

Exciting

CENTRAL TAMPA
BAPTIST • CHURCH

Lennox Zamore, Pastor



21 DAYS
of FASTING and PRAYER

PRAYER AND FASTING GUIDE

Where Everyone Is Someone and Jesus Christ Is Lord



Dear Members and Friends:

If you are reading this letter, it means you have signed up for our 21-Day prayer and fasting challenge.

Scripture tells us that *“the eyes of the LORD run **to and fro** throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him (2Ch 16:9).* What if God’s eyes are on you right now? What if He is calling your name? What if He wants to make Himself strong through you? Are you ready?

In this 21 days of prayer and fasting challenge, God may speak into your life and give you a breakthrough. This season of prayer and fasting will be guided by three tools in this document:

- ❖ A Biblical guide to fasting
- ❖ A fasting matrix with different fasting options, and,
- ❖ A prayer and Bible study guide for each of the 21 days.

This year, I encourage all participants to do all 21 days of fasting and prayer. First, read the guide, second, select your level of fast (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 D1, or D2), and third, do the short daily Bible study, complete with suggested songs and videos.

Whatever type or duration of fast you chose, be earnest and do not waver. It is hard, and the enemy will resist you, but persevere and you will be rewarded. For accountability, I encourage you to do the fast and the devotions with at least one other person, as a family, or even as a small group. Read the Scriptures aloud and discuss the reflection question.

Be of good courage and persevere knowing that our Lord Jesus Christ gave us a good example for 40 days and nights and He is with you.

Prayerfully,

Lennox Zamore
Lennox Zamore
Pastor

ALERT!

Not everyone is able to fast or to fast long. If you have health problems like diabetes, heart disease, auto-immune disorders, etc. please consult with a physician before fasting.

21 DAYS

of FASTING and PRAYER

GUIDE



This document is a guide and not an instruction manual on fasting. Exciting Central Tampa Baptist Church is not responsible for the conduct or consequences of anyone participating in this fast. Persons with medical conditions should consult a medical professional before participating.



WHAT IS FASTING?

Biblically, fasting is totally or partially depriving oneself of food, water or pleasures for a prescribed period of time to devote oneself to seeking God. You will often hear of fasting connected to prayer in the expression "PRAYER and FASTING."

There are 25 required fasting days in Judaism and Muslims fast for 27 days of Ramadan. There are no required fast days for Christians, but it is necessary in order to accomplish great things for God.

WHY DO WE FAST?

Our Lord Jesus implied in several portions of Scripture that fasting is an exercise for each person in the church to participate in from time to time. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that causes one to disassociate himself or herself from the natural desires of the flesh to focus our attention on seeking God's direction for our lives, our loved ones, or our Church. The following are biblical purposes for fasting:



1. God's intervention

2 Samuel 12:16 David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and spent the nights lying in sackcloth on the ground.

2. Repentance

1 Samuel 7:6 When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, "We have sinned against the LORD." Now Samuel was serving as leader of Israel at Mizpah.

Daniel 9:3-5 So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: "Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws."

Joel 2:12-13 "Even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

Jonah 3:5-9 The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

3. Guidance

Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

Acts 13:2-4 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

4. Worshiping

Luke 2:37 Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer.

5. Strengthen prayers

Matthew 17:20-21 And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. "But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."

Ezra 8:23 So we fasted and earnestly prayed that our God would take care of us, and he heard our prayer.

6. Mourning

2 Samuel 1:12 They mourned and wept and fasted all day for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the LORD's army and the nation of Israel, because they had died by the sword that day.

Nehemiah 1:4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

Psalm 69:10 When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach.

7. Humility

Psalm 35:13-14 Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting. When my prayers returned to me unanswered, I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother. I bowed my head in grief as though weeping for my mother.

1 Kings 21:25-27 (There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife. He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the Lord drove out before Israel.) When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly.

TYPES OF FASTS

- **A Regular Fast** - Traditionally, a regular fast means refraining from eating all food. Most people still drink water or juice during a regular fast. When Jesus fasted in the desert, the Bible says, "After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry." This verse does not mention Jesus being thirsty.
- **A Partial Fast** - This type of fast generally refers to omitting a specific meal from your diet or refraining from certain types of foods. Daniel 10:2-3 says, "At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over." In Daniel 1:12, they restricted their diet to vegetables and water: "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink."
- **A Full Fast** - These fasts are complete - no food and no drink. Acts 9:9 describes when Paul went on a full fast for three days following his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus: "For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything." Esther also called for this type of fast in Esther 4:15-16: "Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 'Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.'" It is recommended that this type of fast be done with extreme caution and not for extended periods of time.
- **Open-ended Fasts**
Some extended fasts are open-ended; for example, where you make a commitment not to break your fast until your goals have been achieved. Defining your goals is

particularly important here. Again, this type of fast should not be considered until you have gained some experience. You must be particularly cautious if you are doing a water-only, open-ended fast.

- **A Sexual Fast** - In Exodus 19:15, the people of Israel were to prepare for their encounter with the Lord at Mt. Sinai, and part of their preparation was to abstain from sexual relations for three days. The New Testament also talks about sexual fasting.

1 Corinthians 7:3-6 says, "The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."

PRACTICAL PREPARATION FOR FASTING

7 Basic Steps to Fasting and Prayer by Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ

BEFORE YOU FAST

How you begin and conduct your fast will largely determine your success. By following these seven basic steps to fasting, you will make your time with the Lord more meaningful and spiritually rewarding.

STEP 1: Set Your Objective

Why are you fasting? Is it for spiritual renewal, for guidance, for healing, for the resolution of problems, for special grace to handle a difficult situation? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically.

Through fasting and prayer, we humble ourselves before God so the Holy Spirit will stir our souls, awaken our churches, and heal our land according to 2 Chronicles 7:14. Make this a priority in your fasting.

STEP 2: Make Your Commitment

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus implied that all of His followers should fast (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14 -15) For Him, it was a matter of when believers would fast, not if they would do it. Before you fast, decide the following up front:

- How long you will fast - one meal, one day, a week, several weeks, forty days (Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts.)
- The type of fast God wants you to undertake (such as water only, or water and juices; what kinds of juices you will drink and how often)
- What physical or social activities you will restrict
- How much time each day you will devote to prayer and God's Word

Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

STEP 3: Prepare Yourself Spiritually

The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin will hinder your prayers. Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:

- Ask God to help you make a comprehensive list of your sins.
- Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
- Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3-4).
- Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you.
- Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit according to His command in Ephesians 5:18 and His promise in 1 John 5:14-15.
- Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Master; refuse to obey your worldly nature (Romans 12:1-2).
- Meditate on the attributes of God, His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others (Psalm 48:9-10; 103:1-8; 103:11-13).
- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart (Hebrews 11:6).
- Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16-17).

STEP 4: Prepare Yourself Physically

Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision. Physical preparation makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so that you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer.

- Do not rush into your fast.
- Prepare your body. Eat smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high-fat and sugary foods.
- Eat raw fruit and vegetables for two days before starting a fast.

WHILE YOU FAST

Your time of fasting and prayer has come. You are abstaining from all solid foods and have begun to seek the Lord. Here are some helpful suggestions to consider:

- Avoid drugs, even natural herbal drugs and homeopathic remedies. Medication should be withdrawn only with your physician's supervision.
- Limit your activity.
- Exercise only moderately. Walk one to three miles each day if convenient and comfortable.
- Rest as much as your schedule will permit.
- Prepare yourself for temporary mental discomforts, such as impatience, crankiness, and anxiety.
- Expect some physical discomforts, especially on the second day. You may have fleeting hunger pains, dizziness, or the "blahs." Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches. Physical annoyances may also include weakness, tiredness, or sleeplessness. The first two or three days are usually the hardest. As you continue to fast, you will likely experience a sense of well-being both physically and spiritually. However, should you feel hunger pains, increase your liquid intake.

STEP 5: Put Yourself on a Schedule

For maximum spiritual benefit, set aside ample time to be alone with the Lord. Listen for His leading. The more time you spend with Him, the more meaningful your fast will be.

Morning!

Begin your day in praise and worship, then pray.

- 6:00 am - Read and meditate on God's Word, preferably on your knees.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to work in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure according to Philippians 2:13.
- Invite God to use you. Ask Him to show you how to influence your world, your family, your church, your community, your country, and beyond.
- Pray for His vision for your life and empowerment to do His will.

Noon!

- Return to prayer and God's Word.
- Take a short prayer walk.
- Spend time in intercessory prayer.

Evening!

- Get alone for an unhurried time of "seeking His face."
- If others are fasting with you, meet together for a time of worship and prayer.
- Avoid television or any other distraction that may dampen your spiritual focus.

When possible, begin and end each day on your knees with your spouse for a brief time of praise and thanksgiving to God. Longer periods of time with our Lord in prayer and study of His Word are often better spent alone.

For those doing juices or clear liquids, a dietary routine is vital as well. Dr. Julio C. Ruibal - a nutritionist, pastor, and specialist in fasting and prayer suggests a daily schedule and list of juices you may find useful and satisfying. Modify this schedule and the drinks you take to suit your circumstances and tastes:

5 a.m. - 6 a.m. Fruit juices, preferably freshly squeezed or blended and diluted in 50 percent distilled water if the fruit is acidic. Apple, pear, grapefruit, papaya, watermelon, or other fruit juices are generally preferred. If you cannot do your own juicing, buy juices without sugar or additives.

10:30 a.m. - noon Fresh vegetable juice made from lettuce, celery, and carrots in three equal parts.

2:30 p.m. - 4 p.m. Herb tea with a drop of honey. Avoid black tea or any tea with caffeine.

6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Broth made from boiling potatoes, celery, and carrots with no salt. After boiling about half an hour, pour the water into a container and drink it.

TIPS ON JUICE FASTING



- Drinking fruit juice will decrease your hunger pains and give you some natural sugar energy. The taste and lift will motivate and strengthen you to continue.
- The best juices are made from fresh watermelon, lemons, grapes, apples, cabbage, beets, carrots, celery, or leafy green vegetables. In cold weather, you may enjoy a warm vegetable broth.
- Mix acidic juices (orange and tomato) with water for your stomach's sake.
- Avoid caffeinated drinks and avoid chewing gum or mints, even if your breath is bad. They stimulate digestive action in your stomach.

BREAKING YOUR FAST

When your designated time for fasting is finished, you will begin to eat again. But how you break your fast is extremely important for your physical and spiritual well-being.

STEP 6: End Your Fast Gradually

Begin eating gradually. Do not eat solid foods immediately after your fast. Suddenly reintroducing solid food to your stomach and digestive tract will likely have negative, even dangerous, consequences. Try several smaller meals or snacks each day. If you end your fast gradually, the beneficial physical and spiritual effects will result in continued good health.

Here are some suggestions to help you end your fast properly:

- Break an extended water fast with fruit such as watermelon.
- While continuing to drink fruit or vegetable juices, add the following:
 - ✓ First day: Add a raw salad.
 - ✓ Second day: Add baked or boiled potato, no butter or seasoning.
 - ✓ Third day: Add a steamed vegetable. Thereafter: Begin to reintroduce your normal diet.
- Gradually return to regular eating with several small snacks during the first few days. Start with a little soup and fresh fruit such as watermelon and cantaloupe. Advance to a few tablespoons of solid foods such as raw fruits and vegetables or a raw salad and baked potato.

A FINAL WORD

STEP 7: Expect Results

If you sincerely humble yourself before the Lord, repent, pray, and seek God's face; if you consistently meditate on His Word, you will experience a heightened awareness of His presence (John 14:21). The Lord will give you fresh, new spiritual insights. Your confidence and faith in God will be strengthened. You will feel mentally, spiritually, and physically refreshed. You will see answers to your prayers.

A single fast, however, is not a spiritual cure-all. Just as we need fresh infillings of the Holy Spirit daily, we also need new times of fasting before God. A 24-hour fast each week has been greatly rewarding for many Christians. It takes time to build your spiritual fasting muscles. If you fail to make it through your first fast, do not be discouraged. You may have tried to fast too long the first time out, or you may need to strengthen your understanding and resolve. As soon as possible, undertake another fast until you do succeed. God will honor you for your faithfulness.

THE FASTING MATRIX

Instructions: Select your fasting challenge from Row A-1 through D-2.

	Days	Times	Week	Type	Other
A-1	3 days	6 am-6pm	Weekdays only	Water, liquids, broth, vegetables, fruits, no caffeine, no sweeteners.	No leisure shopping
A-2	3 days	24 hours	Weekdays and weekends	Water, liquids, broth, vegetables, fruits, no caffeine, no sweeteners.	No leisure shopping
B-1	7 days	6 am-6pm	Weekdays only	Water, liquids, broth, fresh or steamed vegetables; no caffeine, no sweeteners.	No leisure shopping and TV
B-2	7 days	24 hours	Weekdays and weekends	Water, liquids, broth, fresh or steamed vegetables; no caffeine, no sweeteners.	No leisure shopping and TV
C-1	14 days	6 am- 6pm	Weekdays only	Water, liquids and broths only; no caffeine, no sweeteners.	No leisure shopping, and social media
C-2	14 days	24 hours	Weekdays and weekends	Water, liquids and broths only; no caffeine, no sweeteners.	No leisure shopping, and social media
D-1	21 days	6 am- 6pm	Weekdays only	Water, liquids and broths only; no caffeine, no sweeteners.	No leisure shopping, TV, social media, and sexual activities
D-2	21 days	24 hours	Weekdays and weekends	Water, liquids and broths only; no caffeine, no sweeteners.	No leisure shopping, TV, social media, and sexual activities



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and is not for publication or sale*



DAILY SCHEDULE AND DEVOTION

DAY 1 | MONDAY, JANUARY 20

PRAY FOR: Yourself.

SCRIPTURE: Read Psalm 24:3-4; Psalm 32:513:7.

DEVOTION: Drawing Near to God.

How can I sincerely draw close to a God who is all powerful, all knowing, and fully aware of all the reasons I do not belong in His presence? Is it really safe? Is this really what God desires? It is a common malady of this Christian life to face serious insecurities when considering approaching God. In my own life, I have experienced many dark seasons of feeling unworthy or uniquely disqualified from this privilege. Why the struggle? Because I know me! I know my propensity to sin. I know my inability to give God the righteousness He deserves. If I were Him, I wouldn't be pleased to have me come near. Praise God. He knows we have these struggles. And, He has an answer.

First, my confidence in drawing near to God is not based on my performance. My confidence is in the performance of Jesus. Hebrews 4 instructs us to come to God with boldness based on our full confidence in the finished work of Jesus on our behalf. And second, my confidence in drawing near to God is based on His love. I can trust His love for me. And strangely enough, the very things in my life that appear to disqualify me – sin, weakness, failure, flaws, etc. – provide convincing proof of God's love. If someone says they love you, but are not familiar with your past failures or current weaknesses, you cannot be sure they really love you. But if they are fully aware of the good and the 'ugly' and love you anyway, you are truly loved. Praise God! He knows it all and loves us anyway. My sin and weakness become my opportunity to really know He loves me. I can really trust His love for me.

Today we draw near to God. We do this by uncovering the 'ugly' side. We confess our sin. We reveal the part of our life that puts His love for us to the test (at least in our minds). And praise God again... He proves His love. He forgives and loves us anyway.

It's not until we recognize the depth of our sin that we realize the depth of God's love.

REFLECTION

1. What sins have you minimized to 'little mistakes' versus acknowledging they are what nailed Jesus to the cross?
2. According to Romans 2:4, what leads us to repentance?



PRAYER

Heavenly Father, reveal anything in my life that would hinder my ability to come into Your presence. Help me see my propensity towards sin and help me to change. Help me to see my sin the way You see it. Thank You for loving me in spite of my failures. Lord, it is your loving-kindness that leads me to repentance

SONG

[Draw Me Close to You](#)

Draw me close to You
Never let me go
I lay it all down again
To hear You say that I'm Your friend

You are my desire
No one else will do
'Cause nothing else could take Your place
To feel the warmth of Your embrace
Help me find the way
Bring me back to You

You're all I want
You're all I've ever needed
You're all I want
Help me know You are near

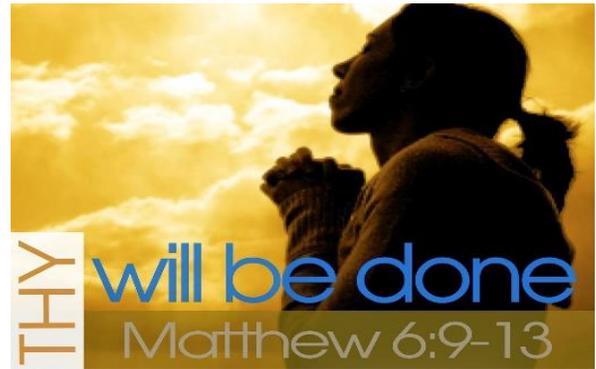
PERSONAL NOTES: (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 2 | TUESDAY, JANUARY 21

PRAY FOR: God's Will

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:6-7

DEVOTION: Don't Worry, Praise



“Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It’s wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.” Worry seems to be an inescapable fact of modern life. No doubt there is plenty to worry about: our future, the economy, global warming, war, disease... the list could go on forever! Sometimes it might seem that worry has even replaced Jesus as the focal point of our lives. Jesus Himself admonished us several times not to worry. And the great apostle, Paul, tell us in the passage above that there is an antidote to worry...prayer. When we worry about something, we are spending energy on it, wondering what might happen, rehearsing the “if only” and “what ifs” in our mind. Why not take that same energy and refocus it on prayer instead? When we worry, we are simply talking to ourselves about our fears, but when we pray, we are taking those fears to God. We can’t control the future, but in the words of Anne Graham Lotz, God is already there! He knows exactly what is going to happen and He promises to be with us every step of the journey. As we continue this season of prayer and fasting, let’s make an effort to convert our worry into prayer. As Paul says in the verse above, “let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers,” and you will find that the peace of God will guard your heart.

See how dramatically your outlook improves when the peace of God is activated through prayer!

Additional Reading: Please read Proverbs 3:1-6; Jeremiah 29:11-13; Isaiah 41:10-13.

REFLECTION

1. Are there things that you consistently worry about? Write them down.
2. As you go through your day today, recapture each worried thought and send it up to God as a prayer.

PRAYER

Lord, You know how often my mind goes to worry and not to trusting You. May my thoughts be quicker to turn into prayers to You, my Almighty God, because You know

the plans You have for me, and they are plans to prosper me and not to harm me. Thank You for Your peace that surpasses all understanding as I place my confidence in You and believe You are at work in my life.

SONG

God Will Take Care of You

Be not dismayed whate'er betide,
God will take care of you;
Beneath His wings of love abide,
God will take care of you.

Refrain:

God will take care of you,
Through every day, o'er all the way;
He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.

Through days of toil when heart doth fail,
God will take care of you;
When dangers fierce your path assail,
God will take care of you.

All you may need He will provide,
God will take care of you;
Nothing you ask will be denied,
God will take care of you.

No matter what may be the test,
God will take care of you;
Lean, weary one, upon His breast,
God will take care of you.

PERSONAL NOTES: (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 3 | WEDNESDAY JANUARY 22

PRAY FOR: Our Communities

SCRIPTURE: Luke 10:25-28; 1 Timothy 2:1; Luke 11:29, 36

DEVOTION: Watching Over Our Communities

Are you a good neighbor? We usually think of good neighbors as those who keep their dog in their yard, keep their lawn manicured, their house in good repair, does not make trouble for others, does not disrespect their fellow neighbors through thoughtless actions, votes for the things that impact the community within which they live...

But have you ever thought that being a good neighbor also entails praying for those in your community and neighborhood? The neighbors you know and those you don't. In fact, everyone you come into contact with.



The Holy Spirit gives our assignments in prayer and assigns burdens for others so we should be faithful to pray as we should for whoever He assigns. We have to feel the burden of others and even weep with them and cry out for them in prayer even when we are not directly affected. Some intercessors find it is impossible to pray effectively, or fervently for conditions or people they do not feel a strong passion toward. For example, if your prayers are going to make a difference to take over darkness you will have to feel a passion for everyone, especially the lost to Christ.

Watching over (praying for) our community, family or neighborhood is a divine assignment because every heart in every community is important to God! Praying for your family is just as important as praying for people you do not even know personally. Our prayers for our home, family, neighborhood and community shapes and determine the spiritual temperature there? Troubled homes, and the abused, need the peace only our prayers can bring. The lost and misguided need to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior and this will not happen unless we first pray for them.

Can you imagine what our communities, neighborhoods and cities would look like if every intercessor spent a dedicated amount of time each week if not daily, praying for their community and neighborhood. Surely, the evil that has crept in through the gaps would be forced out. For sure our crime rates would plummet. The number of

murder-suicides would decrease. Child abduction would end. Bullying and gang violence would be nonexistent. Abuse and domestic violence would cease. Pick a stronghold to pray for and see a victory for good!

In the book of Luke (11:25-37), Jesus had a conversation with a man who was trying to whittle his way out of caring for his neighbor: Looking for some kind of loophole that excused him from caring for others. Jesus told him a parable and in the end explained that a neighbor is defined, not by physical borders or regions, but by acts of mercy. We would do well to consider prayer as an act of mercy; as being a good neighbor!

As an intercessor, who is your neighbor? Well, your neighbor is as close to you as the person you share your home with or those who are to the north, south, east, and west... they are as close as one, two, three states away. They are as close as those in another country or continent. Every human heart, subjected to every human condition is our neighbor!

But we don't have to go overseas or to third-world countries to find a hungry child. We don't have to travel to other states to find the displaced or uneducated, or unemployed. They are in our own city, walking down our street, living next door to us. Their plight may not be newsworthy, they may not have some exotic story, they may not capture the hearts of millions, but they are in need of our prayers.

REFLECTION

1. What ethnic groups are in your community?
2. Do you influence your community for Christ?
3. Are you known for your belief and character in your community?

WHO TO PRAY FOR

1. The elderly
2. Families of all kinds
3. Children of all ages
4. The sick
5. The abused
6. The lost and misguided
7. The unborn
8. The unemployed
9. The lost and misguided
10. The addicted

11. The mentally ill

SONG: [Standing in the Gap for you](#) By Babbie Mason

I heard that you were hurting
That you were suffering pain
But I didn't dare just turn my head
And look the other way
For when your heart is aching
My heart is aching too
Let me help you bear your burdens
That's the least I can do

Chorus

I'll be standing in the gap for you
Just remember someone somewhere
Is praying for you
Calling out your name
Praying for your strength
I'll be standing in the gap for you

Right now you may be troubled
But everything will work out right
For the Spirit knows before you speak
What is on your heart and mind
So I'll be interceding
Till you're standing strong again
Peace that passes understanding
Is gonna be yours,
But until then...

So hang on my friend, it won't be long till
You'll have the strength, to carry on
For when two or three are walking together
It will be a much lighter load
For isn't that what a brother and sister are for?

PERSONAL NOTES: (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 4 | THURSDAY, JANUARY 23

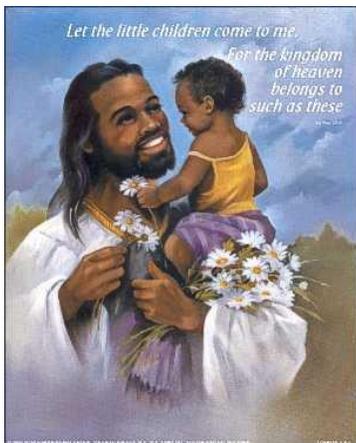
PRAY FOR: Our Children

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 19:13

DEVOTION: Bring the Little Children to Jesus

When a man of nobility or prominence was present in ancient Jewish culture, it was customary to bring the children to him to be blessed. The words of a man of prominence were known to come to pass.

Manasseh and Ephraim were bought to Jacob and received a blessing that would ultimately become their destiny. Jacob and Esau were blessed by Isaac and his blessing became their life fulfillment. It's no wonder that the parents in **Matthew 19:13** *"...brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them"* (NIV).



As this year begins, let's bring the children to the King! Entrust them to his prominence and providence. Jesus' intentions towards the little children was always to speak blessings over them as he prayed for them. We should do the same. Let's speak blessings over our children in prayer.

As we do so, let's also pray for the adults that are most influential in the lives of children. Let's pray for teachers and extend our prayers to their entire school communities. Our schools have become battlefields because the enemy knows the significance of children. So, let's pray for their safety. But the biggest danger is not the shooting and violence but the philosophical attacks on their tender faith. So, let's stand on the promise that they *"will be blessed when they come in and blessed when they go out. The Lord will cause the enemies who rise up against them to be defeated before them. They*

will march out against them in one direction and flee from them in seven..."
Deuteronomy 28:6-7

When you pray for children, here are seven things to pray for:

1. That Jesus will call them, and no one will hinder them from coming (Matthew 19:13-15).
2. That they will respond in faith to Jesus's faithful, persistent call (2 Peter 3:9).
3. That they will experience sanctification through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit and will increasingly desire to fulfill the greatest commandments (Matthew 22:37-39).
4. That they will not be unequally yoked in intimate relationships, especially marriage (2 Corinthians 6:14).
5. That their thoughts will be pure (Philippians 4:8).
6. That their hearts will be stirred to give generously to the Lord's work (Exodus 35:29).
7. That they will work for the Kingdom of God!

REFLECTION

1. Discuss with your group the unsaved people in your family
2. How can you show love to unsaved people in your family?

WHO TO PRAY FOR

1. Children in our families
2. Foster children
3. Children in schools
4. Fatherless children
5. Children in juvenile facilities
6. Children in mental institutions
7. Children in hospitals
8. Unborn children

SONG: [PRAY FOR THE CHILDREN](#)

PERSONAL NOTES: (What is God saying to you?)

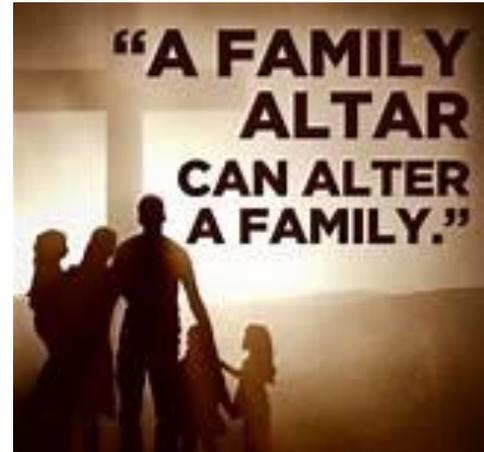
DAY 5 | FRIDAY, JANUARY 24

PRAY FOR: Homes

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:9-13

DEVOTION: Build your Altar

The very first thing built on earth was an altar. Beginning in the Garden of Eden and all throughout the Bible, great men of God built altars of worship:



- Genesis 22:9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.
- Exodus 17:15 And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah Nissi:
- Exodus 32:5 And when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow *is* a feast to the LORD.
- Joshua 8:30 Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal.

The altar is a private place away from the church where we meet with God on a regular basis – your family altar. There is a difference between the public altar and the family altar and those who do not know the difference may abuse one or the other.

The prayer recorded in Matthew 6:9-13 was given by Christ in answer to the request of His disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray." It is the "sample prayer" for public worship. The use of "our" and "us" indicates that it was designed for public use. In a public prayer one person is chosen to speak for all present. He is the mouthpiece of all, and his requests should not be of a private or individual nature. They should deal with the general needs of the congregation, the things desired or needed by all present. "Our" and "us" indicate that such prayers are offered on behalf of those present, and "this day" shows that they are to meet a present need. The people have come together to receive a present blessing and the public prayer should not go all over the world,

embrace all humanity, reach back too far into the past, or forward into the future. It should center on those present and the purpose of their coming together.

We should not use the public altar in the house of God to pray for all our private needs. The proper place is the family altar. When praying publicly in the house of God, our prayers should be for a present *blessing*.

Since the person who prays in public is the spokesman for all present, it is his duty to so pray that all present can hear what he says to God in their behalf. The voice must be "lifted up" and made audible to all, so they can manifest their approvals with silent or audible amens.

Jesus' model public prayer is very short. It can be prayed slowly in a couple minutes and yet its petitions embrace everything needed by any congregation, and, in fact, by all mankind. Usually those who pray the least in secret offer the longest prayers in public. God is not impressed by these long prayers "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words" (Malachi 2:17), is the Lord's charge against all who offer long, dry public prayers.

In order to keep from abusing the public altar, every Christian should have a private altar – a designated, special place where you meet God on a regular basis.

REFLECTION

1. Do you have a regular place to meet with God?
2. Do you have a regular time to meet with God?
3. Do you spend time being quiet before the Lord in that place?
4. Does your family have devotions together?

WHO TO PRAY FOR:

1. Fathers and mothers
2. Marriages
3. Blended families
4. Single-parent homes

SONG: [THE FAMILY PRAYER SONG](#)

PERSONAL NOTES: (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 6 | SATURDAY, JANUARY 25

PRAY FOR: Your Country

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 80:18-19; 86:6; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Jeremiah 29:7

DEVOTION: Revival for the Nation

What does God want from us?

First, we must humble ourselves. We must admit that God is God and we are not. We must submit to God and come to Him in brokenness and repentance. 2 Chronicles 7:14: If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.



Second, we must pray and seek God's face. No revival or awakening comes without prayer. Extensive prayer. Fervent prayer. Corporate prayer. Continual prayer. It is worth noting that the prayer here is focused on seeking God's face and not God's hand. We are seeking God for Himself and not for what He gives us. We are locked in on God's glory, not on our need.

Third, we must turn from our wicked ways. God wants obedience, not religious ceremony. We cannot just say the words of repentance and pray the prayers of repentance. We must do the deeds of repentance and obey God in every part of life. If we do these three things, then God promises to respond in three ways.

- ✓ First, He will hear us. He will hear those prayers.
- ✓ Second, He will forgive our sin. He will remove our sin as far as the east is from the west.
- ✓ Third, God will heal our land. He will pour out His favor and blessing upon us.

In 1861, Abraham Lincoln had just been elected President. The nation was tottering on the brink of war. There was cruel slavery in the land. The President faced widespread opposition and hostility. He issued a proclamation for our country, a proclamation which expresses the spirit of this passage.

"Whereas a joint committee of both houses of Congress has waited on the President of the United States and requested him to recommend a day of public humiliation, prayer and fasting to be observed by the people of the United States with religious solemnities, and the offering of fervent supplications to Almighty God for the safety and welfare of

these states, his blessing on their arms, and a speedy restoration of peace. And whereas it is fit and becoming in all people at all times to acknowledge and revere the supreme government of God, to bow in humble submission to his chastisement, to confess and deplore their sins and transgression, in the full conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to pray with all fervency and contrition for the pardon of their offenses and for a blessing upon their present and prospective action. Therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do appoint the last Thursday in September next as a day of humiliation, prayer and fasting, for all the people of the nation. And I do earnestly recommend to all the people, and especially to all ministers and teachers of religion of all denominations, and to all heads of families, to observe and keep that day, according to their several creeds and modes of worship, in all humility, and with all religious solemnity, to the end that the united prayer of the nation may ascend to the Throne of Grace, and bring down plentiful blessings upon our country.”

REFLECTION

1. How does the spirit of Abraham Lincoln compare with that of the current president?
2. How different is religious liberty today compared to the days of Abraham Lincoln?

WHAT TO PRAY FOR

1. Let's pray for awakening (Joel 3:12).
2. Let's pray for America to have the fear of God (Ps 9:20).
3. Let's pray that they may repent from idolatry to sex and money (Eze 14:6).
4. Let's pray that they may worship and exalt the Lord (Ps 22:27; Ps 46:10).
5. Let's pray that everyone will respect one another, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the president (I Peter 2:17).
6. For the president to seek and follow sound advisors lest the nation falls (Proverbs 11:14).

REFLECTION

1. During this time of prayer and fasting, have you humbled yourself before God?
2. How will you continue having a humbled state before God when our 21 days of prayer and fasting end? Is there a practice you can commit to, such as kneeling before Him at the beginning of every day to recognize Who He is?
3. How will you continue to pray and seek God's face when our 21 days are over?

PRAYER

Father, I pray for a marketplace revival to sweep through our community and for revival to break out in Your streets, in schools, government, business, media, entertainment, and congregations – especially in Your congregations as we are

reflecting who You are. I ask, Lord, that You raise up dedicated Christians who will become a voice to reform our region and to make a difference in the lives of all who live here.

SONG: [PRAY FOR AMERICA](#)

PERSONAL NOTES: (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 7 SUNDAY, JANUARY 26

PRAY FOR: Church leaders

SCRIPTURE: Read Hebrews 13:7 and 17

DEVOTION: Pray for Church leaders



Your prayers for your leaders are significant and they do make a difference. The enemy will try to attack the leadership of your church in a variety of ways, but the enemy's schemes cannot stand against the prayers of God's people and the power that is released through them. God blesses and strengthens the church that prays for its leadership. The Bible reveals several reasons why the spiritual leaders of a church need prayer.

1. It is God's will for you to pray for your spiritual leaders (1 Thessalonians 5:25).
2. It is the only way that your spiritual leaders can fulfill their accountability to God (James 3:1).
3. It is the best defense against Satan's hatred of your spiritual leaders (1 Peter 5:8).
4. It is their great need because of their vulnerability to temptation (Luke 22:31-32).
5. It is essential because of their visibility and influence (1 Samuel 12:13-14).
6. It is crucial for the effectiveness of their ministry (Jeremiah 32:17).

When you pray, here are some areas to pray for:

1. Pray that God will fill your heart with the desire and power to pray for your spiritual leaders.
2. Understand the incredible difference that your prayers will make in the lives and ministries of your spiritual leaders.
3. Ask God to help you grow in appreciation for your spiritual leaders.

How does God respond when we pray for our leaders? God delights in our prayers for our spiritual leaders. He loves our intercession for them. In Acts 12, we have an example of what happens when we pray for our leaders. It is a vivid demonstration of what God does when we stand in the gap for our leaders.

1. God sends divine help into the leader's life. When you pray for your leaders, God will send help into their lives. Whatever their need is, God will grant them help as we pray for them.
2. God covers the leader with divine protection. As you pray for your leaders, God will protect them physically, spiritual, emotionally, and financially. He will also grant protection over their marriages and families.
3. God thwarts the schemes of the evil one against your leader. Satan is out to hinder, hurt, and destroy your spiritual leaders. Yet, your prayers can thwart all of his wicked schemes against them.
4. God will strengthen the church. Your prayers for your leaders will actually bless and strengthen the church. The church that prays fervently for its spiritual leaders can expect God's blessing and help.

REFLECTION

1. What kind of struggles do you believe your leaders experience daily?
2. Read the words of Jesus concerning what happens when the devil strikes leaders Mt 26:31. Who is the devil really targeting?

WHO TO PRAY FOR

1. Senior pastor, ministers, deacons, and ministry leaders at Central
2. Local Association leader
3. President and leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention
4. President and leaders of the North American Mission Board
5. President and leaders of the International Mission Board
6. President and leaders of LifeWay
7. President and leaders of seminaries, Christian colleges, hospitals, schools and other Christian institutions

8. All God's pastors and leaders across the world

SONG: [PRAYER FOR PASTORS](#)

PERSONAL NOTES: (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 8 | MONDAY, JANUARY 27

PRAY FOR: Christians Everywhere

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 51:10-12; Daniel 6:10

DEVOTION: Spiritual Hunger

It was Daniel's practice, three times a day, to go to an upstairs room in his apartment, open the windows facing Jerusalem, get down on his knees, and pray to the one true God. No doubt, Daniel prayed at other times also. He probably prayed throughout the day. But there were these special times, set aside times, where it was his priority to meet with God in prayer. In fact, it was such a priority to Daniel that when the king passed a decree that for the next thirty days people could only pray to the king, Daniel was unfazed. "No way." Daniel may have been an important official in Darius' kingdom, but when the king's law (don't pray) conflicted with God's Law (pray), the choice was clear. Daniel just kept right on praying.



Daniel was thrown in the lion's lair, but God protected Daniel, delivered Daniel, honored Daniel, and put it in the Bible for all to see. Of the many truths in this stunning chapter, one concerns Daniel's prayer. Three times a day, he set aside a special time to pray. God nowhere commands us that we must do the same, but there is wisdom here. Wisdom would suggest a special time, or several briefer times, set aside each day to meet with God in prayer. A time we prize. A time we protect. A time we prioritize.

Yes, we want to pray throughout the day, an ongoing conversation with our Father. But it is wise to also have a special time of prayer each day. Maybe it's not a long time,

but it is your time, as in you and God. It is your time to talk and listen and be together, no matter what else happens that day. Your time to connect. During that time, God will fill you up, restore your soul, and prepare you for whatever the day brings.

REFLECTION

1. Describe your thoughts around Daniel and his commitment to the Lord.
2. What special time will you set aside to talk and listen to God?

PRAYER

Lord, awaken my heart to Your love. Give me an increased hunger to spend more time in prayer, worship, and Your Word. Please give me a greater awareness of Your holiness, a tender conscience, and a heart to please You in every thought, word, and deed.

SONG: [WE ARE HUNGRY](#) BY JESUS CULTURE

Lord I want more of You
Living Water rain down on me
Lord I need more of You
Living Breath of Life come fill me up

We are hungry, we are hungry
We are hungry for more of You
We are thirsty, oh Jesus
We are thirsty for more of You

Lord I want more of You
Holy Spirit rain down on me
Lord I need more of You
Living Breath of Life come fill me up

We lift our holy hands up
We want to touch You
We lift our voices higher
And higher and higher to You

PERSONAL NOTES: (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 9 | TUESDAY, JANUARY 28

PRAY FOR: Nation's Leaders

SCRIPTURE: 1 Timothy 2:2

DEVOTION: Pray for secular leaders



Timothy was placed as a pastor over the church in Ephesus which the Apostle Paul founded. Paul passionately urges Timothy, his son in the faith, to make prayer a priority. He encourages Timothy to pray for all men (*and women*). In fact, he specifically mentions praying for those in authority.

At that time, Christians were being persecuted by the godless Emperor Nero who was on the throne, yet the believers were still expected to pray for this evil leader.

This principle teaches us that, regardless of our opinion of a man or woman in authority, we are required to respect the office they hold and pray for them. In fact, it is for our own good that we do so, "so that we would be able to live tranquil, undisturbed lives, as we worship the awe-inspiring God with pure hearts." (1 Tim. 2:2)

Let's not let political parties or agendas keep us from obeying God's word. Let's pray today for those in governing offices on every level.

REFLECTION

In what ways is the enemy tearing our country apart?

Is our current political situation helpful to faith?

WHO TO PRAY FOR

1. The President and his cabinet
2. Congress and the House of Representatives
3. Governors and state legislators
4. Mayors
5. Community leaders

SONG: [PRAYER FOR OUR LEADERS](#)

PERSONAL NOTES: (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 10 | WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29

PRAY FOR: Your Church

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 43:3-4

DEVOTION: Praying Like Paul for the Church



1. Pray for Love: Philippians 1:9-11 *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*
2. Pray for Wisdom: Ephesians 1:15-19a *For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*
3. Pray for Strength: Ephesians 3:14-21 - *For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according*

to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

4. Pray for Fruitfulness : Colossians 1:9-12 *For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light*
5. Pray for Righteousness: 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 *With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
6. Pray for Salvations, and for Strengthening: 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5 *As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.*
7. Pray for Your preachers: Ephesians 6:19 *Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.*

REFLECTION

1. What great things have happened in your church last year?
2. What would you like to see different in your church?
3. How can you be more effective in your church?

PRAYER

God, I pray that Your Spirit comes down in real and powerful ways in my life. Come alongside me today and demonstrate who You are. Show me the power of Your radical love, show me who I am because of what You have done, and show me how that can impact those around me with Your will and love. Come alongside me in my

interactions with others, in my conversations with You, and in how I treat my family and my friends. Be near to me, show me Your presence and Your power, and make me a different person because of how You love me. But more than anything, I pray that You show up in my life. I acknowledge that there is no church, there is no faith without You, and so I pray that You are present and vibrant in all that I think, say, and do.

PERSONAL NOTES: (What is God saying to you?)

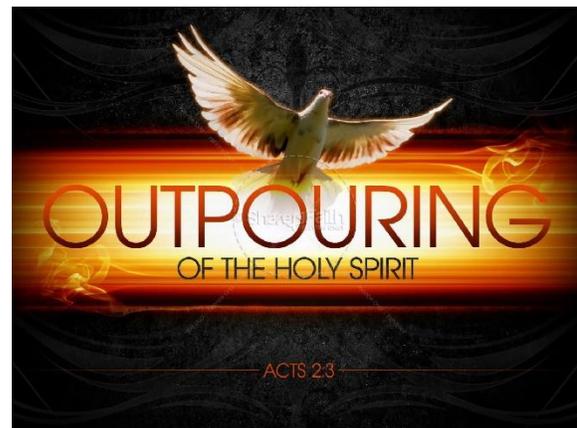
DAY 11 | THURSDAY, JANUARY 30

PRAY FOR: All Churches of God

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 51:2; Psalm 51:7; Mark 2:22b:

DEVOTION: To receive a fresh outpouring of God's Spirit

It seems for many believers a major disconnect occurs between the heart and mind. That being said, a fresh outpouring of God's Spirit is greatly connected to our conscious awareness of His indwelling. John's gospel states clearly the sending of the Holy Spirit, 'the Comforter,' for an encounter not only with us but to dwell (live His life) in us. We must be aware of His



presence more than our sin. Romans 8:5: *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Jesus having become sin for us dealt the death blow to sin's hold on us. Now the removal of the residue of sin's power is no less than Christ's promise to us.

Romans 6:11: *Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

There are many word pictures or descriptions of the Holy Spirit; one is water. Notice the request from Psalm 51 is for 'another' to wash, cleanse, and purify us. The very work of the Spirit invokes the idea of cleansing or purifying by literally being the 'Living Water' flowing in power from within.

Also, Ephesians speaks of Christ and His bride "that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word." The living water and living word are ever present to do their work; we simply must say "yes" to His will and way in us and through us! The new wine skins spoken of in Mark can refer to fresh governing or new governing of our lives. When the new spiritual 'mind-set' being the awareness of Christ's promise is fixed, fresh outpouring, 'New Wine' will follow. When new wine comes, 'times of refreshing' in the Spirit of the Lord will overcome and overtake us with breakthrough in all aspects of our lives and those we influence... as it did on the Day of Pentecost and throughout the book of Acts. Jesus started the church the way He wanted it; now He wants the church the way He started it! He wants us saturated with fresh outpouring!

REFLECTION

1. Do you need a fresh awareness of the Holy Spirit's presence in your life?
2. Will you ask Him to fill you to overflowing?

PRAYER

Lord, I pray for times of refreshing as Your Word and Holy Spirit's presence cleanse and renew me. I pray that I will be spiritually minded and that I will say yes to Your way and will through me. Thank you for Your faithfulness to me! I pray that my spiritual family will receive a fresh outpouring of Your Spirit!

SONG: [PRAY](#)

PERSONAL NOTES: (What is God saying to you?)

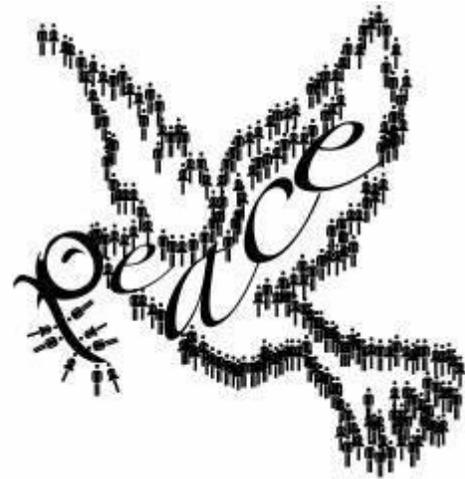
DAY 12 | FRIDAY, JANUARY 31

PRAY FOR: Yourself

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 107:20; Psalm 147:3; Malachi 4:6

DEVOTION: Healing and Reconciliation from Deep Pain

The Scripture says in Matthew 4:1, “Jesus was led up by the (Holy) Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” It was God the Holy Spirit that placed Jesus in that desert for that particular time. There are no mistakes in God’s plan. There is no plan B. We only know His complete plan for our lives as we look backward. A.W. Tozer said, “To the child of God, there is no such thing as an accident. Accidents may indeed appear to befall him and misfortune stalk his way; but these evils will be so in appearance only and will seem evil only because we cannot read the secret script of God’s hidden providence.” Our whole perspective of life changes when we find ourselves facing overwhelming temptation, tragedy, or any hard situation that needs real healing or reconciliation. This happened to a Pastor friend of mine. His son and daughter-in-law, upon graduating from Bible school in Arlington, Texas, with a great ministry to the Mexican people before them, encountered some problems that provoked the son to think God did not really care for him, so he decided to quit the ministry. He was determined to separate himself from God. He stopped praying and reading scripture and instead began drinking and staying out at night, etc. But on his way to inform the missions director of his decision, the son came around a curve, just outside of New Orleans, Louisiana and a tractor trailer, trying to avoid hitting a deer as it crossed the highway, plowed into his car, causing him to go to the hospital. Now he really believed God did not love Him. But during the next six months, God brought him back to good health, but most importantly reconciled him back to Himself. I have been there; we all have been there in one sense or another.



The Lord occasionally does the same with all of us, testing our faith, leading us into hardship, teaching us wisdom, showing us His ways, changing our course on this journey called life, calling us back to Himself—in the process healing us spiritually and sometimes physically. Our first reaction is usually anger, panic, and a sense of ‘why is this happening to me if you love me so much, Lord?’ But remember that deeper secret of the Christian life: “When we are in a difficult place, the Lord has placed us

there, for reasons known for now only to Himself.” The writer, Mackintosh, in referring to the Israelites leaving Egypt comments, “the sea was before them, Pharaoh’s army behind them, and mountains around them. And in all this, be it observed, permitted and ordered of God.” We are where we are today because God permitted it. As someone has said, “Nothing gets to the child of God unless it passes through His Hands first.” Sometimes, circumstances beyond our control can push us off the thin wire we walk on in this thing called life. It could be the ringing of a phone, a knock on the door, a text, an email. We fall immediately into worry and fear that separates us from God, from our friends, our spouses, etc. How can we not worry or fear when our outflow exceeds our income, when a loved one is diagnosed with cancer, when layoffs occur at the company and our name is on the list, when our child is hurt or even killed, or our spouse wants to walk out. What is our hope? Where do we look for guidance in times like that?

We must pray to the One who has control over everything. We must ask Him to do what only He can do. And, we must consult the Scriptures for guidance and hope. Remember these men and women: Hagar, a single mom, was forced into a desert with her boy where they nearly died of thirst. Joseph, desiring to be used of God, was seized, stripped, sold, and imprisoned in Egypt. David, anointed by Samuel, was pursued by Saul’s army. Most of the Lord’s disciples, who followed the Lord’s command to evangelize the world, died horrible deaths. The Lord Himself, fulfilling the Father’s will, was nailed on a cross until dead. Peter wrote in I Peter 4:12, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you. . .” In other words, we should not be surprised when we find ourselves trapped in painful, frightening, difficult, or impossible situations. As a matter of fact, these things are to be expected in this venture of following Christ. If we are in a time of trial, He is here. Remember we are here 1) By God’s ordering, 2) In His grip, 3) Under His training, 4) For His time. But over and above that, our precious eternal Lord is here--He is the One who has promised never to leave or forsake us, never to forget or abandon us. So, if we find ourselves in a difficult spot of needing healing and reconciliation, against all evidence to the contrary, there’s no better place to be. Real Healing and Reconciliation occur when we recognize we are exactly where God wants us to be.

REFLECTION

1. Are you in a difficult place right now?
2. How can you allow God to bring healing and reconciliation in His way and in His timing?
3. Ask Him to give you spiritual eyes to see where He is working.

PRAYER

Father God, You know everything about me. You know the challenges and hope that I have. I pray that You would guide my prayers, thoughts, and actions. I pray that You would give me spiritual eyes to see You in my life and give me the desire and ability to respond in a way that pleases You. Teach me what You want me to learn and help me to grow closer to You each day.

SONG: [THROUGH IT ALL](#)

PERSONAL NOTES: (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 13 | SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1

PRAY FOR: Your Nuclear Family

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 92:1; 100:2; Joshua 24:15

DEVOTION: To serve God together



The Christian life was never intended to be a solitary one. Jesus shared His life with twelve disciples and then taught them to share it with others. The early believers gathered together to break bread and share the living Word. What we do each week in church is an expression of shared belief in Jesus – His body, a community of faith that gains strength and courage through worship. But a full and meaningful life of following Jesus is built on much more than one hour a week in church. It requires personal devotion and an interdependency with others in prayer, study, fellowship, and praise. In other words, the best way to follow and serve Jesus is in community.

Modern families come in all shapes and sizes. Whether you’re widowed, single, divorced, or living in a blended family, God has a group for you, a place of intimate belonging. This cluster of believers is a smaller version of the church, or we could say the church is a larger expression of the family unit. However we view it, the purpose is to be a place for love, acceptance, prayer, and to celebrate the communion of Jesus among us. Finding time to pray as a family beyond grace at meals is an important discipline. To share our hearts, burdens, and triumphs is important, as well as encouraging each other to stay strong in the Lord (Ephesians 6:18). Prayer is as uncomplicated as talking to God together. Seeking time with a trusted brother or

sister can move us from defeat to victory. Building the habit of worshipping together is critical to becoming the people God desires for us to become.

REFLECTION

1. Who is your family, your community of faith, other than the larger church you attend?
2. How do you express love, acceptance, grace, and encouragement with them?
3. What elements of prayer and worship are regularly missing from your time with them?

PRAYER

Great Father God, Jesus my Brother, Holy Spirit my Comforter... lead me into deeper communion and fellowship with You and with my community of faith. Begin with my own family to teach me to be bold to lead in worship and prayer, to bring the greatest glory to You, the only wise God, forever and ever.

SONG: [AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE](#)

PERSONAL NOTES: (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 14 | SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2

PRAY FOR: Your Extended Family

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 18:2; Psalm 16:11; Acts 16:31

DEVOTION: Saved and Delivered



To hide his identity, let's call him 'Andrew.' He was 17 years old, grew up in a strong Christian home, and was clearly loved and cared for. He was close to graduating from high school, but the past few months had taken a turn for the worse. Andrew was a smart kid, but academics were not his forte. His friends joked, "Andrew will work at McDonald's for his entire life." They thought it was funny. Andrew laughed about it on the outside but grew more broken inside. He began to think that if that's the way people thought of him, then he would live into it. Early in the school year, he began to

use drugs and drink alcohol with his friends. He kept it a secret from his family; he thought they would not understand. In the dark, his addictions grew, moving to harder drugs. His family tried every method to get through to him. They tried punishment, and Andrew would rebel more. They tried loving him in every way they could think of, and he rebelled more. His family was exhausted and confused. They came to a place where they finally realized that the situation was out of their hands - placing it entirely in God's hands.

His family cannot explain it, nor can he really, but when things seemed most hopeless, God saved him. Andrew struggles to put it into words, but somehow, somehow, he felt the love of God, and that altered the course of his life. It was almost as if a light when on inside him; the blinders were off. He was saved and delivered into the love of God. His family counts all of their failed attempts and gives God the glory for doing in Andrew what human beings could not.

REFLECTION

1. Who does your heart ache for God to deliver and save?
2. Will you trust that God will do the impossible in their lives?
3. In this painful and confusing time, will you trust God to be your rock? Take refuge in Him.

PRAYER

Father, I pray for the hurting and lost of this world. I ask that You do what only You can in the life of _____ (call name(s) of unsaved). Be their Rock, their Redeemer. Use me in effective ways to show Your love. Enter into the hearts of those far from You. Be their Savior; deliver them into a transforming relationship with You. I pray for any loved ones by name who do not know the Lord or have fallen away from You. I ask You to reveal Yourself to them as the awesome God that You are. I pray a hedge of protection around my family from all deception, temptation, and any plans of the enemy that would thwart the good plans God has for them.

SONG: [AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE](#)

PERSONAL NOTES (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 15 | MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3

PRAY FOR: Yourself

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 43:3; Ephesians 1:17-18

DEVOTION: Walk in wisdom and revelation



Too often we slide slowly into the normalcy of pretending and stay there unaware. With this strange statement, I mean that as Christ Jesus has resurrected our souls by His grace, we know that light and life only come from Him. We are convinced of this emphatic truth. We've looked elsewhere for life and have been awakened to its emptiness. But sadly, we often return there slowly and sink into the gray of unintentional motion, conditioned responses, and banal routine. Lord Jesus, Open our eyes! James, the leader of the Jerusalem church, reminds us that when we lack wisdom, we should ask it of God who gives generously.

In Psalm 43, the Psalmist confesses that God's light and God's truth are the only reliable leaders, for they bring us to where He is.

God of Heaven, lead us with your light and truth! As we continue our way into this consecrated season of prayer and fasting, we are coming together as a church praying that God would lead us, open our eyes, and give us the moving power of His Spirit in a fresh and awakening way. This prayer is a heartfelt, guttural, straining desire to return to True Reality, God's light and life. We know that Christ Jesus has resurrected our souls by His grace and that light and life, along with wisdom and revelation, come only from Him.

REFLECTION

1. Where have you sensed God giving you the gift of wisdom and discernment in your life?
2. James tells us that God will give us wisdom if we ask. Will you ask Him for wisdom? He promises to give it to you when you ask.

PRAYER

Lord, open my eyes to see You more clearly and my ears to hear anything You desire to speak. I pray for a Spirit of wisdom and revelation that I might know Jesus more deeply and have a profound understanding of the hope that is in His heart for me.

PERSONAL NOTES (What is God saying to you?)



DAY 16 | TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4

PRAY FOR: Vision

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 78:24; Habakkuk 2:1

DEVOTION: To be served by visionary leaders

The crowd was buzzing. The morning dew was burning off under the heating sun. Dogs barking, birds chirping, and the announcers giving instructions to the trainers to bring their racing greyhound dogs to the track in the appropriate gates. These dogs have been bred and trained since birth to do one thing - run after the lure (an artificial, mechanical bunny). They were made for this. The gate opens! The dogs sprint! The crowd erupts! The announcers shout! But this race had an unexpected turn... Part way through the race, the lure exploded! For a brief moment, the dogs continued to run, but eventually slowed down, not knowing what to do. Some ran around aimlessly, some ran back toward the gate where they began, and other dogs just laid down on the track pathetically with their tongues hanging out. There was no way to determine a winner, so the race was called off. The race was over. So, what caused the dogs to lose focus? Why couldn't they continue the race? They lost their vision. Even though they had received the strictest training, they failed to achieve anything because they had nothing to aim for.

This story illustrates, in a simple way, the profound truth found in Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." This proverb takes on so many different applications to so many different settings. But let's not mistake a 'good plan' as the complete thought here. A vision cannot be a 'God given' vision unless it is guided by... well... God. As Christians, we find our ultimate vision in the pages of God's story, the Bible. Vision is built. Not just by human effort and planning, but by seeking God through His Word and prayer.

REFLECTION

1. What dream is God revealing to you?

- 2. Are you ready to train and chase after God’s vision for your life?
- 3. Will you trust and pray for your church leaders?

PRAYER

Father, the giver of vision, help me to hear Your voice through Your Word. Mold and motivate me to chase Your vision for my life and the vision You have for Your Church. Answer the prayers of the leaders of this church; give them a clear and passionate vision. Help the vision to stick on the hearts and minds of this congregation - that we might win the race with You! Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.

SONG: ["Open The Eyes Of My Heart" Michael W. Smith](#)

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord
Open the eyes of my heart
I want to see You
I want to see You

To see You high and lifted up
Shining in the light of Your glory
Pour out Your power and love
As we sing holy, holy, holy

PERSONAL NOTES (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 17 | WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5

PRAY FOR: Love

SCRIPTURE: John 13:1-15

DEVOTION: More Love



On the Friday that Jesus died, it might seem that the wrath of God had eclipsed the love of God. But not so! Instead mercy triumphed over Judgment, and love triumphed over wrath. At the Last Supper, Jesus washed the disciples’ feet. He also gave them a new commandment, “Love one another as I have loved you.” But the disciples don’t fully

comprehend how deeply Jesus has loved them. After all they had been through, it took a king on His knees with a towel around His waist to prove to them the loving, servant heart of God (what if our president, or a king, were to wash the feet of a bunch of fishermen today? What if it were your feet?). But even so, Peter the disciple doesn't understand why Jesus would defile Himself in this way. If that night Peter finds it hard to accept that Jesus His king would humiliate Himself by washing His followers' feet, he will be even more confounded the next day. For there will be yet another demonstration of the magnitude of God's love as he sees Jesus on the cross. It is here that the perfect love of God in Jesus, faces the wrath of God against evil, but triumphs in the end. All for the love of us.

In John 13:1-15 we read how, before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He now showed the disciples the full extent of his love. It was time for supper, and the Devil had already enticed Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to carry out his plan to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. So, he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he had around him. When he came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, why are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You don't understand now why I am doing it; someday you will." "No," Peter protested, "you will never wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "But if I don't wash you, you won't belong to me." Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!" Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you are clean, but that isn't true of everyone here." For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean." After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because it is true. And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. How true it is that a servant is not greater than the master. Nor are messengers more important than the one who sends them. You know these things - now do them! That is the path of blessing. Peace is my last gift to you, my own peace I now leave with you; peace which the world cannot give, I give to you. I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you. Peace is my last gift to you, my own peace I now leave with you; peace which the world cannot give, I give to you. By this shall the world know that you are my disciples: That you have love for one another.

1. Are you washed in the love of Jesus?
2. Whose feet do you need to wash in humility and love?

3. In what areas of your life and in what relationships do you need His Spirit of love and humility?
4. How can you serve others, especially those you are the closest to?
5. How can you grant another the peace He has freely given us?

PRAYER

Wash me clean Lord. I want to receive all You have for me. I am blessed and honored when You serve me; I am humbled by Your humility. Help me remember Your healing and cleansing. Don't let me forget the cost of my salvation. In darkness, help me call on Your name Jesus. In darkness, be the light of my heart; may I never be afraid. I am longing for Your sunrise, Jesus. In Your mercy, give me the gift of hope. And by Your love, help me to love others. Teach me Your way in the coming days. Help me to understand how You have loved me, and how You love me still. Journal Write what you learned from your study today

SONG: [HELP ME TO LOVE](#)

PERSONAL NOTES (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 18 | THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6

PRAY FOR: God's Will

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:10; Matthew 6:9-13

DEVOTION: God's Heart



Heaven is a place where God's will reigns supreme. If we want to have a taste of heaven on earth, then our prayer should be like Jesus': "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done..." The purest motivation for our prayers is that God will be glorified and that His will would reign supreme in our lives, just like it does in heaven. On a more personal level, we can pray that His will be unhindered in our own lives. Rather than imposing His will upon us, God gives us the choice to surrender to it with trust and gladness. As we yield to the Lordship of Christ over every area of our lives, we come into agreement with Him. We experience alignment with heaven and position ourselves to taste a little bit of heaven here on earth. His will then becomes what we desire and the thing we most seek after. We

enter into the incredible adventure of participating in God's plan to move His kingdom forward on the earth. This is where we find the most fulfilling and joyous life, but it all starts with one, personal "yes, Lord" on our part.

You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness[a] will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings." James 1:27: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

REFLECTION

1. What does God's will "on earth as it is in heaven" look like in your life?
2. Do the desires of your heart seem eager for God to come near them?

PRAYER

Father, Your word is very clear about what Your will is. You desire for us to reach out to the lonely, oppressed, marginalized and lost. You have great compassion on them and desire us to be Your hands and feet. Please help my will to line up with Yours. Please enable me to care about others being lost more than I care about the comforts or problems in my life. May Your kingdom come, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And may I be willing to bring Your kingdom to earth by the way I treat others around me. Please open my eyes to who You want me to bless today.

SONG: [LEAD ME LORD](#)

PERSONAL NOTES (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 19| SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7

PRAY FOR: God’s Plan for you

SCRIPTURE: Read Psalm 44:18; Psalm 139:24b

DEVOTION: To Fulfill Your Kingdom Destiny



So often, we are the ones to decide what we want to be or do with our life. As children, we are asked “what do you want to be when you grow up?” There is an unspoken pressure to decide, and then somewhere around your junior or senior year in high school, it becomes spoken with a deadline affixed to your sophomore year in college. But, finding and fulfilling our destiny can only be done in God. Joseph was given a dream, David had an encounter with a prophet, and Joshua had a mentor. In all three cases, God conveyed His plan into the lives of these individuals.

Jeremiah wrote that God has a plan for your life and when you seek Him, you will discover your destiny (Jeremiah 29:11- 13). Moreover, you find out His plan is far superior to yours. Holding on to the dream is tough when you face prison time and accusation as Joseph did. The words of the prophet can fade away when you find yourself hiding and living in caves, as David did.

The disciplines of your apprenticeship imparted by a mentor can become a lonely place when he is gone, as Joshua discovered. However, all three experienced what Mary said in Luke 1:37, “no word from God is without power”. It is only the word from God that can sustain you in the long term. His plan for our lives is better than our own. The greatest joy, fulfillment, and success come when we seek Him about the direction for our lives and commit to follow His plan for us.

REFLECTION

1. Where is God leading me?
2. Am I willing to surrender God’s plan?
3. Am I open to discovering what His plan is for me?
4. Have I or am I preparing towards His plan?

PRAYER

Lord, please give me the next step in Your Divine plan for my life. Help me to be still and know that You are God, so that I can clearly sense Your guidance and hear from You. I commit to follow You, forever.

SONG: [LEAD ME LORD](#)

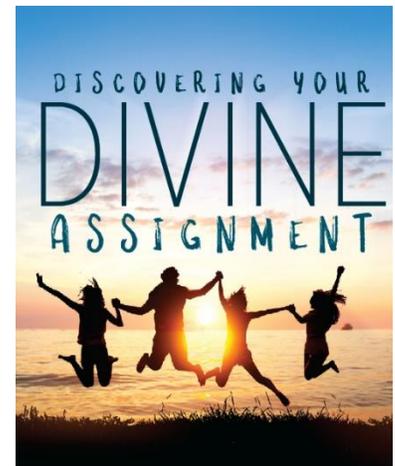
PERSONAL NOTES (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 20 | SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8

PRAY FOR: Your Divine Assignment

SCRIPTURE: Luke 4:1-2, 14-15:

DEVOTION: Your Assignment



Fasting and prayer are helpful to receiving a clear vision of God’s specific path for our lives. Many times following a season of prayer and fasting we can have a more defined understanding of the part that we play in the body of Christ and a greater sense of our particular spiritual giftings. (1 Corinthians 12) This chapter in the Gospel of Luke describes the circumstances surrounding the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. Notice that He went into the desert “full of the Holy Spirit.” However, He returned to Galilee, “in the power of the Holy Spirit.” Being full of the Spirit is knowing God and his character; walking in the power of the Spirit is when we know that we have the God-given strength and authority in our lives to walk out His will. The power of the Spirit is essential for us to accomplish the assignment God has for our lives. God could be leading you to fast so that you can receive His specific instructions for your life. He will empower you, not just to know Him, but to walk in His power to accomplish what He has called you to do.

Additional Reading Psalms 37:3-7: “Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of

your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.”

Isaiah 48:17-18: “This is what the LORD says— your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your well-being like the waves of the sea.”

Romans 1:1-2: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

REFLECTION

1. Are there areas of your life that need more clarity?
2. Are you walking in the power of the Spirit and living in God’s purpose for your life? Write down those things God is speaking to you.
3. As you continue your fast, pray that God continually reveals His purpose and gives you ever increasing clarity and strength to walk it out.

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, thank You that Your power lives within me. I want to live more in Your power, so I ask that You come into my soul and fill me again. I do not want any sin in my life to block You, so I ask You to cleanse my heart. I know You have a purpose for my life, but I don’t always know what that is. I ask for a clear calling and discernment as I desire to live out the assignment You have given me. Thank You that when You call me to something, You also completely equip me. I pray that You alone will work through me and that others will see You in me. Thank You for choosing me and giving me a purpose. May my life shine brightly for You!

SONG: [CALLED TO BE](#)

PERSONAL NOTES (What is God saying to you?)

DAY 21 | SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9

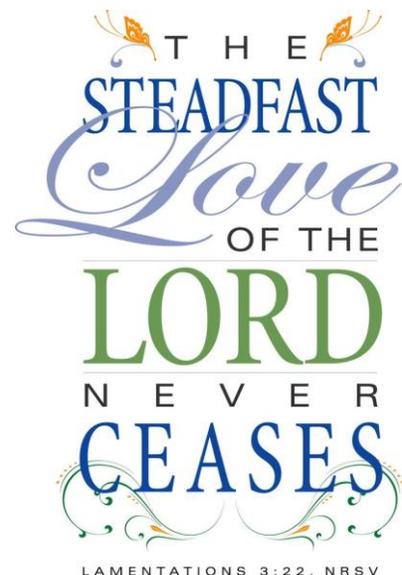
PRAY FOR: Unwavering Faith

SCRIPTURE: James 1:2-7

DEVOTION: Steadfast Faith

What do you expect when you pray? When we pray with earnest expectation, we are exercising our faith. The earnest prayers of people walking in step with God can produce powerful results, and the most earnest prayers come from us recognizing our need for God. There can be a natural tendency to shrink back when praying for the seemingly impossible, but we must remember that nothing is impossible with God. If we know the promises that God has given us, and understand His character and the principles by which He works, we can pray with confidence and trust Him for the answer. The Kings James Version of the Bible refers to it as being “unwavering in your faith.” What has caused you to waver in your expectation with God? James reminds us that faith and wavering are actually contradictory – he says “nothing wavering”. Know that God never wavers in His love for you. You can trust Him completely. Here are some ways to strengthen your faith.

1. **Invite God into your situation.** Abram (Abraham’s name before God renamed him), sought God’s direction for his life, heard God’s call to move to a new place (Canaan), and let go of what was familiar and safe to risk stepping out into the unknown. Just like Abram, you can also invite God to meet you where you are and lead you into the future he has planned for you.
2. **Place your trust in God rather than in yourself.** When a famine hit Canaan after Abram arrived there, his faith was challenged as he grappled with a situation he didn’t understand. But he chose to place his trust in God because God is always trustworthy. When you choose to trust God instead of yourself, your faith can grow like Abram’s did.
3. **Deal wisely with relational challenges.** Abram and his nephew Lot dealt with tensions in their relationship with each other, and Abram responded by working for peace between them. When you commit yourself to being a peacemaker in your own relationships, the **Holy Spirit** will empower you and strengthen your faith.
4. **Keep your focus on God when you experience success.** The battle success that Abram enjoyed tempted him to respond with sinful pride, but instead Abram chose



to humbly recognize that God was the one who had allowed him to succeed – and he thanked God for that help. If you also keep your focus on God when you're successful, you can avoid having sin damage your relationship with God.

5. **Respond honestly to disappointment.** Abram honestly expressed his feelings to God about a situation that disappointed him – his lack of a son – and suggested his own plan to deal with that disappointment: having his servant Eliezer inherit his estate. But after God reiterated his promise to give Abram a biological son in his old age, Abram believed God, despite unanswered questions. God welcomes you to communicate honestly with him whenever you feel disappointed – and to choose faith in the midst of that disappointment.
6. **Expect God to fulfill his purposes in your life no matter what.** God reassured Abram that, no matter where Abram was on his journey of faith, every step he took while trusting God led to good purposes being fulfilled in his life. God offers the same promise to you.
7. **Avoid shortcuts.** When Abram and his wife Sarai (later renamed Sarah) tried to take a shortcut in their walk of faith with God – by having Abram get their servant Hagar pregnant since Sarai wasn't conceiving – their decision caused many problems. Their example shows that shortcuts aren't worth taking in your own life.
8. **Face your past failures.** Abram faced his major mistake of sleeping with Hagar, worked through the issues it caused, and learned valuable lessons from his past failure that gave him deeper faith in the present. You can do the same.
9. **Wait for God's timing.** God finally did give Abram the biological son that he had promised, but God's timing was many years after he first told Abram to expect a son. In your own life, God may require you to wait for the right time for something you significant that you want.
10. **Get ready to receive what God has promised.** God blessed Abraham (now renamed from Abram) after Abraham showed strong faith in God himself, rather than just in what God could do for him. Just like Abraham, you too can strengthen your faith when you choose to trust God for who he is rather than what he does – and then you'll be prepared to receive whatever blessings God chooses to give you.
11. **Balance your faith between loving service and confident trust.** If you do so, like Abraham did, you can stabilize your faith so that it will endure well.
12. **Support God's mission in the world.** Just as Abraham did, you can discover by faith that everything God does in your life ripples out beyond you to others and helps accomplish God's mission of redeeming this fallen world.
13. **Make choices with consequences in mind.** Abraham lived out the consequences of his choices – both good and bad – and developed a deeper faith in the process. His example can inspire you to make wise choices in your own life.

14. **Deal with your bad habits and the weaknesses behind them.** Abraham's bad habit of occasionally lying caused pain once again when he deceived some people into thinking that Sarah was his sister rather than his wife. He made progress in his journey of faith, however, when he faced the weaknesses behind his bad habits and sought God's help to overcome them. You can do the same.
15. **Discover God's purposes for your waiting.** While Abraham was waiting for the right time for God to deliver what he had promised, Abraham learned patience, trust, perseverance, and contentment while developing a more intimate relationship with God. You, too, can gain a stronger character and a closer relationship with God while you're waiting.
16. **Let go of self-sufficiency and rely on God instead.** Just as Abraham had to fully rely on God to help him do what's best in challenging situations (such as sending Hagar and Ishmael away in order for Isaac to take his place as heir of God's promise), you can count on God to give you the faith you need to deal with challenges whenever you trust him to help you.
17. **Keep renewing your faith.** Abraham still had to contend with problems despite the many blessings in his life, but he dealt successfully with those problems by remaining focused on God, which constantly renewed his faith. You can successfully deal with problems in your own life by renewing your faith through staying focused on God.
18. **Pass the test of faith.** God tested Abraham's faith in a dramatic way when he told him to sacrifice his son Isaac as a worship offering, and then saved Isaac when he saw that Abraham was willing to obey. God may test your faith in many different ways throughout your life. Let Abraham's example of choosing God under pressure inspire you to do the same.

REFLECTION

1. What are you trusting God for in this season?
2. How can you line up your expectations with the Word of God when you pray?
3. Find promises in His Word that answer your need and write them down today.

PRAYER

Lord, please help me to stand firm in my faith as I walk with You. You are my strong tower. I know I can trust in You. Guard and renew my mind, body, soul and spirit in Christ Jesus according to Your will. May each one line up with the Word of God. May my life be filled with faith and expectation that You are working all things for good. Give me faith to move mountains, knowing that You have promised to do the impossible so that You may be glorified. May my life, thoughts and expectations reflect Yours, my King and my God.

SONG: [LORD I Believe In You](#)

Lord, I believe in You
I'll always believe in You
Though I can't see you with my eyes
Deep in my heart
Your presence I find
Lord, I believe in You
And 'Ill keep my trust in You
Let the whole world say what they may
No one can take this joy away
Lord, I believe

PERSONAL NOTES (What is God saying to you?)
