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CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Looking Ahead - Top Off Doors Off

May 24, 2026

All relationships face moments of tension and disappointment. What happens next can either build a connection or erode it from within.

Bitterness rarely bursts onto the scene. It begins quietly, growing in the gap between what we hope for and what actually happens. Left unaddressed, it spreads and quietly shapes the whole relationship.

Missed expectations and unspoken hurts create distance in relationships. Sometimes, instead of addressing this tension, we step back. What seems like protection soon becomes separation.

Distance can feel safe. But it also keeps us from what we are created for: connection, love, and reconciliation.

Scripture encourages us in this journey.

Hebrews 12:15

Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.

When conflict comes or disappointment hits, address things early. Have the conversation. Extend grace, even when it's hard. Resist the urge to build walls when you could build bridges. Healthy relationships don't avoid struggle. They stay faithful in the middle of it.

You don't have to pretend something didn't hurt. But you also don't have to let that hurt take root.

Today, notice where distance may be setting in. Then take one small step toward connection instead.

The goal isn't perfection. It is choosing to stay present with each other, even when it's hard. In every relationship, let presence, grace, and connection have the final word.

Discussion Questions:

Ice Breaker: When plans don't go the way you expected, how do you usually respond?

Why does disappointment often lead to disconnection instead of resolution?

Read Ephesians 4:17–32: Which instructions about relationships stand out most (truth-telling, forgiveness, kindness, managing anger)?

Who is one person you feel distant from right now? What is one small step you can take this week to move toward connection with them instead of away from it?

Reflect and Respond: If living with freedom in our relationships requires staying connected through imperfect moments, what might God be asking you to do differently this week?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, you are the only one who truly knows when the rain will come in my relationships. Thank you for always being a safe place for me to bring my hurts, frustrations, and disappointments. Please heal the wounds that cause any distance to be created between me and _____. Remove any pride, anger, or hard edges I bring into our relationship, and give me the grace to communicate with compassion and listen with understanding. I love you, I trust you, and I worship you. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Galatians 5:13

For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.

This post was written by Lori Tuckerman, Director of Content at CedarCreek.

Renewal When It Rains - Top Off Doors Off

May 25, 2026

Bible in a Year: Isaiah 45-50 | Romans 5

It is said that in Northwest Ohio, if you don't like the weather now, just wait an hour, and it will probably change. I experienced this personally this past week while waiting for a track meet to start. The day was hot and sunny, but right when the meet was supposed to begin, the skies opened and dumped torrents of rain. The meet was canceled. Then the sun came back out. The same thing happened the following day. Needless to say, I was beyond disappointed.

Although we cannot control the weather, we can prepare for it. We bring umbrellas, have alternative plans, and stay flexible.

Relationships are like the weather. We don't have control over the other person, but we can prepare for the "downpours." We should never seek out conflict, but we should be prepared for when it comes. Unfortunately, many relationships are destroyed by this lack of preparation.

In his letter to the Ephesian Church, the apostle Paul provides some helpful advice for developing "rain-ready" relationships, capable of withstanding downpours.

Ephesians 4: 21-24

Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God - truly righteous and holy.

When we become Christ followers, we trade our old sinful nature for a new spiritual nature. Paul characterizes that sinful nature as lustful and deceptive. As much as we don't want that to be true, that is exactly what we are by nature.

Lust and deception are only satisfied by gratifying our physical desires. We lust after people, things, and even food. In each of these instances, our desire for that object becomes ultimate. We lie or mislead to obtain our desired outcome. Our needs and wishes trump the needs and desires of other people. This behavior will always break relationships.

Instead, we are called to live in the new nature we have in Christ. Instead of lust and deception, this life is characterized by righteousness and holiness. Often it means denying our own desires and putting others first. Sometimes it means telling the truth when it's hard.

When we regularly practice these habits, we begin the process of making our relationships rain-ready.

Questions:

Which of your relationships needs to become rain-ready?

What are some of the behaviors you need to put off to make this relationship better?

Next Steps:

Make an intentional effort to implement some of the steps you thought of above to improve your relationship.

Read 1 Corinthians 13, and pick an attribute of love that you will focus on developing in your daily life.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of relationships. Thank you for the joy they bring to my life. Thank you for the gift of the people you have blessed me with. Forgive me for responding in ways that tear down these relationships instead of building them up. Help me know which steps I need to take to improve my relationships with those I love. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:**Galatians 5:13**

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This post was written by Julie Mabus, a Whitehouse attendee and a regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut.

The Distance Between Us - Top Off Doors Off

May 26, 2026

Bible in a Year: Isaiah 51-55 | Romans 6

For a long time, I thought *love* meant keeping the peace.

I believed staying quiet was safe. That minimizing my hurt was kindness. And pretending everything was “fine” protected relationships from falling apart.

So I became very skilled at silence.

I would carry disappointment quietly and convince myself not to “make things bigger than they needed to be.” Meanwhile, distance slowly formed in places where connection once lived.

Unresolved pain settles in the heart; it does not disappear simply because we refuse to speak about it.

And, eventually, the hurt I buried would bubble up anyway. Sometimes inwardly. Sometimes outwardly. But almost always leaving a trail of damage behind, exactly the way the enemy wants.

Inside, I replayed false narratives from the scripts in my mind:

“They do not care.”

“You are too much.”

“You will be rejected.”

On the outside, I would slowly withdraw and hide. And if the pain sat untouched long enough, eventually it would seep out defensively or reactively. Not because I wanted to wound others, but because wounded places eventually cry out when they remain unseen.

One of the hardest lessons I have learned is that disappointment creates distance when truth is left unspoken. We seek relational perfection, and the moment friction appears, we emotionally pull away to protect ourselves.

Distance feels safer than vulnerability.

But silence can become its own form of dishonesty.

Not just the obvious lies we say, but the subtle ones we hide behind:

“I’m okay.”

“It didn’t hurt.”

“I don’t need anything.”

There are lies of commission, where we speak what is untrue. But there are also lies of omission, where we withhold truth because we fear conflict, rejection, or being misunderstood.

And yet withholding the truth slowly damages intimacy, too.

Unspoken hurt becomes resentment.

Avoided conversations become walls.

False peace becomes emotional separation.

Paul reminds us that following Jesus means putting off the old way of living. The old self hides, avoids, pretends, and self-protects. But our new nature invites us into honesty, humility, and healing.

Colossians 3:9-10

Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.

Not perfection. Truth.

Maybe today the invitation is simply this:

Stop hiding behind silence and start saying what is true.

Questions:

Where in my life have I mistaken silence for peace while quietly creating distance in a relationship?

What truth have I been avoiding because I fear conflict, rejection, or vulnerability?

Next Steps:

Take one small step toward honest connection this week.

Instead of withdrawing, choose one safe relationship where you can practice telling the truth with humility and grace. That may look like starting a conversation, admitting hurt, asking for support, or simply letting someone know you have been distant.

If you have been craving deeper connection but hiding in isolation, consider joining or even leading a summer Group. Healing often happens when we stop carrying things alone and allow ourselves to be fully known.

Prayer:

Jesus, I confess that there are times I hide behind silence, avoidance, and self-protection. I tell myself I am keeping the peace, but often I am only creating distance. Help me recognize the false narratives I replay in my mind and replace them with your truth. Give me the courage to be honest about my hurt instead of burying it until it spills out onto others. Teach me how to speak truth with humility, love, and grace. Heal the places in me that fear rejection, conflict, and vulnerability. Help me stop hiding and start living in the light. Renew my heart, my mind, and my relationships as I learn to become more like you. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Galatians 5:13

For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.

This post was written by Monique Myers, a Perrysburg attendee and regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut.

When Anger Speaks Louder Than Your Heart - Top Off Doors Off

May 27, 2026

Bible in a Year: Isaiah 56-61 | Romans 7

Anger is one of those emotions that can feel immediate and justified. A sharp comment, unmet expectation, betrayal, exhaustion, or feeling unseen can ignite something in us before we even realize what's happening.

While anger itself is not always sinful, what we do with it matters deeply. Left unchecked, unresolved anger rarely stays contained. It leaks into conversations, changes our tone, hardens our hearts, and slowly steals joy and connection from the relationships around us.

Scripture gives us powerful instruction.

James 1:19-20

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.

The order here matters. Most of us react in the opposite direction. We become quick to speak, quick to assume, and quick to defend ourselves. However, God invites us to pause before responding.

Sometimes anger is only the surface emotion. Underneath it may be hurt, fear, disappointment, rejection, insecurity, grief, or exhaustion. Because of this, it's important to ask yourself, "Why am I **really** angry?" Not to excuse unhealthy behavior, but to uncover what is actually happening in your heart. When we skip that step, we often end up fighting the wrong battle or hurting people who were never the real problem.

God is not asking you to suppress your emotions or pretend that everything is fine. He is inviting you into honesty. If your anger reveals something valid, address it directly and truthfully instead of allowing resentment to grow silently. Healthy communication heals what avoidance quietly destroys.

The longer anger sits unresolved, the more room it has to shape your thoughts and relationships. Bitterness can convince you to withdraw, assume the worst, or build walls where God wants connection. When you bring your emotions before the Lord first, he helps you respond with wisdom instead of reaction.

Today, before responding out of frustration, pause. Breathe. Pray. Ask God to reveal what's underneath the anger and to help you speak with honesty, gentleness, and self-control. A surrendered heart can repair what unchecked anger would have destroyed.

Questions:

What has been triggering frustration or anger in you lately? Is it rooted in hurt, fear, exhaustion, disappointment, or something deeper?

What would it look like to respond slowly and prayerfully instead of reacting emotionally?

Next Steps:

The next time you feel anger rise up, pause before responding and ask yourself, "What am I actually feeling underneath this anger?"

Release the need to win the argument and focus, instead, on protecting connection and peace.

Spend time in prayer, asking God for wisdom, gentleness, and self-control in difficult moments.

Prayer:

Lord, you see every emotion I carry, even the ones I try to hide. Help me to not respond out of woundedness, pride, or impulse. Teach me to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Reveal what is truly happening in my heart beneath the frustration and give me the courage to address it with honesty and grace. Heal the places in me that react from hurt, and help me become someone who brings peace instead of division. In Jesus' name, amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Galatians 5:13

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This post was written by Heaven Nash, a Findlay attendee and a regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut devotional.

When It Rains, Pour Back - Top Off Doors Off

May 28, 2026

Bible in a Year: Isaiah 62-66 | Romans 8

I lacked focus in middle and high school. And it didn't change much when I started college. My goals often couldn't compete with life's distractions. And after watching someone I love slowly die for 14 years, I had a tendency to procrastinate when things seemed less important.

So, imagine my surprise when a close friend said, "I've never met someone as driven as you," after I earned my master's degree. Those words lifted my spirit and ignited a spark.

Why would someone who had already accomplished something special need encouragement?

Because even when I'm feeling like Bret Hart - "the best there is, the best there was, and the best there ever will be" - my goals still can't always compete with life's distractions. I'm certainly not alone in my feelings. Many of us struggle in difficult moments.

Reflecting over the years, I've always had people generously pour into me when I needed it most, and it didn't always look the same. Mr. Froelich refused to let me fail. Professor Peltri gave me books that offered healing and unlocked my love for writing. Others let me sit in silence when they understood anything more would be too loud.

That all so familiar idiom, "when it rains, it pours," feels awful when it's happening to you or someone you care about. It's important to have "rain-ready" family, friends, and mentors in your life, and it's equally essential for you to be that person for others.

Proverbs 11:25

The generous will prosper; Those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.

Sharing generously doesn't mean throwing money at a problem. Yes, give what you can financially, but be more intentional about giving YOU to others.

Check in on that friend whose name popped into your head instead of losing yourself in binge-watching a favorite show after a long day of work. Your voice or message could be the difference between them sinking or staying afloat. Teach someone how to network, or show them how to improve their skills to achieve more in their professional life. It's okay to compete, but helping others along the way reminds you that iron sharpens iron (Proverbs 27:17).

Don't sit around and tell others, "[It's gon rain on your head,](#)" in the middle of a storm. Buy them a hat, offer your coat, or stand with them so they're not in the storm alone. It will strengthen strained relationships.

Questions:

Do you easily accept the generosity of others?

Do you believe God equips you in various ways to pour into others?

Next Steps:

Be vulnerable enough to share the tools God has shown you for dealing with grief, anger, pride, insecurity, etc. Don't share your list of generous deeds on social media, or do so with the expectation of reciprocity. Pouring into others doesn't need recognition. Be the safe space people need by being a great listener, a confidant, an example of discipleship, and a person who doesn't shame.

Prayer:

God, help me be a person who refreshes rather than drains. I want to be the person who takes the time to pour into others as needed, rather than rushing for results. Show me how to be a beacon of peace, rather than a source of tension. Help me reach your community of children, rather than focusing only on my group. I want strangers to see the reflection of your heart. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:

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This post was written by Jaron Camp, a Findlay attendee and regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut.

Speak Life in the Rain - Top Off Doors Off

May 29, 2026

Bible in a Year: Exodus 1-4 | Romans 9

I was recently caught off guard by a moment in a close relationship. Harsh words seemed to come out of nowhere, robbing me of my good mood and wounding my heart. The sting of that exchange lingered, leaving me surprised at how quickly things could shift from comfortable to painful.

It was a real reminder that you don't get to choose when the rain comes in your relationships.

Tension and misunderstandings are part of every relationship. The real question is what we've decided in advance about who we'll be in those moments.

Ephesians 4:31-32

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

That kind of response doesn't happen accidentally. It's a choice we make before emotions run high.

Let's be honest - when challenges come, our natural instinct isn't kindness. For me, it's usually sharp, sarcastic words. Maybe it's the same for you, or perhaps you react by lashing out or shutting down.

Choosing to speak life doesn't mean ignoring what's hard. It means we refuse to let the moment pull us into tearing down when we were created to build up. If we've prepared ourselves, instead of reacting with impatience or harsh words, we can pause, remember we're loved by God, and choose to reflect his kindness.

We can speak with grace, even when we feel justified in not doing so. And we can forgive, not because it's easy but because we've already been forgiven. This kind of response softens hearts, keeps the connection intact, and can even turn the storm into something that strengthens rather than separates.

So when tension rises, pause, and ask yourself: *Am I prepared for my response in these moments?*

Will I tear down ... or will I speak life?

Because we cannot avoid the rain, but we can choose to be someone who brings life, even in the middle of it. My prayer for you is that you choose to be ready, so when the moment comes, you respond with kindness, forgiveness, and strength.

I'll end with these words from TobyMac's song, "[Speak Life](#)," which say it best:

Raise your thoughts a little higher

Use your words to inspire

Joy will fall like rain when you speak life with the things you say.

Questions:

When was the last time you felt hurt by someone's words? How did you respond?

What would it look like to pause and choose kindness, even when it's hard?

How can you remind yourself to respond with grace when tension rises?

Next Steps:

Write down one practical way you'll prepare your heart to respond with kindness the next time you're hurt.

Listen to "[Speak Life](#)" by TobyMac and let the message encourage you to bring light to your relationships.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for modeling what it means to feel loved and forgiven. Help me spread this message to everyone I come into contact with, especially those I'm closest to. Help me prepare my heart to manage the tension and any harshness that comes my way, so that I can respond with tenderhearted, forgiving words. I love you, I trust you, and I worship you. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:**Galatians 5:13**

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This post was written by Lori Tuckerman, Director of Content at CedarCreek.

Reflections - Top Off Doors Off

May 30, 2026

Rain changes things. It interrupts plans, slows our steps, and sometimes keeps us apart. In life, too, the rain brings in unexpected conflict, disappointment, and misunderstanding. It's easy to let those moments push us away from each other.

But what if we saw the rain as an invitation? Instead of drifting into distance or letting bitterness grow, we can use even these rainy seasons to lean in, notice what's happening, and choose to love each other anyway.

Galatians 5:13

For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.

We *are* free, but this freedom means we can choose how to respond, not simply do whatever we want.

We're free to walk away or lean in, to shut down or stay present, to respond in frustration or choose kindness, grace, and forgiveness.

So as you reflect, consider this:

Where have I been tempted to create distance?

Where is God inviting me to engage?

What specific step can you take this week to use your freedom to serve and move toward someone in love, even when the rain comes? Decide now how you will show up.

Because the life we've been called to isn't just free - it's full of love that chooses to say what's true, settle anger quickly, share generously, and speak life - even in the rain.

Prayer:

Father God, thank you for your continual forgiveness. Though I strive to live without sin, I know I continue to fall short of your perfect will and plan for me. Help me live in the freedom your love provides, being honest and vulnerable in my relationships. Show me any place I've been creating distance and clearly reveal where I can share myself generously, no matter how dark the storm clouds are around me. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:

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