

Sacred

THUMBprint

What is God doing to get your attention?



**UNDER-
CURRENT**

**7 Day
Devotional**

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*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.*

Matthew 11:29

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Introduction

There is an interesting science that has developed in recent years that studies ancient fingerprints left on pottery and other objects. Obviously, the scientist cannot tell us who the people are who left those prints but we can be assured by today's scientific methods that these people were as unique as you and me.

There are hand and foot prints in Egypt that date back 4,000 years. There is even a ridged print that could date as far back as 10,000 years.

The ancient Babylonians and Chinese used thumbprints like signatures in official documents and business transactions. Scientists don't know if they understood the uniqueness of each print or if they thought that the touch of the document had some kind of mystic spiritual connection.

Not until about 100 years ago did the science of fingerprinting come to the forefront. Now it is an accepted science used especially in law enforcement.

Take a look at your thumbs. The characteristics of fingerprints include nine patterns with names like "loops and whorls" that are consistent in all humans. The combination of these nine patterns gives each person their own unique set of fingerprints. Reading and pondering the THUMBPRINT Devotionals will certainly affirm the uniqueness of your own spiritual identity but more importantly we will drill deeper into the question, "What is God doing to get your attention?" by exploring how to respond to God's advances.

The truth is, lots of us go along through life just minding our own business when all of the sudden, something happens. It may be bad or good. Either way it is significant, and makes us aware of the circumstances or events that have gotten our attention. It's kind of like a wake-up call. Sometimes we are really shaken up and we want to blame some one or get even or quit.

The purpose of this devotional series is to:

- drill deeper to the awareness of God's presence
- enlighten you by what the Bible says about God's work in your life
- challenge you to authentically respond to God

Throughout the Bible God took action to get people’s attention in as many unique ways as there are thumbprints. God inspired people, warned them, confronted them, saved them, fought for them, fought against them, taught them and loved them. God had his reasons and purposes for taking action in people’s lives.

The six THUMBPRINT profiles are based on the acronym T.H.U.M.B. plus O. Here is how the individual profiles correspond to the letters in the acronym:

Profile	Letter	Description
Pilgrim	T	Thirst: Thirsty for God, longing for the truth
Philosopher	H	Hunger: Hungry for meaning and significance in life
Warrior	U	Undercurrent: Up against unseen forces in life, undercurrents that threaten to carry you away
Prophet	M	Mystery: Curiosity about the mysterious, the awesome works and actions of God
Saint	B	Brokenness: God gets our attention through illness, disappointments, devastation, pain and grief
Observer	O	Observer: Low or no awareness of God’s presence in the circumstances of life but you are watching and waiting

The “U” represents “unseen undercurrents.” The unseen undercurrents are the forces that push and pull you. These forces are stronger than you think and you are weaker than you thought to resist their movements. As a Warrior, you recognize that you are standing against forces that you know are not good for you, temptation, addiction, doubt, fear and whatever might draw you away from your relationship with your Heavenly Father. But as a Warrior, you also are ready to stand firm for the good, the right and the just. You have become aware that you are in a fight, a life-long struggle for a fulfilling and joy-filled life.

When God has your attention, things that you thought were once important no longer have the same hold on you. When God gets your attention, your life will never be the same.

Day 1: Undercurrent



Rip currents are nothing to mess around with. They are a deceptively powerful force that cause 80% of drownings on ocean beaches.

People who fall victim to rip currents rarely recognize the danger they are in until it is too late. They enjoy playing in the surf as the waves pound the shore. But what they see may be deceiving. The calm between the waves may be a river of water flowing away from the shore pulling them out to the ocean. Once caught in a strong rip current, not even an Olympic swimmer can swim through it back to shore.

There are undercurrents in life that cannot only threaten your life, they will threaten your soul. As with ocean rip currents, these undercurrents may look harmless on the surface, even exciting. You may think you are strong enough, clever enough, and determined enough to not get swept away like other people but once the current has you, it may be too late to escape without help.

Sarah was convinced that success in her job would make her happy. She never expected that the love of money would ever be a problem but there was never enough, and rarely a time when she wasn't thinking about how to make more of it. Happiness was always just a little further out.

Dave was a social drinker who did not see the fact that he was getting deeper and deeper into self medication until he realized he was in way over his head and could not get back.

Cloe loved her family so much but she didn't love herself. She would never intentionally do anything to hurt the people she loved but her self-loathing clouded her thinking, and eventually affected all of her relationships.

Harry missed the old days. His memories were sweet but his life was miserable. His disappointments had turned to bitterness and his dreams to nightmares. What Harry didn't see was that living in the past had sabotaged his joy of living in the now.

You may or may not see yourself in the theme of one of these stories. But you may, however, recognize the panicked awareness of what it is like to be pulled out into deep, dangerous waters by a current of addiction, ambition, self-focus or bitterness.

The undercurrents of life are powerful forces. Everyone is subject to their draw and vulnerable to the dangers they present if we are not careful. Jesus said,

*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.
Matthew 11:29*

PRAYER

Lord, here I am. You see the forces pulling against me and pulling for me. When it is all said and done, you are the one who holds me together. You are my hope, my life preserver, my savior. Here I am. Help me find rest for my soul today. Amen.

Day 2: Undercurrent



In the THUMBPRINT acronym the “U” is for Undercurrent. When you become aware of the *unseen, unknown, undercurrents* in our lives, be assured, God is not blind to the powerful forces that you are facing. Whether you are pushed by outside forces that seek to put you in your place or pulled by inside forces that seek to dislodge you from your God-given identity, God sees it all.

The Apostle Paul understood the power of the unseen undercurrents we face. In his letter to the Roman Christians, he gives a glimpse of the struggle he faced with the very real rip tides of life.

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. Roman 7:14-20

Like a lifeguard on a beach, God sees the dangerous currents that surround you. He gets your attention by allowing you to become aware of their power and danger. He allows you to experience these forces and is prepared to dive in to rescue you when you acknowledge your need and inability to rescue yourself.

PRAYER

Jesus, you know what I need to challenge me and make me stronger. And you know what can tear me apart and destroy me. See me, support me, save me, Jesus. Give me the courage today to admit that I can't save myself and to ask for your help with all of my heart, strength and mind. Amen.

Day 3: Undercurrent



If you were to scan the stories of the Bible, at say, a thousand-foot level, and look at the stories for rip currents of God, we would see some remarkable things.

First, the forces that eventually swept people away into danger were not very different from the forces that sweep you and me away too.

Second, the undercurrents people stepped into back then seemed harmless at first but the deeper the person in the story went, the more vulnerable they were to losing their footing and being swept away.

Third, besides rip currents that pull you away there are also powerful currents and waves that push you home to shore.

One such story is a parable that Jesus told. Look up Luke 15 starting at verse 11.

"There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living."

Can you see the rip current? This kid had no idea what he was getting himself into. In his desire for fun and entertainment he was literally being pulled by powerful forces out into the deep waters of life. He thought it was all harmless. He thought he was invincible. He thought wrong.

"After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything."

The kid was in a very dangerous place. Not only was he in way over his head, he was exhausted from trying to escape the rip tide that threatened his life. Don't underestimate dangerous temptations, unhealthy patterns and dark thinking that threatens to carry you away. Jesus sees you, Jesus supports you. Jesus saves you.

PRAYER (*verse 3, Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*)

*O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above. Amen.*

Day 4: Undercurrent



I want to be very careful here because I don't want us to get caught up thinking about the metaphor of rip currents and making connections with a parable and forget to look at the very real circumstances of our own lives. How many of us have found ourselves in a difficult and even dangerous situation and then one day you look around and say, "How did I get here?"

A husband or wife may say, "I'm sorry" over and over again but when your behavior doesn't change and trust is once again breached, the words, "I'm sorry" are meaningless.

A guy addicted to pornography thinks that nobody gets hurt by keeping his secrets but little does he know what is at stake. The truth is his thought life and actions pull him further and further into the deep waters of no return.

Lazy people rarely see themselves as lazy and work-a-holics become emotionally numb to an out of control schedule. Bitter people, gossips, cynics, meddlers, hypocrites and liars all have found themselves entrapped in a powerful flow that pulls them deeper and deeper into trouble.

None of these people got to that place without little compromises along the way. All of them could not see and did not act soon enough to escape the dangerous undercurrent. We are all vulnerable to these currents and like the younger son in Jesus' parable. One day we wake up and find ourselves in a lonely, dangerous place and wonder how in the world we got there.

"When he came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men." Luke 15:17-19

This is one of the most remarkable lines in the Prodigal Son story. “*When he came to his senses...*” It is very likely that the kid in the parable would have had lots of warnings about the choices he was making. Warnings about taking his inheritance, warnings about foolish spending, leaving home, hanging out with the wrong crowd, and on and on.

But it is only when “*he came to his senses*” does he see clearly what the consequences of his choices had dragged him into.

Don’t pray that your loved one will just stop the behavior that you know is destroying them or their dreams, pray that their eyes would be open and that they would come to their senses.

As for you, pray that you would clearly see the consequences of your own compromises. Pray that you would come to your senses before it is too late!

“So he got up and went to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.” Luke 15:20-24

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. Thank you for welcoming me home and calling me your child. Amen.

Day 5: Undercurrent



"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come home,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' " Luke 15:25-32

If we take another 1000-foot view of this story, we can see that the older brother in the story has also been caught in a rip current. His bitterness toward his brother and self-pity was just as dangerous to the relationship with his father as the younger brother's wild living.

When you try to compare your problems to someone else's problems and conclude that you are not as bad off as they are, think again. Your anger, bitterness, rebellion, or anything else is just as dangerous to you as the anger, bitterness, or rebellion is to the person you are comparing yourself to.

Jesus did not tell us how the story ended with the older brother. He may not have lived wildly like his younger brother but his bitterness and envy threatened to drown him just the same.

Perhaps Jesus left the story hanging in order to encourage us to raise our hand high when we recognize our own entrapment by dangerous unseen forces.

PRAYER

Lord, help me to appreciate what you have provided. Let my gratitude be evident in my words and actions with my family, co-workers, neighbors and everyone I come in contact with. I want to be a person who is known as a thankful person. Amen.

Day 6: Undercurrent



The father in the parable of the Prodigal Son sat and waited and watched for the young prodigal. You get the impression that even though he had every right to say, “I told you so,” to the kid that he was not waiting to rub it in. He was waiting to give the kid a new start, to heal what was broken and restore his identity as a family member. The father loved his son.

The dad was in many ways, drawing his kid back home, almost willing him out of the rip current that had carried him away. To escape a rip current you are to swim parallel to the shore until the grip of the rip is gone. Then you simply ride the current of the waves that pushes you into the safety of shore.

God waits for you, he watches for you to come to your senses. He wills for you to come home. He calls for you to know true, deep, abiding joy.

As a young boy, Jack, showed great promise. He had a good mind and voracious hunger for knowledge. He loved to read, he loved learning. With a sophisticated sense of humor, early on he set himself on the intellectual journey of pursuing joy.

With the devastating loss of his mother at a young age, Jack was caught in a rip tide of grief. His quest for joy was swept into the deep waters of atheism from which there seemed no hope.

For 31 years Jack continued his quest for joy without success. Until one day, God got his attention. The result was that his heart was transformed and he became a follower of Jesus. Out of hopelessness, Jack came to his senses.

The changes that took place in the young professor were remarkable. He became a prolific author and defender of the Christian faith. We know Jack better as C.S. Lewis.

Lewis described his life-long longing for joy with a German word: *sehnsucht*. *Sehnsucht* is almost impossible to translate. It is a deep inexpressible longing for home. Not necessarily the place where you were born but rather, the place that you were made for. The longing is more than just the instinct of an animal, it is the cry of the soul. There is a force that pushes the individual in this quest. There is a drawing of a person to shore, much like the waves pushing to shore the weary swimmer.

It was *sehnsucht* that pulled on the heart of the prodigal son to go home. It was *sehnsucht* that transformed the heart of an avowed atheist to seek after Christ.

It is *sehnsucht* that draws your heart to find the safety and contentment of home with God.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, the longing of my heart is to be at home with you. Forgive me for thinking that doing it my way would ever be the best way. I'm coming home. Give me the strength and determination today to walk toward joy. Amen.

Day 7: Undercurrent



What is God doing to get your attention? He stands on the shore waiting for you to come to your senses. If you see that your efforts for happiness, fulfillment and joy are getting you nowhere, as if you are swimming against a rip current, take a good hard look around you.

The choices you have made may have felt like little compromises along the way but the result is that you are being carried by one of life's many rip tides. This is not the end of your story. The Bible says that if you confess your sin, Christ is faithful and just to forgive your sin and to cleanse you from all your bad decisions, wrong thinking and actions that put you in the rip current in the first place.

Imagine if you will, that your heavenly Father is watching and waiting for you on shore. The *sehnsucht* (the longing for home) of his amazing love draws you home again.

Come home. Come home. Come home.

How Deep is Your Compassion

How deep is your compassion

How high your mercy

How wide are your loving arms

That surround even me.

Unlike my brother I was restless

Feeling my wild oats again.

So I took what belonged to me

And I left my family.

I did not know then,

Then to a far off land I wandered,

Squandered ev'rything I owned.

'Til in desperate poverty

My Father's love for me

Was calling, "Come back home."

My father saw me from a distant.

He'd been waiting all the while for me.

I heard him call my name

And through my tears of shame

I could finally say,

*How deep is your compassion
How high your mercy
How wide are your loving arms
That surround even me.*

Tracy Danz and Bob Stromberg ©1983 Stream Mountain Music

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you've got my attention. Awaken me today to the reality that you are here. You see my wandering heart and patiently wait for me to come to my senses and come home. Give me eyes today to see how truly deep your compassion is for me. Amen.