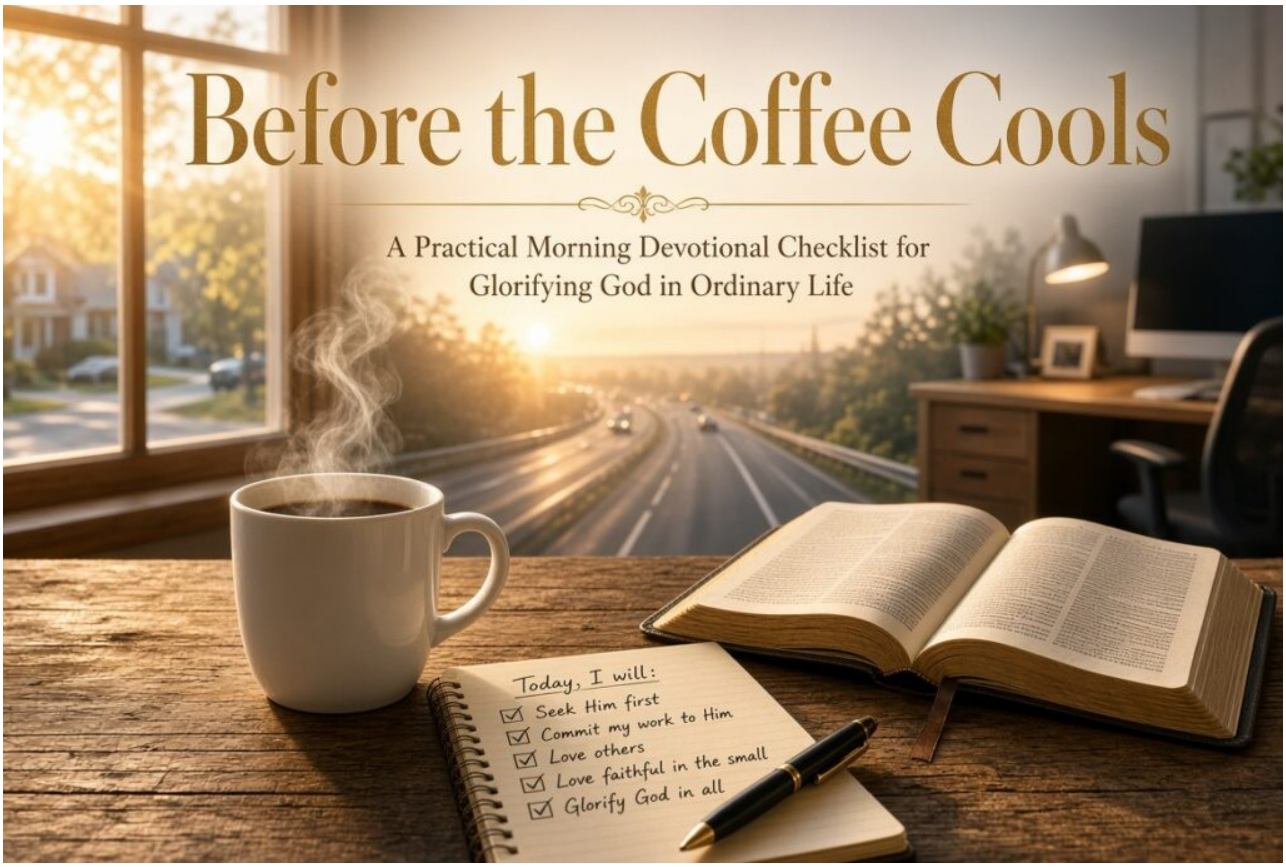


The Preflight Inspection of the Soul

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Lost by Inches

Most Christians do not lose their witness in a single dramatic fall. They lose it by inches: a curt word to a cashier, a lane stolen on the freeway at 7:40 in the morning, a neighbor whose name we never bothered to learn, a brother's need quietly overlooked because the week was busy. The great battles of discipleship are rarely fought in the sanctuary. They are fought in the parking lot, the break room, the checkout line, and the text thread.

That is why a morning checklist can be such a sharp spiritual tool. Pilots do not skip the preflight inspection because they have flown before, and surgeons do not skip the instrument count because they are experienced. The checklist exists because ordinary days are where catastrophic failures hide. Billy Graham, introducing his ten guidelines for Christian living, reminded readers that the Bible describes the Christian life as one of constant growth. Growth of that kind is either tended each morning or neglected by default.

What follows is not a ladder of works by which we climb up to God. Scripture is plain that we are saved by grace through faith, “not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9). It is the very next verse that gives this checklist its warrant: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). The boxes below are not a scorecard for earning favor; they are a lamp for walking in good works God has already prepared. Check them with gratitude, not anxiety. Leave a box empty with honesty, not despair. And let every one of them point you back to Christ.

How to Use This Checklist

Read one or two sections each morning with your Bible open, and pray the words of Psalm 139:23–24 before you begin: “Search me, O God, and know my heart.” Choose the boxes that fit the day ahead: the commute, the meeting, the errand, the visit. In the evening, return to the page and mark what God enabled you to do. What looks like recording an accomplishment is really recording grace.

If you want a single anchor verse for the whole exercise, take the passage that OpenBible.info’s readers have voted the most helpful on daily Christian living, Romans 12:1–2: present your bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,” and “be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Every section below is simply an application of those two verses to a different corner of the week.

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1. Seek First the Kingdom: The Morning Watch

Matthew 6:33 · Luke 9:23 · Psalm 5:3

Everything else on this list flows from this first category, or it does not flow at all. Jesus did not tell His disciples to seek the kingdom eventually, but *first* (Matthew 6:33), and He called them to take up the cross *daily* (Luke 9:23). Graham’s first guideline is to read the Bible daily, and he warned against skimming a chapter merely to satisfy the conscience. The benefit is not information alone but orientation. A heart that has heard from God before it hears from the world walks into the day already steadied.

> *“…God first, others second, self third.”*
>
> **— Billy Graham, “In His Own Words: Billy Graham on Living the Christian Life,” Billy Graham Library**

- ☐ I read Scripture this morning slowly enough to hear it, not merely to finish it.
- ☐ I prayed through today's calendar (meetings, errands, appointments) by name.
- ☐ I confessed known sin and received God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
- ☐ I asked the Holy Spirit for strength before I needed it.
- ☐ I surrendered one specific worry to God (Philippians 4:6–7).
- ☐ I settled the order of the day: God first, others second, self third.

2. Whatsoever Ye Do: Employment and Daily Work

Colossians 3:23–24 · 1 Corinthians 10:31 · Ephesians 6:6–8

Most believers spend a third of their waking lives at work, and Scripture refuses to treat those hours as spiritually neutral: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23). The employee who arrives on time, tells the truth on the timesheet, and does excellent work when no supervisor is watching preaches a sermon few pulpits can match. The spiritual benefit is freedom. When the Lord is your true Employer, a harsh boss cannot steal your joy, and a promotion cannot inflate your pride.

> *"The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees."*
>
> **— Brother Lawrence, The Practice of the Presence of God (17th century)**

The Dutch theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper put the same truth in public terms. In his 1880 address on sphere sovereignty, he insisted that there is no compartment of life, the office and the shop floor included, that falls outside the claim of Christ.

> *"There is not a square inch … over which Christ … does not cry: 'Mine!'"*
>
> **— Abraham Kuyper, "Sphere Sovereignty" (1880)**

- ☐ I will give an honest day's work, whether or not anyone is watching.
- ☐ I will not pad hours, shade the truth, or take credit that belongs to someone else.
- ☐ I will speak well of my employer and coworkers and refuse gossip in the break room.
- ☐ I will treat the customer, client, or caller in front of me as someone made in God's image.
- ☐ I will pray silently for one coworker by name.
- ☐ I will offer the tedious parts of my work, too, as worship (1 Corinthians 10:31).

3. Love Thy Neighbour: Strangers, Neighbors, and Everyday Conversation

Luke 10:27–37 · Colossians 4:5–6 · 1 Peter 3:15

When a lawyer asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" the answer was a story about a stranger lying beside a road (Luke 10:29–37). Neighbor-love in Scripture is not limited to the people we would have chosen. It includes the man next door whose bumper sticker irritates us, the server who brought the wrong order, and the stranger beside us at the pharmacy counter. Verse By Verse Ministry compares believers to ambassadors posted on foreign soil: we remain among unbelievers precisely so that we can represent Christ's kingdom to them. The benefit is open doors. People who have been treated with unexpected kindness tend to ask where it came from.

> *"We witness in two ways: by life and by word."*
>
> **— Billy Graham, "10 Guidelines for Christian Living," Billy Graham Library (from Peace with God)**
>
> *"Do not waste time bothering whether you "love" your neighbour; act as if you did."*
>
> **— C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, Book III, chapter 9**

- ☐ I will learn, or use, the name of a neighbor, cashier, or server today.
- ☐ I will be the first to greet, and I will be swift to hear and slow to speak (James 1:19).
- ☐ I will look for one practical way to help a neighbor: carrying, lending, mowing, watching.
- ☐ I will let my speech be "alway with grace, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6).
- ☐ I will be ready to give a reason for my hope, "with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).
- ☐ I will pray for one person who does not yet know Christ.

4. Esteem Others Better Than Yourself: The Highway, the Line, and the Errand

Philippians 2:3–4, 14 · Galatians 5:22–23 · Proverbs 16:32

Few places test sanctification like an interstate on-ramp at rush hour or a long line at the motor vehicle office. Paul's instruction to "esteem other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3) is not suspended behind the steering wheel. Self-control, the last-named fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23), is what turns an inconvenience into a testimony. Dennis Rainey lists among his essentials of the Christian life the call to obey God rather than our cravings (1 Corinthians 9:24–27). Impatience, after all, is only a craving for our own way, a little sooner. The benefit is peace: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty" (Proverbs 16:32).

> *“Our passions must be subordinated to the cross.”*
>
> **— Dennis Rainey, “7 Essentials for the Christian Life,” Cru (reprinted from FamilyLife)**

- ☐ I will drive as though the car ahead of me carries someone for whom Christ died.
- ☐ I will let someone merge, and I will not answer rudeness with rudeness.
- ☐ I will keep the speed limit and arrive with a calm spirit rather than a stolen minute.
- ☐ I will sincerely thank the clerk, the mechanic, and the delivery driver.
- ☐ I will wait in line without murmuring (Philippians 2:14).
- ☐ I will return the cart, pick up the litter, and leave each place better than I found it.

5. Bear Ye One Another’s Burdens: Meeting the Needs of Fellow Believers

Galatians 6:2, 10 · 1 John 3:17–18 · 2 Corinthians 9:7

Paul tells the churches to do good unto all men, “especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). John presses the point: whoever has this world’s goods, sees a brother in need, and shuts up his compassion, “how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17). Burden-bearing takes many shapes: a grocery card for a family between jobs, a ride to a medical appointment, a meal after a funeral, an hour of simply listening. Graham called believers to let love be the ruling principle of life, and Rainey’s essentials include serving God rather than ourselves (Isaiah 6:8). The benefit flows both ways. The body is strengthened, and the cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7) finds that generosity enlarges the heart far more than it shrinks the wallet.

> *“The first service that one owes to others … consists in listening to them.”*
>
> **— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together (1939)**

- ☐ I will check on one believer who is grieving, sick, unemployed, or alone.
- ☐ I will give, as I am able, to a known need, cheerfully and not under compulsion.
- ☐ I will listen fully before I offer advice.
- ☐ I will pray *with* someone, not merely *for* them.
- ☐ I will offer practical help: a meal, a ride, a repair, an afternoon of childcare.
- ☐ I will keep confidences and protect the dignity of those I help (Matthew 6:3–4).

6. Be Not Conformed: In the World but Not of It

John 17:15–18 · Romans 12:2 · James 1:27 · Philippians 4:8

Jesus prayed not that the Father would take His disciples out of the world, but that He would keep them from the evil one (John 17:15). The Christian is to be neither a hermit nor a chameleon. Ligonier Ministries points to Daniel, who served Babylon with skill yet refused to compromise, and concludes that believers should neither reject nor uncritically accept their culture. Fredericksburg Christian School's guide to worldview urges believers to weigh films, music, novels, and news against Scripture, keeping what agrees with biblical truth and rejecting what does not.

> *"Developing a Christian worldview doesn't mean withdrawing from culture."*
>
> **— Fredericksburg Christian School, "Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Developing a Christian Worldview"**

Former cold-case detective J. Warner Wallace offers a test worth carrying all day. Being physically present in a worldly setting is not the danger, he argues; it may even be an opportunity. The danger begins when that setting becomes a source of instruction for how we think and live. When a show, a feed, or a friendship starts doing that, it is time to step back. The benefit of such vigilance is discernment: the renewed mind is able to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

> *"…less concerned with my point of location than … with my source of information."*
>
> **— J. Warner Wallace, Cold Case Christianity**
>
> *"Christians live in the world, but it is not their ultimate home."*
>
> **— Ligonier Ministries, "Christianity and Culture," Ligonier Guides**

- ☐ I will measure today's entertainment by Philippians 4:8 before I press play.
- ☐ I will notice when a program, feed, or conversation begins shaping my values, and step away.
- ☐ I will engage unbelieving friends with warmth, without adopting their worldview.
- ☐ I will spend more minutes in God's Word today than in my news feed.
- ☐ I will keep myself "unspotted from the world" in speech, humor, and habit (James 1:27).
- ☐ I will remember that "our conversation is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20).

7. A Friend Loveth at All Times: Christ-Centered Friendship

Proverbs 17:17; 27:6, 17 · Ephesians 4:15 · John 15:13

The Greek *philia*, the love of friendship, is a gift of God, and Mission Hills Church anchors it in Proverbs 17:17: "A friend loveth at all times." Shannon Kay McCoy of the Biblical Counseling Coalition describes gospel-centered friendships as centered on Christ, redemptive in offering forgiveness and restoration, and sacrificial in their demands on our time and emotions. Like a garden, she says, they must be tended, and honesty within them should come with humility and kindness. Leslie Ludy of Set Apart Ministries adds a guardrail many friendships lack: the godly friend points the other person to Jesus rather than becoming that person's first refuge. The benefit is iron sharpening iron (Proverbs 27:17). Friends formed this way leave each other more like Christ.

> *"A gospel-centered friend drives others to God and not to herself."*
>
> **— Shannon Kay McCoy, "Cultivating Gospel-Centered Friendships," Biblical Counseling Coalition**
>
> *"…the absent must be safe with us."*
>
> **— Amy Carmichael, as cited by Leslie Ludy, "How to Be a Christ-Centered Friend," Set Apart Ministries**

Guidelines for Casual Friendship

- ☐ I will point a friend toward Christ rather than making myself indispensable.
- ☐ I will refuse gossip. The absent will be safe with me.
- ☐ I will speak a hard truth in love when it is needed, and receive one humbly (Proverbs 27:6).
- ☐ I will widen my circle so that no one feels shut out.
- ☐ I will choose close companions who sharpen my walk (Proverbs 13:20; 1 Corinthians 15:33).
- ☐ I will keep friendships with the opposite sex transparent, guarded, and honoring to any spouse involved (1 Timothy 5:1–2).
- ☐ I will forgive quickly and keep no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5).

8. Flee, Follow, and Wait: Romantic Relationships That Honor God

2 Corinthians 6:14 · 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5 · 1 Corinthians 6:18–20 · Song of Solomon 2:7

Mission Hills Church observes that romantic love is often avoided in church settings, even though the Bible celebrates it within God's design for marriage (Song of Solomon 8:6–7).

Because romance is a good gift, it needs firm guardrails. Desiring God frames dating as discernment toward marriage rather than practice for it, since intimacy is safest within marriage. Frank Powell of ChurchLeaders urges believers to date with a trajectory toward marriage and not to date non-Christians. Transformation Christian Fellowship adds five practical principles: seek God before seeking a person, value character over attraction, communicate with grace, share spiritual alignment ("Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3), and stay accountable to a church community. Three times the Song of Solomon charges, "stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please" (2:7). The benefit is a love that is protected before marriage and therefore strong within it.

> *"Pursue clarity, and postpone intimacy."*
>
> **— Desiring God, "The Great Prize in Christian Dating"**
>
> *"Dating with a trajectory towards marriage means dating with a purpose."*
>
> **— Frank Powell, "10 Christian Dating Principles That Could Transform Lives," ChurchLeaders**
>
> *"…a healthy romantic relationship must be rooted in God first."*
>
> **— Transformation Christian Fellowship, "Building a God-Centered Romantic Relationship"**

Guidelines for Romantic Involvement

- ☐ I will date only a believer whose love for Christ is evident, not merely professed (2 Corinthians 6:14).
- ☐ I will date with a purpose, discerning marriage, not passing the time.
- ☐ I will set physical boundaries in advance and keep them when emotions run high (1 Thessalonians 4:3–5).
- ☐ I will value character over chemistry: patience, faithfulness, self-control (Galatians 5:22–23).
- ☐ I will invite trusted believers (parents, pastors, mature friends) to speak into the relationship.
- ☐ I will avoid settings of isolation that invite temptation, and flee youthful lusts (2 Timothy 2:22).
- ☐ I will ask honestly whether each of us is growing closer to Christ because of the other.
- ☐ If married, I will guard my eyes, my screen, and my heart for my spouse alone (Proverbs 5:18; Matthew 5:28).

9. Rejoice Evermore: Living Above Your Circumstances

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 · Habakkuk 3:17–18 · Philippians 4:11–13

Graham's final guideline was to live above your circumstances, and Rainey closes his essentials with the call to worship God rather than comfort, pointing to the prophet Habakkuk. Paul learned "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11). Joy that does not depend on circumstance may be the most persuasive apologetic a Christian ever offers, because the watching world has no explanation for it.

> *"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines … Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."*
>
> **— Habakkuk 3:17–18 (KJV)**

- ☐ I will give thanks in everything, naming at least three specific mercies (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
- ☐ I will choose worship over complaint when plans collapse.
- ☐ I will not let a bad report or a bad day redefine the goodness of God.
- ☐ I will end the day by reviewing these boxes, thanking God for each one checked and confessing each one missed.
- ☐ I will lie down in peace, trusting that His mercies are new every morning (Psalm 4:8; Lamentations 3:22–23).

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The Checklist and the Cross

No believer will check every box every day. The point is not a perfect page but a turned heart. Each empty box drives us back to the One who kept the law perfectly on our behalf, and each checked box is evidence that His Spirit is at work in us. Graham reminded his readers that temptation is not sin; yielding is. The same grace that forgives the yielding also strengthens us to resist it tomorrow.

So tomorrow, before the coffee cools, open the Book and pick up the pen. Then step out the door as an ambassador of another King, into the break room, onto the freeway, past the neighbor's fence, and toward the friend who needs a call. Ordinary days are where faithfulness is proved, and with God's help, yours can be one of them.

> *"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."*
>
> **— 1 Corinthians 10:31 (KJV)**

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Colophon: Researched and drafted with the assistance of Claude (Anthropic) as a research collaborator; all editorial decisions rest with the author.