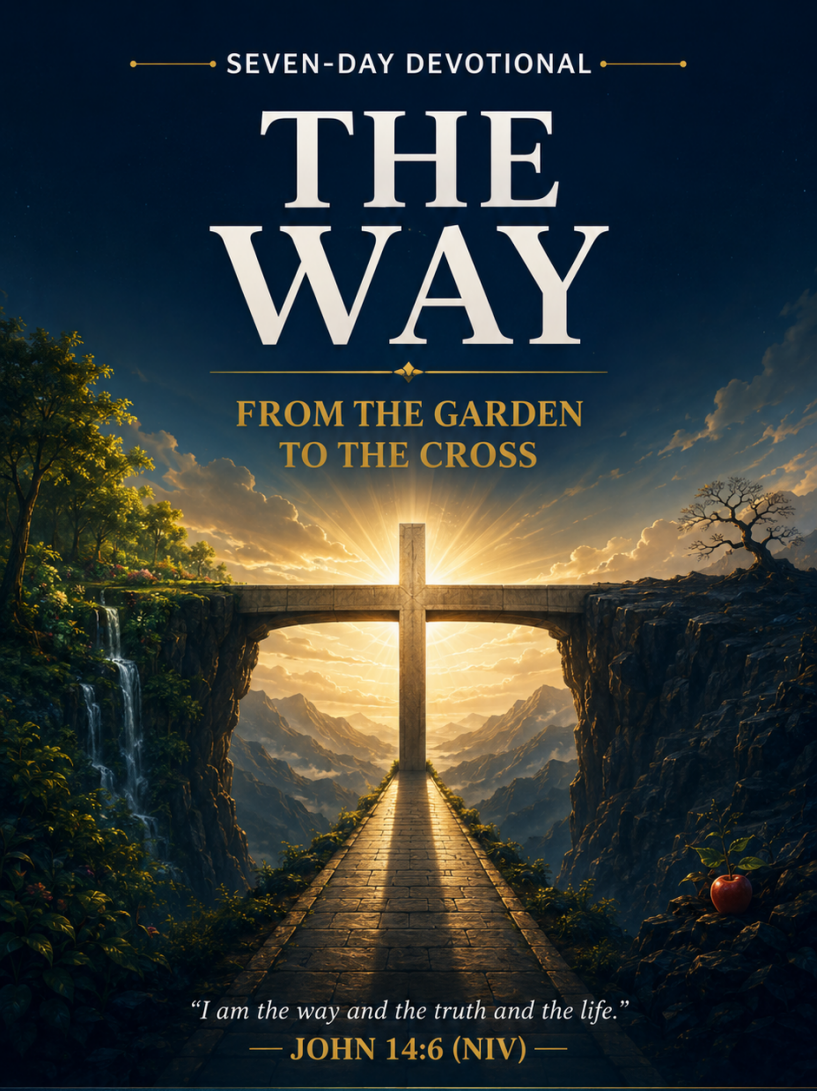
SEVEN-DAY DEVOTIONAL

THE WAY

FROM THE GARDEN TO THE CROSS



"I am the way and the truth and the life."

— JOHN 14:6 (NIV) —

A seven-day journey through the sermon, choosing God's abundant way over the self-determined way of the apple.

Grant Askham

The Bridge Church

30 August 2026

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ABOUT THIS WEEK

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

Acts 9:1-2; John 14:6; Genesis 2:8-17; Genesis 3:1-6; John 10:10; Matthew 7:13-14; Acts 24:14

Grant began in Acts 9 with the earliest description of followers of Jesus as people who belonged to “the Way”.

That name became the doorway into a much bigger question: is Christianity mainly a set of beliefs and rules, or is it a particular way of living with Jesus?

The sermon then returned to the beginning. God placed humanity in a garden marked by abundance, relationship, provision and purpose. His boundary around one tree was not the restriction of a killjoy, but the protection of a Father who knew where self-determination would lead.

Against that garden Grant placed the picture of the apple: the tempter’s old invitation to question God’s Word, contradict His warning and claim the right to decide good and evil for ourselves. The contrast is deliberately stark - God’s abundant way, or my will, my way and my timing.

This week we will follow the sermon in that same order: from the people of the Way, back to the garden, through the temptation of self-rule, to the cross and the narrow way of surrender, and finally into the ordinary choices of church, family, relationships, work, finances and obedience.

So the question running through this week is not:

“What am I allowed to do?”

The deeper question is:

“Lord, what is Your way - and will I surrender my way to Yours?”

MONDAY
DAY
1

The Way Is a Person

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON

Grant began with Acts 9 and the phrase “belonging to the Way”. Before followers of Jesus were widely called Christians, they were known as people of the Way. From there the sermon traced God’s intended way of life back to the garden, contrasted it with humanity’s self-determined “way of the apple”, and brought the choice into the ordinary places of Christian life.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Acts 9:1-2 (NIV)

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Grant began in Acts 9 with the phrase “belonging to the Way”. Before followers of Jesus were widely called Christians, they were known as people of the Way. That name says something important: Christianity is not merely a collection of beliefs to agree with. It is a particular way of living with God and with His people.

Grant contrasted this with a rule-centred picture of faith. Even the Old Covenant law was not given because God delights in catching people out. God was forming a people who could live together under His wisdom. In the same way, correction in the Christian life is not meant to shrink life into legalism; it is meant to lead us toward the life God designed.

Then Grant brought the focus to Jesus: “I am the way, the truth and the life.” Jesus did not come merely to offer better advice, stronger morals or another religious system. He gave Himself so that a broken relationship with God could be restored. The Way is therefore first a Person to know and walk with. The question for today is not only, “Do I know the rules?” but, “Am I actually walking with Jesus?” Reconciliation is the centre of this. Sin broke

relationship; Christ restores it. We do not master a technique called Christianity and then use it to produce a successful life. We receive a Person, follow a Person and increasingly allow His way to become our way. Obedience grows from relationship: we follow because we know and trust the One who leads.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REFLECT AND REMEMBER

1	What parts of my Christian life have become more about knowing the right things than actually walking with Jesus?
2	When I hear biblical correction, do I instinctively experience it as restriction, or can I receive it as God leading me toward His good design?
3	If someone watched the ordinary way I live this week, what would show that Jesus Himself - not merely a religious system - is shaping my direction?

PRAYER

Jesus, You are the Way. Keep me from reducing faith to information, rules or formulas. Teach me to know You, walk with You and receive Your Word as the wisdom of a Father who wants life for His people. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

Christianity is not merely a set of beliefs; it is a life walked with Jesus.

TUESDAY
DAY
2

Welcome to the Garden

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday we reflected on the way is a person. Today the sermon moves forward into welcome to the garden, continuing Grant's contrast between God's way of life and the self-determined way of the apple.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **John 10:10 (NIV)**
>
> *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Yesterday we saw that "the Way" is ultimately Jesus Himself. Grant then took us back to Genesis and the garden. Humanity was created for relationship with God, for a life in which God walked with people "in the cool of the day". The garden became Grant's picture of God's intended abundance: beauty, diversity, provision, relationship and the freedom to enjoy what God had made. Grant used the language of welcome to underline the generosity of the scene. Humanity is not grudgingly tolerated in God's world but invited into it. The garden is filled with things to see, taste, enjoy, cultivate and share. It pictures life received as gift rather than seized as entitlement.

Grant was careful to distinguish this from the prosperity gospel. Abundant life is not a promise that every bank account will overflow or that following Jesus removes hardship. It is a life settled in God's provision and order - abundance in the mind, emotions, marriage, family, work and every part of life as we come under His will.

That changes how we hear God's boundaries. The command not to eat from the tree was not the act of a killjoy withholding something good. Grant presented it as protection. God knew what the fruit of self-determination would produce. The garden says, "I have given you all this; come and live with Me." The temptation says, "Ignore the Giver and take the one thing on your own terms." Which voice

sounds more familiar in my choices? The serpent magnifies the one boundary until the generosity of the whole garden disappears from view. Temptation still works that way: obedience begins to feel like deprivation and self-rule begins to feel like freedom. The question is not only what I want now, but what kind of fruit this choice will grow over time.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REFLECT AND REMEMBER

1	Where in my life have I confused God's abundant life with getting the outcomes, comfort or possessions I personally want?
2	What boundary or biblical principle have I been tempted to see as God withholding something from me rather than protecting something in me?
3	When I picture the "garden" God intends, what would greater contentment under His provision and order look like in my actual life?

PRAYER

Father, thank You that Your heart is not scarcity but life. Correct the ways I have confused abundance with getting my own way. Help me trust Your boundaries and receive Your provision with contentment. Welcome me again into the life of walking closely with You. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

God's boundaries are not there to keep me from life, but to keep me in His way of life.

WEDNESDAY
DAY
3

The Way of the Apple

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday we reflected on welcome to the garden. Today the sermon moves forward into the way of the apple, continuing Grant's contrast between God's way of life and the self-determined way of the apple.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Proverbs 14:12 (NIV)**
>
> *There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Yesterday the garden showed us God's generous design. Today Grant's apple exposes the competing way: self-determination. In Genesis 3 the tempter first asks, "Did God really say?" Then he contradicts God's warning and finally offers autonomy: you can decide good and evil for yourself. Grant's point was that the strategy has not changed. Once 'Did God really say?' loosens our confidence, contradiction becomes easier and self-rule begins to sound wise. We stop asking what God has said and start asking what interpretation will permit what we already desire. The old temptation is not merely to break a rule; it is to move the final authority from God to self.

The contrast on the platform was deliberately absurd: a basket overflowing with colour, variety and abundance on one side, and a single apple on the other. Yet humanity chose the apple. Grant said we repeat that same choice whenever we insist on our way while disregarding God's Word and principles. We can even interpret Scripture until it conveniently supports what we already want.

The danger is that the result is not always immediate. Grant described sin as a slow poison. Genesis begins in a garden and ends in a coffin. A way can feel reasonable, defensible and even attractive today while quietly producing separation, decay and loss over time. Proverbs 14:12 therefore asks me to distrust the assumption that what seems right to me must be right before God.

Grant linked this to the sweep of Genesis: a book that opens with life in a garden closes with a body in a coffin. That gives weight to God's warning. Sin's wages may accumulate quietly, but direction matters. Small repeated choices form a way, and a way eventually has a destination.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REFLECT AND REMEMBER

1	Where am I most likely to ask, “Did God really say?” because His Word conflicts with something I strongly want or believe?
2	What is my present “apple” - the area where self-determination is more attractive to me than trusting God’s way?
3	Is there any slow fruit of self-will already appearing in my relationships, attitudes or habits that I need to stop excusing?

PRAYER

Lord, expose the places where I have made my own reasoning the final authority. Give me courage to call the apple what it is and to trust Your Word even when my desires pull another way. Lead me away from slow destruction and back into Your life. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

A way can seem right to me and still be the way of the apple.

THURSDAY
DAY
4

The Cross Opens the Way Back

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday we reflected on the way of the apple. Today the sermon moves forward into the cross opens the way back, continuing Grant's contrast between God's way of life and the self-determined way of the apple.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Romans 6:23 (NIV)**
>
> *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Yesterday we faced the way of the apple and its slow movement toward death. Grant then brought us to the gospel: sin separates us from God, but Jesus reconciles what was broken. Salvation is not humanity finding a better version of its own way. It is receiving the free gift God has made possible through Christ. Romans 6:23 holds the two ways together: wages and gift, death and life. The apple promises autonomy but pays wages we cannot escape. Jesus offers what we cannot earn. Grace does not mean God is indifferent to how we live; grace brings us out of the old way and gives us a new life under a new Lord.

Grant described repentance as recognising that I have lived by the way of the apple and turning from it. Baptism then gives visible expression to that surrender: dying with Christ to the old self-directed life and being raised into resurrection life. In Grant's words, baptism is a renouncing of "my will, my way" and an embracing of Jesus as Lord, Saviour and King. Grant's baptism picture makes the surrender visible. Going under the water says that the self-centred claim to rule my own life belongs in the grave; rising says that my future is joined to Christ's resurrection life. It is a public confession that another King now has the right to lead me.

This is why religion cannot save me. Religion can become another attempt to achieve salvation through my effort, performance and control. The gospel brings me to the foot of the cross with empty

hands. Jesus has made the way. My response is to receive, repent and surrender. The abundant life begins not with getting God to support my plans, but with laying my life beneath His Lordship.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REFLECT AND REMEMBER

1	Where am I still tempted to measure my standing with God by my effort, performance or religious behaviour rather than Christ's completed work?
2	What does repentance from the "way of the apple" need to mean in one concrete area of my life right now?
3	Does my understanding of baptism and new life include a real surrender of "my will, my way", or have I separated faith from Lordship?

PRAYER

Jesus, thank You that the way back to the Father is Your gift, not my achievement. I repent of the places where I keep choosing myself as lord. Teach me to live from the cross and resurrection - surrendered, forgiven and raised into the life You give. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

The gospel does not improve the way of the apple; it brings me through the cross into a new way.

FRIDAY
DAY
5

Worship by Walking in the Way

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday we reflected on the cross opens the way back. Today the sermon moves forward into worship by walking in the way, continuing Grant's contrast between God's way of life and the self-determined way of the apple.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Acts 24:14 (NIV)**
>
> *However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Yesterday the cross brought us from self-effort into Christ's gift and Lordship. Grant then widened the meaning of worship. Paul says he worships God "as a follower of the Way". Worship is therefore more than the songs we sing together. A surrendered life and a surrendered will are worship. This gives ordinary obedience spiritual weight. The unseen decision to tell the truth, forgive, give generously, keep a promise or submit a plan to God can be worship just as surely as a song. Paul could describe his whole manner of following God as worship 'according to the Way'.

That surrendered walk is narrow because self-determination is natural to us. Grant used Jesus' picture of the narrow gate and the hard way that leads to life. The wide way is easier precisely because it allows "my will, my way, my timing". The narrow way repeatedly asks, "Lord, what is Your way? Let Your kingdom come and Your will be done in me."

Grant also warned that the tempter can appear as an "angel of light". Not every claim of personal revelation is from God simply because it feels spiritual. He urged us to test what we hear through God's Word, His Spirit and His body. A revelation that conveniently releases me from what Scripture has consistently said may simply be the old temptation wearing religious clothing. Grant's warning about revelation was therefore a call to discernment, not a denial that God speaks. God does not need to

contradict His own character and Word to guide us. Scripture, the Spirit and the body of Christ give us safeguards against baptising our desires with spiritual language.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REFLECT AND REMEMBER

1	What would change if I measured worship this week less by what I sing and more by where I actually surrender and obey?
2	Where does the narrow way currently feel costly because God's will confronts my timing, preferences or sense of personal rights?
3	How do I test what I call "revelation" or personal conviction, especially when it tells me exactly what I already want to hear?

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, make my whole life worship. Give me courage for the narrow way and humility to test what I hear. Protect me from spiritual language that hides self-will. Let my obedience give Jesus glory when nobody is watching. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

Worship is not only what I sing; it is the way I walk when my will meets God's.

SATURDAY
DAY
6

Choose His Way in Real Life

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday we reflected on worship by walking in the way. Today the sermon moves forward into choose his way in real life, continuing Grant's contrast between God's way of life and the self-determined way of the apple.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Exodus 6:7 (NIV)

I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God.

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Yesterday worship became a surrendered way of life. Grant concluded by bringing that surrender into ordinary relationships. First, church: God says, "I will take you as my people," not merely as isolated individuals. Grant challenged the post-church idea that Jesus, my Bible and my private spirituality are all I need. God forms a people, and purpose is worked out in the context of His body. Grant used Israel's story to show the pattern: inheritance was given to a people, with tribes, families and individuals finding their place within that people. Christian maturity is not designed as permanent independence. Jesus is still building His church, even though churches and leaders can fail and require correction.

Then he applied the same principle to marriage and family. Husbands were called to take responsibility and love sacrificially as Christ loved the church; wives were called to embrace the complementary biblical role of submission; parents were told to train their children rather than surrender the responsibility of parenting in order to be liked. Grant's repeated point was not "be legalistic", but "do not choose your own way and then expect the fruit of God's way."

Finally he spoke directly to unmarried people and couples about cohabitation, covenant, sexual integrity and honouring lawful authority. His appeal was to wait for the appointed time and honour God with the body and the relationship. He ended by widening the question beyond marriage: business, finances, parents, church and

every other area come under the same choice. “Choose today whom you will serve.” The Holy Spirit convicts; our responsibility is to hear truth, respond and walk in God’s way. Grant repeatedly said this was not about Christians running around doing the Holy Spirit's work of conviction. It was about speaking truth in love and allowing the Spirit to deal with each heart. The issue underneath every example remained the same: when Scripture, culture, desire and personal opinion pull in different directions, who gets the final word?

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REFLECT AND REMEMBER

1	Where have I allowed disappointment with people, church or leadership to become a reason for withdrawing from God’s design for community?
2	In my closest family relationships, where am I being asked to take biblical responsibility rather than defend my preferences, comfort or frustrations?
3	What area of my real life - relationships, sexuality, parenting, finances, business or honouring authority - most clearly places God’s way and my way in front of me as a choice?

PRAYER

Father, bring Your Word into the ordinary places of my life. Keep me from using disappointment, culture or personal opinion to excuse self-will. Give me grace to live as part of Your people and to honour You in my relationships, family, work, finances and body. I choose Your way. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

The test of “the Way” is not in theory; it is whether I choose God’s way where life is most personal.

SUNDAY
DAY
7

Garden or Apple - Which Way Will I Walk?

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday we reflected on choose his way in real life. Today the sermon moves forward into garden or apple - which way will i walk?, continuing Grant's contrast between God's way of life and the self-determined way of the apple.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

John 14:6 (NIV)

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Yesterday Grant brought the sermon into church, marriage, parenting, relationships and everyday decisions. Looking back over the week, everything begins with the same truth: the Way is not a technique. Jesus is the Way. Through Him we are reconciled to the Father and invited back into the life for which humanity was created. That restored life is not a return to Eden by human effort. It is life with God made possible through Jesus and then learned through daily surrender. The sermon has moved from identity - people of the Way - to origin, fall, cross, worship and finally practice. Each movement asks us to trust the same God more deeply.

The garden and the apple have given us a simple picture to remember. The garden is God's abundance under God's rule: relationship, provision, order, community and life. The apple is self-determination: "my will, my way, my timing". It can look reasonable and even spiritual, but its fruit moves toward separation and death.

The choice appears again and again in ordinary life. Most choices do not arrive labelled 'rebellion'. The apple can look sensible, compassionate, modern, efficient or even spiritual. What exposes it is the centre: does this choice submit to God's revealed way, or does it require me to make myself the final authority?

The garden is not ease without cost; it is life received under God's rule, sometimes through the difficult narrow path of obedience.

So the week ends where Grant ended: “Choose today whom you will serve.” This is not an invitation to earn God’s favour through rules. It is an invitation to surrender to the One who has already opened the way through the cross. Repent when I have chosen the apple. Receive Christ’s grace. Let worship become obedience. Test what I hear. Live among His people. Honour His Word in the most personal areas of life. And keep asking one simple question: “Lord, what is Your way?” Grant's examples prevent the message from remaining abstract. Church commitment, marriage, parenting, sexuality, money, business and honouring authority are places where theology becomes a way of life. We answer the sermon not mainly by admiring the illustration but by the next obedient choice. This is not fear-driven legalism but trust: the God who gave the garden and the cross can be trusted with the road ahead. The choice also needs to be renewed rather than assumed. Yesterday's surrender does not automatically govern today's decision. In each new pressure point I can pause before reacting and ask what Grant kept asking through the sermon: 'Lord, what is Your way?' That question turns the message into a practice. It gives Scripture room to challenge my first instinct, gives the Spirit room to convict me, and gives trusted believers room to help me see what I may be missing. Over time those repeated acts of surrender become a way of life.

The goal is not anxious rule-keeping, but a heart increasingly at home under God's leadership - receiving His abundance as gift, trusting His boundaries as wisdom, and returning quickly to the cross whenever self-rule reappears. Before ending, take a few quiet minutes and let the sermon become personal. Where am I still hearing the old question, “Did God really say?”, and where have I quietly made my reasoning, preference or timing the final authority? Think about the ordinary places Grant named: church, marriage, parenting, sexuality, money, business, authority and community. The point is not anxious rule-keeping. It is trust in the God who created the garden, warned us because He loves us, and opened the way back through the cross. Remember the picture of baptism: dying to self-rule and rising to live under Christ’s Lordship. Remember too that worship is not only what we sing; Paul said he worshipped according to the Way. So name one area honestly. Repent where you need to repent, receive grace again, and choose the next obedient step with Jesus.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REFLECT AND REMEMBER

1	Looking back over the week, where have I most clearly recognised the difference between God's garden and my own "apple"?
2	What has this sermon changed in the way I understand abundant life - especially the relationship between grace, surrender and obedience?
3	What is one specific choice I can make in the coming week that says, in practice, "Jesus, You are the Way; not me"?

FINAL PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You are the Way, the Truth and the Life. Thank You for opening the way back to the Father. I surrender the apple of self-rule and choose to walk with You. Let Your Word shape my relationships, decisions, worship and community. Keep me close to You and make my life fruitful in Your way. Search me where I still defend my own way. Give me courage to repent quickly, trust deeply and obey joyfully. Make the choices of this coming week a visible yes to Your Lordship. Amen.

CARRY THIS INTO THE COMING WEEK

Every day I choose again: the way of the apple, or Jesus - the Way into life.