speak and think like me? Am I willing to be inconvenienced by growth? Do I see my own gift as something to protect, or something to offer?

The prophetic word was submitted to the elders to test, but the biblical response is already clear: be rooted in truth,

welcome people, serve wholeheartedly and make room for the many-sided grace of God.

The fruit God brings may be different from me, but it belongs on the same tree.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What did the many different kinds of fruit on the tree represent?
2	What response did Gill ask from the congregation toward the people God brings through the doors?
3	Why did she insist that all individuals must be included in the church's calling?

PRAYER

Lord, open my heart to the people You bring. Remove prejudice, comfort and passivity from me. Make me servant-hearted and willing to use my gift for Your purpose. Help our church become a family where many kinds of people can be welcomed, strengthened and fruitful. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

The fruit God brings may not look like me, but I must make room and serve.

DAY 4

How Great Joy Reaches a City

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I saw that the many kinds of fruit on Gill's tree represented people from different cultures, backgrounds and giftings. The response is not simply to admire diversity, but to welcome, serve and make room. Every individual has a part to play in the harvest.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Acts 8:4-8 (NIV)**
>
> *4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. 5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. 6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. 7 For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. 8 So there was great joy in that city.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Gill then turned to the main passage of the sermon: Acts 8:4-8. Persecution had scattered the believers from Jerusalem. What looked like disruption became an opportunity for the gospel. Those who were scattered preached the Word wherever they went, and Philip went to Samaria and proclaimed Christ.

The joy in Samaria did not begin with comfortable circumstances. It began with believers carrying the gospel into a difficult place. The disciples had received the reality

of the crucifixion, the resurrection and Pentecost. They were full of the good news of Jesus Christ, and their scattering could not silence them.

Samaria also represented a barrier. Jews and Samaritans did not naturally mix. Gill reminded the church of Jesus and the woman at the well - a woman surprised that a Jewish man would speak to her at all. Jesus crossed social, cultural and moral boundaries with truth and kindness. The woman then returned to her town and invited people to come and see the Messiah.

That story helps me understand how joy reaches a city. It reaches people when Christ is proclaimed across the lines that normally keep us apart. It reaches the ashamed when they discover that Jesus does not merely expose their past; He restores, forgives and clothes them with righteousness. During the sermon Gill paused for someone still carrying shame after coming to Christ. Her message was that the cloak of shame had been removed and a robe of righteousness had been given.

Acts 8 shows both words and works. The crowds heard Philip proclaim the Messiah, and they saw signs, deliverance and healing. They paid close attention because the gospel was announced and demonstrated. The result was not excitement around Philip's personality. It was great joy in the city.

I need to resist the idea that city-wide joy is somebody else's calling. The believers who were scattered were not all apostles. They were ordinary disciples carrying an extraordinary message. Their circumstances moved them, but the gospel travelled with them.

Where has God placed me? Which barriers am I tempted to preserve? Who might feel too different, too wounded, too compromised or too far away? The message of Jesus is not meant to remain inside the safest circle of my life.

Great joy begins when Christ is carried into places where darkness, shame, sickness and division have seemed to have the final word.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	How did persecution and scattering become an opportunity for the gospel to spread?
2	What did the people in Samaria hear and see through Philip's ministry?
3	According to Acts 8, what produced great joy in the city?

PRAYER

Jesus, fill me again with the good news of Your death, resurrection and living presence. Give me courage to cross barriers with truth and kindness. Use my words and my life to point people away from shame and darkness and toward the freedom and joy found in You. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

Great joy begins when Christ is carried into places I might naturally avoid.

DAY 5

Share What Jesus Has Done

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I followed Philip into Samaria and saw how great joy reached the city. Ordinary believers carried the gospel through scattering, Philip proclaimed Christ, and people heard and saw the power of God. The message crossed old barriers and offered freedom from shame, sickness and darkness.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **John 4:28-30, 39 (NIV)**
>
> *28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" 30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him. 39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did."*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Gill asked a practical question: What is preaching? Many people immediately exclude themselves because they imagine a pulpit, formal training or public speaking. Gill brought it back to something simple: preaching is sharing the good news.

"What did Jesus do for me? How did I get saved? How did I receive this joy? How did God bring me through what I faced?"

The Samaritan woman did not return to the town with a complete theological course. She returned with a testimony and an invitation: "Come, see." Her life had been seen truthfully by Jesus, yet she had not been pushed away. The encounter that could have left her ashamed became the story she carried to others. Many believed because she told them what Jesus had done.

I can easily underestimate what God can use. I may think my story is too ordinary, my words too simple or my knowledge too limited. But the gospel is not only carried by people who can speak to crowds. It travels in honest conversations at work, at school, at home and among friends. It is shared when I explain how Jesus met me, forgave me, changed me or gave me hope.

Gill also asked what teaching is. Again, she removed the unnecessary barrier. If I have received truth, I have something I can pass on. Teaching may happen one-on-one as I share what I have learned, help someone understand Scripture or encourage another believer to obey what God has said. Those called to teach congregations must prepare diligently and wait on God, but every believer can help someone else grow.

Then Gill made the gospel even more practical. She spoke of the love shown to Werner and another person through meals over an extended period. She encouraged phone calls, messages, flowers, cake and simple acts of help. These things may seem small, but they make God's love visible. A testimony without love can sound empty. Practical care gives the good news hands and feet.

The challenge is not to become impressive. It is to stop keeping quiet when God has given me something worth sharing. Someone in my sphere may be carrying grief,

fear, confusion, sickness or shame. I may not have a complete answer, but I can listen, speak of Jesus, share what I have learned, offer help and pray.

I do not need a platform. I need a testimony, an open heart and the willingness to take one faithful step.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	How did Gill define preaching for an ordinary believer?
2	How did she explain the kind of teaching that can happen one-on-one?
3	What practical examples did she give of demonstrating God's love to people?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, forgive me for the times I have kept quiet because I felt unqualified or afraid. Help me speak naturally about what You have done in my life. Give me eyes to notice people's needs, courage to offer prayer and a servant's heart that makes Your love practical. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

I do not need a platform; I need a testimony and an open heart.

DAY 6

Sent in the Power of the Holy Spirit

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I saw that sharing the gospel does not require a platform. It begins with a testimony, a simple explanation of what Jesus has done, truth passed on one-to-one, and practical love made visible through ordinary acts of care. Today the sermon reaches its final call: step out in faith and minister in the power of the Holy Spirit.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Luke 9:1-2 (NIV)**
>
> *1 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.*

THE WHOLE SERMON IN ONE FINAL REFLECTION

The sermon began with a picture of refuelling. Grant Askham reminded the church that God gives ministry gifts to strengthen and equip His people. Gill Patterson then made the purpose clear: what is received must not remain as notes from a good weekend. It must become a lifestyle that comes out of us and overflows.

Gill submitted a picture of The Bridge Church as a large, strong and fruitful tree. Its roots went deeply into God and His Word before spreading north, south, east and west. The rugged trunk carried evidence of storms, but those storms had developed strength. The many kinds of fruit spoke of people from different cultures, backgrounds, gifts

and talents. The calling to become a base church would therefore require deep roots, open hearts, servant-hearted people and the involvement of every individual.

From that picture Gill moved to Acts 8. Persecution scattered the believers, but the gospel travelled with them. Philip entered Samaria, proclaimed Christ, and people heard and saw the work of God. Impure spirits came out, the sick were healed, and there was great joy in the city. Gill connected that joy to Pretoria: the gospel must move beyond the meeting and into the city.

She then removed the excuses that keep ordinary believers silent. Preaching is sharing the good news - telling people what Jesus has done. Teaching can be passing on what I have learned, often one-to-one. Demonstrating God's love may look like a meal, a phone call, a message, a cake, flowers, practical help or prayer. The work of God is not limited to a platform.

The sermon then pressed further. Gill encouraged the church to pray for the sick outside formal church settings and to step out in faith. She reminded us that Jesus gave His disciples power and authority and sent them to proclaim the kingdom and heal the sick. She spoke about the fullness of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, tongues and deliverance, while warning against making one kind of ministry the sole focus. Her emphasis remained: focus on the Lord and on what each person can do to help others.

The words of knowledge and the invitation to receive prayer made the message immediate. Shame, fear, sickness, addiction, anger, depression, family strain and other needs were not treated as ideas. People were invited to respond and trust God together. Gill also placed the prophetic word back into the hands of the elders to test,

showing that Spirit-led ministry and responsible church leadership belong together.

Grant closed by honouring Gill's long faithfulness and enduring joy through suffering and loss. That final picture gives the sermon weight. Great joy is not shallow happiness or the absence of storms. It is the fruit of a life rooted in God, filled with His Spirit and still available for His mission.

The question that remains is whether I will stay a listener or become a carrier. Will I keep what God has given me, or will I let it overflow? The church becomes a strong, fruitful base church as ordinary people live this message wherever they go.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER THE WHOLE SERMON

1	What pictures and Scriptures held together the sermon's central message about The Bridge Church and the city?
2	What practical evidence did Gill say should follow from receiving the Word and the fullness of the Holy Spirit?
3	What truth or question should I carry beyond this week so that the sermon becomes a lifestyle?

FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for strengthening Your church through Your Word, Your Spirit and the gifts You place in people. Root me deeply in truth and make me steady through every storm. Open my heart to the people You bring and teach me to serve with what You have given me. Fill me with the Holy Spirit and give me courage to share the gospel, teach

what I have learned, care practically, pray for the sick and trust You to work. Keep my focus on Jesus, and let what You place in me overflow until others experience the freedom, healing, restoration and joy of Your kingdom. Amen.

THE THOUGHT TO KEEP AFTER THE SIX DAYS

Let it become a lifestyle: rooted in the Word, filled with the Spirit and overflowing until there is great joy in the city.