



Days
Of
Prayer
& Fasting

A RESOURCE BROUGHT TO YOU BY



21 DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING

A RESOURCE BROUGHT TO YOU BY
HERITAGE CHURCH



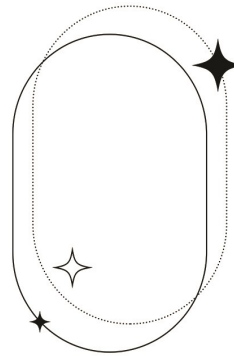


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First, we want to say thank you for picking up this book and choosing to go with us on this 21-day journey of prayer and fasting. We know that this is a big commitment and even a big leap of faith and obedience (or, as I like to say-Faith Obedience) for many of you. But whether this is your first fast or your 100th fast, we want you to know we are thinking of you, praying with you, and praying for you every day, but especially over the course of the next 21 days. During this time, we know that the Lord is going to reveal Himself to you in new ways-speaking clearly, giving direction, encouragement, and even a little correction at times. No matter what you are seeking the Lord for over the next 21 days, we know that, as you faithfully set aside the distractions of life and seek Him, you are going to close out day 21 a different person than the one who picked up this book and began reading it today.

We encourage you, as you read through the following pages, to underline, write, and highlight ALL the things! Just ignore the voice of your grade school librarian nagging you in the back of your mind, reminding you that books are to be read and not written in because we want you to MARK THIS BOOK UP!! Use it as a prayer guide for all you want, desire, and need, as well as a memorial stone and declaration of celebration for all the Lord speaks and all He does in you and through you all along this journey.

For all of you fasting newbies who are really unsure what you are about to get yourself into, take a deep breath, sit back, and relax. Just like any journey worth taking - you won't be taking this journey alone. We are here to walk with you, guide you, pray with you, encourage you, and celebrate you all along the way! For as Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says, "Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble."

We would also like to take a moment to say a huge Thank You to the Heritage Church Staff and Volunteers who worked diligently in helping write the daily devotions and helped make the dream of this resource a reality. We are so blessed by our Heritage family and the way you continue to rally behind the vision the Lord lays on our hearts, no matter how out of the box those ideas may seem at times. We truly could not (and wouldn't want to) do what we do without you! From the bottom of our hearts - THANK YOU!

Now, get ready for a spiritual adventure as we strip away distractions, get hungry for God, and dive into prayer like never before.

For the Falls,

Pastor Tim Puckett and the Heritage Staff

PROLOGUE

How to Use this Book:

This book is broken down into four different sections. An Introduction. Resources. The 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting Devotional, and finally, Bonus Material. Even though you can absolutely just flip on back to the first page of the devotional and dive right into Day 1, we encourage you to take some time to read through the introduction and resources first, as they provide such a solid foundation for your fasting journey and really serve to convey the heart, passion, and purpose of this book.

Once you have read the introduction and resource sections, you are ready to dive into the 21 Days of Fasting and Prayer Devotional, starting with Day 1. Though you are welcome to complete each day's reading, prayer, and reflection time in any order and at whatever time of day that works best for you, we have designed this book in such a way for you to journey through each days devotional pages at 3 different times during the day-morning, noon, and night. This rhythm is built to give intentionality to those meal times you are fasting, not just skipping a meal (which is a physical action) but spending that time you would normally be eating seeking the Lord instead (a spiritual action).

Below is a quick breakdown of the Fasting Challenge:

Morning: Begin each morning thanking the Lord for all He did in and through you yesterday. Even if it's something as simple as "Thank you for helping me guard my tongue yesterday, staying quiet when I wanted to give my co-worker a piece of my mind!" is a wonderful blessing from the Lord and something we can (and should) give Him thanks for. The answers you wrote in the previous day's reflection questions serve as a great launching point for this time of thanksgiving to the Lord.

Next, ask God to speak to you today! Psalm 85:8 says, "Let me hear what the Lord will speak..." Let that be your prayer each and every morning, before your feet ever even touch the floor. "Lord, no matter what my day may bring, help me to be intentional to hear your voice, even amidst the noise of life!" Finally, read through that morning's daily devotion. These devotionals will generally only take you 10 minutes to read through and will help place your heart and mind where it needs to be as you start your day - focused solely on Him!

Afternoon: While the kids are napping or while you are on your lunch break, close your office door, sneak away to your car, or find a quiet(ish) place in the hallway of your high school to throw in your earbuds and spend a few moments in prayer. To help best equip you for this time of prayer we have provided a quick 10-minute podcast that will guide you through various prayer points. This time of guided prayer will then be followed by another 10 minutes of music, which you can utilize for a time of prayer over your personal needs. You can find this Guided Prayer opportunity on the Heritage Church Podcast as well as on the church website (heritageag.org).

Evenings: Before you close your eyes at night, we challenge you to end your day with a simple time of prayer, reflection, and self examination. Ask yourself, "What did God say to me today? What did He do in me today? How did He use me today? "Where were you at work in the midst of my day today?" Then, take a moment to jot down what God reveals. Each one of the things written in the evening will be things that you will get to celebrate the next morning during your time of thanksgiving as you begin your day!



Fasting is a Power Move

An Introduction

WHEN IT ALL DEPENDS ON HIM

A True Story of the Power of Prayer and Fasting



“The Spirit Is Willing, but The Flesh Is Weak.” Matthew 26:41b

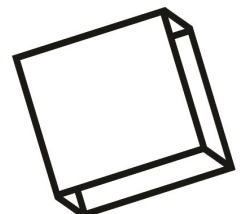
In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus dropped some wisdom on His squad: "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). While Jesus poured His heart out in prayer, His disciples were more tuned into their body's needs than anything else. Sound familiar? How often do we miss what God is up to because we're sidetracked by all the wrong things?

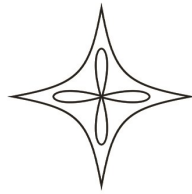
It's time to cut through the noise and lock into prayer, just like Jesus did.

Does this resonate with anyone else besides me? Even as a pastor, I know it is easy to look and feel like the flesh is winning the battle. It may not be a major sin, but just like in this example, you know the Lord has asked you to stay up and pray, and yet you still drift into a slumber. You desire the Spirit but sometimes don't put in the effort to see it. You want to be obedient but sometimes allow the flesh to hinder that, like the disciples here.

That's my story with fasting. About eleven years ago, when my wife and I were in the height of our youth ministry, I felt the Lord was drawing me into a long-term fast. I was hesitant at first because I couldn't wrap my mind around adding a long term fast into such a busy and chaotic season of our lives. I questioned whether the timing was right and battled thoughts of "Maybe I should hold off and start this fast when....". But let's be honest, when is there ever a "good time" to have a long fast? There is always a holiday meal coming or someone's birthday, a trip, or times when it is downright inconvenient. It is easy to dismiss, push back, delay, and let the flesh win the battle!

I had delayed entirely too long, and it began to affect me. I was fulfilling my responsibilities well, but more often than not, I was simply checking the box. I would be there in submission to the process, but inside, I would scream that I'm unhappy about it. I remember being at an event I was helping facilitate. I didn't have a significant role at the event, but I was more there for set-up, tear-down, and support. I didn't want to be in the room and showed it with my relaxed attire and casual attitude. I was present during the sermon but couldn't tell you a word that was spoken. Still, I remember during an altar moment of prayer, God revisited the topic of fasting with me. My internal arguments against it crumbled as I felt a compelling push towards obedience. I continued to "argue" with God, but it seemed like all my arguments fell short at that moment. The altar time proceeded, and I felt the Lord give me a word of knowledge for someone in the room. I texted it directly to the person running the event so he could read it over the mic - I clearly was not in the space to give that word - but instead of reading it, he called me to the platform. There I was, sweats and all, giving the message myself.





As I began, a couple in the crowd broke, visibly and audibly; God was speaking right to them. Every detail of their situation was being vocalized from the stage by me, a complete stranger. When I finished, I stepped off the platform, and they came running out of their seats to pray with me. So there in the middle of the room in my sweats and hoodie, I prayed for this couple, and God whispered again in my ear, "Why are you waiting?" This was the moment I caved. I finally said, "yes," and God began to encourage me that there was more for me and my youth ministry.

I had committed to a long-term fast by the time I left the event. I felt led to fast until I saw a tangible move of God's presence in the student ministry, a move that the students couldn't deny. It just so happened that my fast began a little before my birthday and included all of the Easter holiday, too, which were precisely two of the key "reasons" I had delayed in the first place. Ironic, right?

The everyday struggle of a fast is real. I'm not a breakfast eater anymore, and I often work through lunch, but you can guarantee the moment you start a fast, you will crave all the things for all the meals!

Now, the first couple of weeks were good. We were having good services. I was dismissing service and then doing altar calls because I only wanted people there who actually wanted to be there. Kids were getting saved, parents were getting saved, but it wasn't the tangible move I was seeking....yet.

I found that the longer I fasted, the more in-tuned I was to what God was saying. I remember one Wednesday afternoon, three weeks into my fast, I was in pre-service prayer with the student interns and I felt like the Lord told me to tell the students about Mandey and my battle with infertility during service that night. Up until this point, we had kept it a secret. This was a battle we had privately been dealing with for two years. It was an extremely painful season and every question about when we were going to have kids felt like a dagger (we had been married for five years at this point, so we got this question a lot, especially from our students, as they wanted a baby to dote on and parade around). Every new birth announcement was crushing, and each month was a new reminder of failure. But, up until this point, it had been our own private battle. However, on this seemingly random Wednesday night during the regular routine of pre-service prayer, God told me, "Tonight is the night you bring it into the light and have the kids pray for you."

So I called Mandey and told her what I felt I heard the Lord telling us to do. I remember her saying these significant words, "I trust you. I trust that if you are saying that God is telling you to do this, then we should do it." So that night, after my message, I told the kids what was going on and asked them to pray with us. We had yet another appointment with our doctors the following day, so I asked them to pray a bold prayer. I knew biologically it wasn't possible, but I asked them to pray that when they ran the tests on Mandey, that she would miraculously be pregnant. So that's what they did. I left the room that night on cloud 9, believing God had answered our prayers. I remember hearing God say that night, "End your fast after next Wednesday's service." I was confident in this.

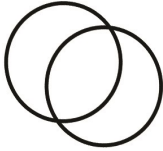
The following day we went to the appointment full of excitement and expectation. As they began the tests, to say I was disappointed to hear the words “she isn't pregnant” would be an understatement. Still, it was nothing we weren't already used to. But even amidst the disappointment, the Lord blessed us with a silver lining - the good news we got was that they couldn't find anything biologically preventing Mandey from having a child. This was definitely a win! However, the next step was an exploratory surgery to help us learn more - a surgery that could help provide answers but could also cause issues, preventing her from ever getting pregnant. And then, as we were about to leave, the doctor walked in with an envelope. It was my results from a previous test that happened to just have come in. That test concluded that I would not be able to have kids naturally. Talk about a blow. I remember the hope-filled morning came to a crash landing because of the contents of that white envelope. All the delays, all the struggles, all the pain was my fault. That moment marked one of the most painful experiences I had faced until then.

Now, we know men are great about putting things in a box and moving on, right? So I packed up my baby box, returned it to the corner recesses of my mind, and picked up my work box again. I knew that God had spoken to me about ending my fast after the following Wednesday night service, but remember, what was I fasting for? A tangible move of God's presence that no one could deny. So, despite the personal blows I had received, I walked into service that night with expectations of incredible things! Honestly, I expected Shekinah glory clouds to fill the room or something. I am not exaggerating this at all. I walked into the room that Wednesday expecting to see things I had never seen before and to experience things I had never experienced. We had a good service, kids got saved, we had a good hunger for God's presence, and kids stayed for thirty minutes after service, praying. It was awesome! But it still wasn't what God said. It wasn't the tangible move of God's presence I was fasting for.

Can I tell you, I was mad?! I was frustrated with God because I knew without a shadow of a doubt I was supposed to end the fast that night. I say that with so much confidence because, throughout the fast, I found my ability to hear and determine the voice of God was heightened and so precise. The longer I went, the more distinct and louder His voice became.

So, in my frustration, I broke my fast that night in the worst way possible! (We include some practical steps about how to prepare for and how to end your fast in this book that will help you avoid my mistake.) I went to Qdoba and had a big giant burrito with steak, queso, salsa, and cheese! I was so sick for the next several days as my body's digestion was jolted back into service - 10 out of 10 do not recommend. lol.

I have vivid memories of the days following the fast. I was mad at God, chucking frustrations like, “I don't understand! I did what You told me to do, and I don't feel like You stuck up to Your end of the deal here!” I was obedient and listened, but I never saw the initial reason for my fast to come to pass. I settled back into a regular ministry routine but dropped any conversation about my fast. I quickly changed the subject if anyone brought it up.



Several weeks later, I got a call from my wife, Mandey, asking me to come home after church on a Sunday morning. It was a strange request and a really inconvenient time. I was running an important meeting for a church consulting group later that afternoon, and I had a lot of tasks and preparation that needed to be done to be ready for it. Still, I realized the circumstances we were living with and our new complicated reality that I had nicely filed away in a box in the back of my mind that I knew she couldn't deal with as neatly as I could.

I chose to quickly run home, and when I walked in the doors, I saw Mandey holding a pregnancy test and a onesie that said, "Baby P, Boy or Girl, I guess we'll see." I have never been so happy to grab a pee-covered stick in my life! I immediately began to count the dates, and God did a miracle on the very Tuesday before the Wednesday that I broke my fast. I had no idea God was working behind the scenes the whole time.

Several weeks later, we brought the letter in from the doctor that said I couldn't have kids naturally and an ultrasound picture of our daughter, Presleah, and told the story to our students. That night, we prayed for miracles. We had NINE verified miracles take place in the room that night. I had finally seen the fulfillment of the reason for the fast. A tangible move of God that no one could deny. We had a letter that said it wasn't possible and a picture that showed nothing is impossible for the Lord!

Fasting changed my life and my family's lives forever. Now, anytime we have a significant decision, or I need to hear from the Lord, I submit to the discipline of fasting. Something happens when you disconnect from the world, even the basic necessity of food, and spend that time seeking God. You will also realize how much of your life is shaped around food. You will be amazed at how much time you have to devote to God when you aren't worrying about what to eat next.

Let me challenge you: everyone needs to fast and commit to at least one long-term fast in their life. It's life-changing. Those 28 days changed me, and I am telling you, these 21 days will change you!

-Pastor Tim Puckett

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A resource guide to the

Why, What & How of Fasting

Chapter 2

THE WHY



I am sure all of us have at least heard of the idea of fasting, and not just in the church setting. We hear all the time about intermittent fasting in the health and fitness world and are even told to fast by our doctors for specific tests that need to be completed. Though there are many reasons we could list in support of fasting when it comes to our physical health, there are also several distinct reasons for doing so for our spiritual health laid out for us in scripture.

4 Reasons to Fast:

#1: Overcome temptation: Ever notice that saying 'no' to certain cravings helps build discipline? It's like hitting the gym for your willpower. When you fast, you are flexing that spiritual gift muscle we call "self-control". The following verses are some biblical examples of this flex. As you read them, take a moment to underline words or phrases that teach us more about this spiritual discipline:

Hebrews 12:11

No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

2 Peter 1:5–15

In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.

The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.

So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Therefore, I will always remind you about these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth you have been taught. And it is only right that I should keep on reminding you as long as I live. For our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that I must soon leave this earthly life, so I will work hard to make sure you always remember these things after I am gone.

Now, take some time to reflect on and pray over these scriptures and the words you underlined. Are there any areas of your life where you sense a need to work on flexing that self-control muscle in your life? If so, list them on the lines below.

#2: Brings breakthrough: It’s a bird. It’s a plane. It’s Superman! I have no doubt that as you read those words, images of a caped crusader flying through the skies on a mission to fight against evil filled your mind. After all, as children, we were likely all fascinated to some degree by these superhuman heroes and found ourselves fantasizing about what life would be like if we too could effortlessly crash through walls like the Hulk, run with super speed like the Flash, or don a cape and fly through the skies like Superman. We now know that those “superhuman” traits are nothing but fiction, some having learned this lesson only after a trip to the emergency room from a painful fall from the roof after a failed attempt to “leap tall buildings in a single bound.” However, though we are not superhuman, we as Christians do, in fact, have the ability to work, move, and operate in the supernatural when we are intentional to hear the voice of the Lord and follow His leading, and fasting helps us in doing just that. To put it plainly, fasting is like superhero training for your spirit, weakening the flesh and giving your spirit a power boost.

Take a moment to read the following passages of scripture. Underline words and/or phrases you see that teach you more about this “power boost” we receive from the Holy Spirit.

Daniel 10:12–14

Then he said, “Don’t be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day you began to pray for understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer. But for twenty-one days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the archangels, came to help me, and I left him there with the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia. Now I am here to explain what will happen to your people in the future, for this vision concerns a time yet to come.”

Ephesians 6:12

For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

In what areas of your life could you use this “supernatural boost,” if you will, from the Holy Spirit?

#3: Assists in bringing forth the will of God: Have you ever been stuck in a confusing situation? Are you stuck in one now? There aren't many things in life worse than feeling STUCK. I will never forget the time that I was driving down a dirt road after a rain storm only to find myself stuck! My tires were spinning and mud was slinging but no matter how hard I tried my car was NOT moving. I was not moving forward. I was not moving backward. I. Was. Stuck! Thankfully, after the swallowing of my pride and a quick call for help, I soon found myself back on solid ground and on my way once again.

In the same way that my tires got stuck in that mud, we can, at times, find ourselves stuck in life. These stuck feelings can come from frustrations at work or in our career, in times of shattered dreams and broken relationships where it feels there is no way out and no signs of improvement, and even in our lives spiritually when it seems God has gone silent, leaving you to sit and spin your wheels, staying stuck. During these times of "stuck", fasting can help serve as your lifeline, your GPS or call to AAA if you will, to help you navigate God's path when things don't make sense, when things get foggy, and when you find yourself stuck in that mud pit just spinning your wheels.

In Esther chapter 4, we find Esther in one of these seasons. Take a moment to open your Bible and read Esther chapter 4. It's only 17 verses long, so it won't take you long. And as you read, make sure you take note of the many ways Esther likely felt "stuck", as well as her response to those obstacles.

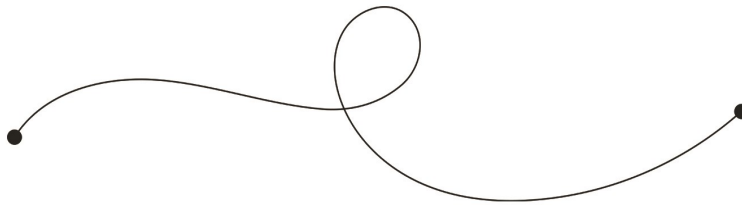
Though Esther faced many challenges - moments of feeling lost, confused, forgotten, abandoned, and generally "stuck" - she leaned into the Lord to help her navigate all of the uncertainty. What does Esther 4:15-16a tell us that she did?

Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: " _____ and _____ together all the Jews of Susa and _____ for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same.

Esther sprang into action as she instructed her people in verse 16 to Go, Gather, and Fast! Not "go form a committee and plan," but Go, Gather, and FAST! And it was from this time of quiet, as she shut off the feelings of doubt and fear and worry and "stuckness" that she heard clearly the voice of the Lord, giving her the confidence to speak those timeless words found in verse 16b, "I will go and see the King. And if I must die, I must die."

In what areas of your life do you feel stuck and could use the Lord's leading to serve as that spiritual GPS or call into AAA in your life?

#4: Clarity and understanding: Have you ever seen an episode of the show "Hoarders"? I can't imagine how it must feel for the show's cast and crew members as they walk through the rooms that are packed from wall to wall, only leaving a small path by which to navigate the mountains of stuff that are quite literally closing in on them. After all, it makes me feel anxious and claustrophobic just watching it all unfold from the comfort of my sofa!



It is so easy for us to sit back as we dive into the messy parts of someone else’s life with eyes of judgment and even an air of arrogance as we think to ourselves, “I may be a mess but goodness, I’m glad I’m not THAT bad!” However, I can’t help but wonder how many times the Lord steps into the “living room” of our hearts, spirits, and minds only to find mountains of personal hopes, dreams, desires, packed schedules, and duties that we have collected over the years. All of those “back-up plans” that we cling to JUST in case what the Lord has asked us to do doesn’t quite pan out. Or those stacks upon stacks of things the Lord has laid on your heart to act on or step out in that sit there, waiting, gathering dust until you “feel ready” or “have time” to tackle them.

If this is speaking to you and your heart, then I encourage you, picture fasting as a life declutter–sweeping out what doesn't belong so you can become the person God designed you to be.

Acts 13:2 says:

One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.”

All throughout life you are going to feel pulled in many different directions by many different things–and, most of the time, these “things” aren’t in and of themselves necessarily bad. However, as we just read in Acts 13:2, the Lord has a special plan designed just for YOU. And when we fill our lives with all of that unnecessary clutter, we don’t leave room for the Lord’s will and plan to come into our lives.

In what areas of your life are you seeking the Lord’s direction/leading? Are there any things–be they thoughts, plans, dreams, agendas, or tasks that you need to prayerfully consider allowing the Holy Spirit to sweep out of your life? If so, list them below.

Now that you have taken some time to reflect on several reasons for fasting, take a moment to look back over any notes that you made. As you continue to work your way through the coming pages preparing for the upcoming 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, visit these notes regularly. Pray over them. Add to them. For it is from these moments of reflection that the Lord will likely speak clearly to your heart more details on the what and how of fasting, which we will be discussing in more detail in the coming pages!



Chapter 3

THE WHAT



Even for those of us who are not new to the concept of fasting, we all likely still have some questions about it. Questions like “What’s it all about?” and “Are there any specific rules I need to follow?” Well, to put it simply, fasting is like hitting the pause button on our worldly connections and taking time to intentionally turn our focus towards God. It’s a time to shut off all of the unnecessary noise, allowing ourselves to (here’s that word again) intentionally refocus and reconnect with God. Slowing down and embracing the opportunity to hear His voice and, in turn, follow His leading. In fasting, we are, in essence, not just saying but, with our actions, are showing God that we enjoy HIM and HIS presence more than our own personal wants (i.e., technology) and even our needs (i.e., food/drink).

So, what’s fasting exactly? To answer that, we have to first define what it is not! It’s not a crash diet or a hunger strike. Instead, it’s more about taking a deliberate break from our usual routine for a set period in order to spend more time seeking Him and listening for His leading. The heart and goal of fasting remains the same whether that break be from food, your cell phone, your TV, or any other countless possibilities, which we will discuss in more detail in the “How” portion of this resource guide. But, for now, think of this time of fasting as a spiritual workout, flexing those faith muscles to strengthen your connection with Jesus.

Now, let’s talk about the nitty-gritty. When you decide to give fasting a shot, get ready for some pushback. Jesus, the ultimate spiritual coach, experienced resistance (for more on this, check out “Overcoming Obstacles” on page 115 of this Guide), yet He STILL recommended both prayer and fasting for believers. Let’s check out Matthew 6:5,16.

“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get.” (verse 5)

“And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get.” (verse 16)

Did you notice that the scripture doesn’t say “if” you pray or “if” you fast but rather WHEN you pray and fast? The spiritual disciplines of prayer and fasting are non-negotiables to the Lord. This truth alone should serve as a big red warning light to each of us that time spent in prayer and fasting is necessary for each and every one of us.

However, just as is true in many aspects of life, especially a life lived counter-culturally—one lived in obedience to the Lord and His leading and not ourselves and our own desires. However, obstacles and challenges will pop up. So, don’t be caught off guard when things get a bit tough during your fast. You’re on a mission to level up spiritually, reclaiming ground from the enemy. So, put on your armor (Eph 6:11-13) and gear up for a faith-fueled victory through Christ.

The Bible is packed with stories of fasting MVPs. When Moses needed divine guidance, he went on a fast (Exodus 34:28). Daniel threw down a 10-day diet challenge and later fasted when he was anxiously waiting for an answer (Daniel 1:11-14; 10:3,12-14). Ezra fasted when seeking protection and provision (Ezra 8:21-23), and Esther fasted to thwart a sinister plan against her people (Esther 4:14-17). Spoiler alert: these fasting heroes got results! As you prepare for this time of fasting,



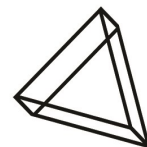
take time to read through each of these accounts, making notes in the margins, creating a “memorial stone,” if you will, of the way the Lord worked and moved in each of the situations. A reminder to you of all the Lord has done for others in the past and encouraging your spirit to believe for all He will continue to do for you in the present and the future. And then, as you begin your own fasting journey, allow these stories to serve as a reminder to you that your time of prayer and fasting isn't just a spiritual pit stop. It's a power move, an opportunity for breakthroughs, and a chance to see results in your own journey with God.

This is absolute: fasting brings a greater awareness of God's presence. You can also expect a greater love for God and a bigger heart for the hurting, addicted, and oppressed. Fasting is like a superhero power-up against sin and a victory dance over the enemy's plans.

Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. (Eph 6:13) And get ready to witness the extraordinary!

“Fasting brings a greater awareness of God's presence.”

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THE HOW



Don't rush through this section! The steps below will help you in laying a strong foundation for your fast, so take time to really read through them so that you can begin praying over each. You will then have the opportunity to put all of your thoughts and prayers down on paper as we write out our individual focus, intentions, and commitments on Day 1 of the 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting Devotional, which begins on page?

8 Steps for Effective Fasting

#1: Set your objective: Earl Nightingale, an American radio speaker and author, was quoted as saying, "People with goals succeed because they know where they are going." Such a simple statement but one that holds a powerful truth that even applies in the context of prayer and fasting. If you go into this time without a goal, then you will come to the end of it having completed a fast but not having accomplished your goal or reached the desired destination. That is why it is important to ask yourself-What is my fasting goal? Is my desire to draw closer to God? Am I seeking a miracle? Do I need to hear the Lord's voice in a specific area of my life? And then, after you have identified these various areas of need in your life, take it a step further and ask yourself why. Why do I want to draw closer to the Lord? Why am I seeking this miracle in my life or the lives of others around me? Why do I need/want to hear God's voice? Really, dig down and try to define it, writing down all the Lord speaks to you and lays on your heart in the process.

We see a wonderful example of praying focused and specific prayers in Matthew 20:29-33.

As Jesus and the disciples left the town of Jericho, a large crowd followed behind. Two blind men were sitting beside the road. When they heard that Jesus was coming that way, they began shouting, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" "Be quiet!" the crowd yelled at them. But they only shouted louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" When Jesus heard them, he stopped and called, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord," they said, "we want to see!" Jesus felt sorry for them and touched their eyes. Instantly they could see! Then they followed him.

Clearly, these two blind men knew what they were seeking, and they sought it with boldness and confidence. Verse 30 tells us that "when they heard that Jesus was coming...they began shouting...". Did you notice that it says "when they heard Jesus was coming" and not "when they heard Jesus coming" or "heard Jesus passing by." No, when these men heard others around them talking about how Jesus was coming, they began crying out to him-so much so that they annoyed the others around them. But did they care? Nope. They knew what they desired-healing-and they knew that Jesus had the power to heal. So before Jesus even came into their physical presence, they began calling out to Him for their healing. And then, when He drew near and spoke to them directly, they again spoke their desire and need plainly, "Lord...we want to see" (verse 33).

May we all go into this time of prayer and fasting with that same level of focus, confidence, and boldness, knowing what we desire and passionately seeking the One who can and will provide.

#2: Make your commitment: Matthew 6:16 lays out for us clearly that fasting is something we as Christians should partake in when the scripture says, "And when you fast..." - Not if you do but when you do. So when preparing for a fast, our prayer does not need to be "Lord, should I fast" but more so, "Lord, what should I fast." There are many different fasting plans available for you to follow (several of which are detailed out in the following pages, so keep on reading!)

and it is up to you and Jesus what your time of fasting and prayer will look like. That means you will need to prayerfully determine the following:

1. When will my fast begin?
2. How long will my fast last?
3. What will I be fasting during this time?
4. How will my fast fit into/adapt/change my regular daily routine, and what do I need to do to best prepare for those changes?

#3: Prepare yourself spiritually: I don't know about you, but I am always amazed at how much random stuff my family can (and does) acquire just by living the day-to-day of life. I can go through and deep clean my whole house in the spring-taking time to declutter and reorganize all of the things-only to find the task needing to be done again in the summer, fall, and even winter. It's a never-ending and ever-necessary task.

In the same way that our homes can become cluttered over time, we can also have a tendency to acquire clutter in our spiritual lives as well. And so, as you prepare for this time of fasting and prayer, take some time to complete a "spiritual spring cleaning," if you will. During this time, confess, forgive, and surrender as you get ready for the spiritual journey. Not sure where to start? I suggest starting by praying Psalm 139:23-24 over your heart and life and then, after you have prayed, sit quietly in the Lord's presence as you wait for His leading and prompting to certain areas of your life that may need a little extra "deep cleaning".

"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." Psalm 139:23-24

#4: Prepare yourself physically: Depending on the type of fast you choose, you may need to physically prepare your body for the fast itself.

For those fasting food, you will want/need to gradually ease into your fast by adjusting your diet. Cutting back on portions, cutting out snacks, and eating lighter food options are great ways to begin this process. You do not want to have a pre-fast food fest the night before your fast as a way to "get in all your favorites before having to go without for 21 days". This type of food binge will wreak havoc on your blood sugar levels and will confuse many of your "normal" body systems, making an already difficult fast that much harder.

For those fasting certain items such as soda, coffee, or just caffeine in general, prepare by cutting down on your regular daily consumption while simultaneously increasing your water intake. This will help your body adjust more gradually to the lack of caffeine and will help in easing those pesky caffeine headaches.

No matter the type of fast you plan to embark on, you will likely need to make at least some minor adjustments to your sleep schedule. If you are fasting food, you will be consuming far less calories than you are accustomed to. And since the food we eat is the literal source of the physical energy we burn, less (or no) food is going to mean a decline in your energy and your body's need for more rest than usual. If you are fasting caffeine, you are going to be feeling all of the sleepy vibes and overcoming those caffeine headaches, again requiring you to get more sleep! Even if you aren't fasting food or caffeine but are committing to getting up 10, 15, or even 30 minutes earlier in order to spend that time in the morning in prayer you are going to need to adjust that bedtime a bit earlier. Otherwise, the mission and goal of getting up earlier will not be sustainable long term. In order to stay consistent with that morning time with the Lord, you are going

to need to bump up that bedtime a bit so you can be sure to get ample amounts of – you guessed it – SLEEP!

#5: Put yourself on a schedule: Most of us have likely heard the quote, “A goal without a plan is just a wish.” It’s a quote we see on motivational posters in our high school classrooms and has become a prominent inspirational meme on social media platforms for health coaches and life coaches alike. Why is this quote so prominent in these “goal-setting” arenas of life? Because it’s true! If I have a goal of running a 5k but don’t set aside time to prepare myself both physically and mentally, then that 5k is never going to happen! Without a plan, life will always get in the way, derailing even the goals I most desire to accomplish in my life.

So, as you prepare for this fast—come up with a plan! Plan when and where you will have your prayer, reading, and reflection times. Is it best for you to get up early and spend this time with the Lord before your day begins? Do you get a lunch break that would allow you to sneak away to your car for a time of worship, prayer, and reflection mid-day?

As a part of this book, we have included a suggested prayer and fasting rhythm to help you in creating a schedule for these 21 Days (you can read more about this in the “How to Use this Book” section on page 2); however, feel free to adjust it and adapt it to fit what works for you and your life. After all, none of us are in the same season of life. What works for an office manager and what works for a stay-at-home mom of littles is not going to be the same! So don’t try to push yourself and your situation to fit the mold of someone else. You do what the Lord leads you to do during the next 21 days. No more. No less.

#6: End your fast gradually: Especially when it comes to fasting food, it is important that you are intentional to end your fast gradually, reintroducing food back into your diet slowly and with intentionality. When you skip this step in the process, you shock your system and can cause unnecessary sickness and stomach issues. Start by eating light foods, nothing fried or full of butter or oils, adding in various food options over the course of days, allowing your system to readjust to a regular eating schedule once again.

#7: Expect results: Remember a few pages back when we talked about the importance of “setting your objective”? Well, now that you have thought and prayed over what you desire to receive from this time of fasting, write it down!! Write down what you’re believing God for, and regularly pray over your commitment, building your faith and trusting that God will do His thing!

#8: Tell your family: No matter what you choose to fast, it is always a good idea to give your family a heads up! That way, they can serve as accountability partners for you or even join in the fast with you! As we reach the end of this Resource, it is time to dive into some of those fasting options that we alluded to earlier. You see, fasting is not one size fits all, and you will likely find that, over time, the Lord will lead you to fast different things for different reasons in different seasons of your life. So, as you read through the lists below, please know that these are simply SUGGESTIONS. This is not a comprehensive list but rather a launching point for you to prayerfully consider.

In general, fasts can be split into 4 different categories. The complete fast, the selective fast, and the soul fast.

#1: The complete fast: In this type of fast, you would be going without food for a set time, just like the people of Israel did, as we see in Judges 20:26.

#2: The selective fast: In this type of fast, you would not be giving up eating completely but would instead be skipping specific foods for a set period. This could be a favorite snack or meal or even something specific like sugar, caffeine, or meat. We see this type of fasting done by John the Baptist and Daniel. This type of fast is especially ideal for those with health considerations.

#3: The partial fast: In this type of fast, you would be avoiding certain foods periodically. This could mean fasting a single meal each day or on a specific day of the week. This type of fast is much more flexible and more easily managed.

#4: The soul fast: In this type of fast, you are not fasting any form of food or drink but is more like a theme-based fast, giving up something other than food to bring focus to an area of your life or situation (social media, anyone?). This type of fast can easily be paired with one of the three options listed previously, and can also be completed as a complete, selective, or partial fast as outlined below:

Partial Fast: Put your phone to bed daily at 7 PM and leave it until morning. This type of fast may require you to do some advance planning. You may need to pull out that trusty old home phone so that you can still be reached in the overnight hours in case of an emergency. You may need to invest in an old-school alarm clock. Or you may choose to opt to simply plug your phone in on the other side of the room with the ringer turned all of the way up and your notifications silenced. That way, you can still hear it when it rings without the distractions of the constant notification dings and without it being constantly within reach, decreasing that temptation to start the mindless scroll of social media in those evening hours.

Information Fast: Delete all news, social media, and gaming apps, essentially only using your phone as a PHONE and not a mini-computer or source of entertainment. If those work emails tend to steal away your attention in the evenings, consider disconnecting your work email account from your phone for the next 21 days, only allowing work to have your focus only when you are intentionally sitting down at your computer to do so.

Full Media Fast: Abstain from television, podcasts, and radio completely for the duration of the fast. This type of fast truly forces you to embrace silence and provides lots of opportunities for the Lord to speak clearly with you, not having anything to fill the noise and distract you from listening when He does.

No matter the type of fast you choose, it's time to cut through the noise and lock into prayer, just like Jesus did. It is our prayer that during this time of prayer and fasting, you will be able to do just that! And those days that you are feeling weary, when this time of prayer and fasting feels too difficult or too heavy, we pray you remember and will be encouraged by the fact that fasting is a power move. It's a chance to clear the clutter and get seriously hungry, quite literally for some of us, for the Lord.

Our lives are jam-packed with all sorts of stuff, and it's easy to get filled up with the wrong things. A time of prayer and fasting is the reset button—it's about ditching the distractions, filling up with God, and staying alert to His presence. It's a time of spiritual heavy lifting—approaching the Lord with a bold confidence and faith that declares, *“Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.”*

Ephesians 3:20

Now that we have covered many of the “shoulds” of fasting let's take a moment to also highlight a few dangers to avoid.

MINDSETS TO AVOID WHILE FASTING

#1: Fasting in order to lose weight: Though choosing to fast from eating food for any period of time will in fact, result in weight loss, that should not be the goal and focus of your fasting journey. Remember, your spirit is on a diet, not your waistline. Here are a few tips to help you keep your focus where it should be:

- Put away the scale for the duration of your fast. If you aren't weighing yourself, then the amount of weight lost (if any) isn't even an issue or concern. This will help you stay focused, celebrating the spiritual wins in the season you are standing in and not the physical wins of the scale you are standing on.
- Start every day by reading over your "why" for fasting. You might also consider posting this in various key points around your home or even in your car or at work! This will help you in staying focused and keeping your mind from wandering to those insignificant "extras".

#2: Fasting to cover other sinful motives and practices: Using fasting as a way to "cover up" or "hide" your secret sins is about as successful as a toddler trying to play hide and seek. We've all seen it. There they stand, fully visible in the room with just their hands over their eyes and yet 100% convinced that they are hands down the best hider to ever have hidden, when in reality, there they are, plain as day, just standing in the middle of the room. Friends, just like you can see that toddler standing there in all of their glory in those moments, God can see each and every one of your secret and/or "hidden" sins when He looks at you and me. So, let's determine now to put aside these childish games and keep it real and honest, just like God prefers.

This is such a serious concern of the Lord's that He even lays out for us some pretty hefty consequences for those who fast with the wrong motives and practices serving as their driving force.

We see this in 1 Kings 21:9-13:

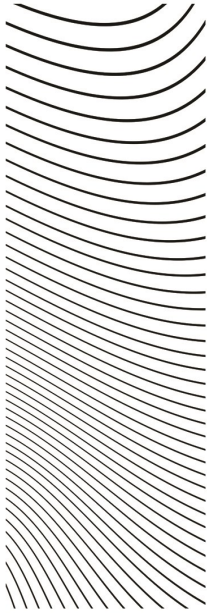
So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent them to the elders and other leaders of the town where Naboth lived. In her letters she commanded: "Call the citizens together for a time of fasting, and give Naboth a place of honor. And then seat two scoundrels across from him who will accuse him of cursing God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death."

So the elders and other town leaders followed the instructions Jezebel had written in the letters. They called for a fast and put Naboth at a prominent place before the people. Then the two scoundrels came and sat down across from him. And they accused Naboth before all the people, saying, "He cursed God and the king." So he was dragged outside the town and stoned to death.

And again in Isaiah 58:1-4

*"Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast.
Shout aloud! Don't be timid.
Tell my people Israel of their sins!*

*Yet they act so pious!
They come to the Temple every day
and seem delighted to learn all about me.*



*They act like a righteous nation
that would never abandon the laws of its God.
They ask me to take action on their behalf,
pretending they want to be near me.
'We have fasted before you!' they say.
'Why aren't you impressed?
We have been very hard on ourselves,
and you don't even notice it!'
"I will tell you why!" I respond.
"It's because you are fasting to please yourselves.
Even while you fast,
you keep oppressing your workers.
What good is fasting
when you keep on fighting and quarreling?
This kind of fasting
will never get you anywhere with me.*

In the first passage, we read of Jezebel and how she used the guise of fasting in order to accomplish her own agenda, and then in the second, we read of people fasting with the wrong motives completely. In both passages, we see clearly the importance of fasting with the right motives and heart, as well as the consequences when we don't. Which brings us to the third dangerous mindset to avoid when fasting, fasting to get God to do what you want.

#3: Don't fast to get God to do what you want: Much in the same way that we need to avoid fasting with wrong motives, we also need to be mindful of our intentions! In other words, what are you wanting to get out of this time of fasting? Are you fasting with the desire to hear His voice or with the desire for Him to hear yours? Yes, when we pray it is a two-way conversation, and yes, the Lord loves to hear the prayers of His people-after all, He is more than able to handle the doubts, questions, and frustrations that we throw His way. The "danger," if you will, comes when we set out on a mission to change God's mind. We must remember that fasting is NOT a divine bargaining chip.

If we continue reading the passage in Isaiah 58 that we started reading earlier, we see in verse 5:

*You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance,
bowing your heads like reeds bending in the wind.
You dress in burlap and cover yourselves with ashes.
Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the Lord?*

And then in Joel 2:13:

*Don't tear your clothing in your grief,
but tear your hearts instead."
Return to the Lord your God,
for he is merciful and compassionate,
slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.
He is eager to relent and not punish.*



When preparing to participate in a time of fasting, we must remember that the goal is to hear, see, and know HIM more clearly, deeply, and intimately. And for that to happen, we must first begin with our focus, motives, and desires focused squarely on Him, His voice, and His leading.

#4: Fasting for appearances: I don't think there has been a society with more of a habitual focus on appearance. Thanks to new commodities like cell phones with cameras and social media platforms from which to share all aspects of our lives, appearance has become a form of an idol for many. After all, we have all mastered the art of "appearing" to have it all together, even when we don't. So why do we do it? Because we crave those moments of celebration and praise that come from our captive audience. However, hear me clearly - Fasting is about connecting with God, not showcasing your self-control on Instagram. Matthew 6:16 addresses this issue clearly:

And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get.

Does that mean that you have to keep your fast a secret? Absolutely not! In fact, there are many advantages to keeping others in the loop. Doing so adds a layer of accountability, a support system you will want and need on the days that those obstacles we talked about earlier come knocking at your door. So no, the Lord does not want us to necessarily keep our fasting a secret, but He also warns us to not wear it as a badge of honor, making it all about us and what we are doing and not Him and what He desires to do.

#5: Don't separate the formal practice from internal devotion: In the same way that you don't want to fast for the appearance of doing good, you also do not want to fast just for the sake of fasting-going through the motions outwardly without allowing time and space for the Lord to do a work inwardly! This is a big one and is a big part of the motivation for us writing this book. After all, if you simply give up eating for 21 days without also intentionally seeking the Lord, replacing your eating times with focused time with him, then all you accomplished was not eating for 21 days. An incredible feat, yes, but one without reward or value. Therefore, it is essential that you make sure to let the outside (fasting) match the inside (praying). It's a package deal. They go hand in hand. And we are excited to journey with you as we work through this book together!

**“The goal is to hear, and see,
and know HIM more clearly,
deeply, and intimately.”**



A journal for

21 Days Of Prayer And Fasting

Day 1

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!" Isaiah 43:18-19

PRESS PAUSE: Today, we're embarking on a spiritual adventure, diving into Jesus' teachings on prayer and fasting. This journey will guide us all into a deeper understanding of our relationship with the Father. It's like we've snagged an exclusive coffee date with the Savior, and He's ready to share some insider tips that could totally revolutionize our spiritual lives. So, grab your coffee (unless you are fasting it that is...), get comfy, and let's get real about connecting with God more authentically.

READ: Matthew 6:5-18*

(*For full context and a deeper dive into today's passage, take the time to read the entirety of Matthew 5-7.)

This passage is not just a set of instructions but an invitation to transform our spiritual practices from mere religious activities into genuine encounters with God. As we embark on this 21-day journey of prayer and fasting, let's allow Jesus' words to challenge and reshape our approach to these disciplines.

Prayer: The Heart-to-Heart Connection

Jesus kicks things off by breaking down the do's and don'ts of prayer, a fundamental aspect of our relationship with God. Picture this: some folks treat prayer like a performance, hoping to catch applause from their audience. But Jesus? He's all about keeping it personal and private. He invites us to find our own "secret place" for prayer—a space where it's just you and God, no filters or pretense. He contrasts the two approaches: the hypocritical way of the Pharisees, who wanted to be seen by others, and the sincere heart posture of those who desired to see God, which He desires from His followers. Today, can we commit to keeping it real? Making prayer what it is meant to be about - connecting with our Heavenly Father.

"Prayer and fasting don't bring clout but connection."

Your Personal Chat Room with God

Imagine having a direct line to God that's open 24/7, no appointment needed. That's what Jesus is offering. Whether in your closet, on a walk, or hidden away in your car during a lunch break, this "secret place" is not necessarily a physical location but rather a state of the heart where our focus is solely on God, away from the eyes of the world. In this place of intimacy, prayer becomes a dialogue where we share our deepest concerns, joys, and desires with the Father, and He speaks into our lives. It's about making that space sacred and just for the two of you.

The Lord's Prayer: A Template, Not a Script

Jesus gives us the Lord's Prayer, and it's pure gold. But here's the thing, it's not about mindlessly memorizing the words; it's about letting those words guide your heart. Think of it as a map for your prayer journey, covering all the essential stops: worship, confession, protection, submission to His will, expression of our dependence on Him for daily provision, seeking forgiveness and extending it to others, and requesting guidance and deliverance from evil. Throughout this 21 day journey if you ever come to the place you don't know how or what to pray come back here and use this model as a guide to your personal prayer time.

Forgiveness: The Heart's Posture

Ever noticed how hard it is to talk to someone you're mad at? Jesus points out that holding onto unforgiveness is like trying to chat on a blocked line. A significant emphasis in Jesus' teaching here is the relationship between forgiveness and prayer. Jesus underscores that our forgiveness from the Father is linked to our willingness to forgive others.

This principle reveals that the condition of our hearts significantly impacts our prayer life. Forgiving others clears the way for clear, open communication with God, meaning we need to walk in forgiveness in order to walk in communication with God.

Fasting: The Ultimate Unplug

Then, Jesus shifts gears to fasting. And no, it's not about dieting or impressing others with your spiritual stamina. Fasting is about voluntarily stepping back from the buffet of life to feast on God's presence. It's a discipline that deepens our connection with Him in ways that are hard to explain but amazing to experience. Think of fasting as a soul detox. It's a time to let go of the things that clutter our spiritual lives, making more room for God. Whether we are giving up food, social media, or Netflix binges, fasting helps us refocus on what truly nourishes our souls.

The Rewards of the Secret Discipline

The coolest part? The rewards of this discipline, done in secret, are custom-delivered by God Himself. They might not always be what we expect, but they're precisely what we need: deeper insight, breakthroughs in our spiritual battles, and a closer, more vibrant relationship with Him. The focus of fasting is to weaken the flesh and strengthen the spirit, allowing us to become more attuned to God's voice and leading.

The Wrap Up

The message I see from Jesus is that there are benefits to our times of prayer and fasting. I can choose to have the external benefits of people thinking I am "a really good Christian," or I can have the internal benefits of a closer relationship with God. Today, my prayer is we choose intimacy with God.

Now, let me clarify, this does not mean you can't pray out loud or talk about your fast at church or with your small group or friends. It simply means God is evaluating your motives in everything you do, a theme throughout the sermon on the mount. So, as you share and talk about your fast, don't forget that God knows your intentions - which should always be to bring attention to Him and not to you. Let me encourage you though, your story matters. And throughout the next 21 days I expect to hear so many stories of what God has done and is doing. Don't let a "fear of wrong motives" hinder you from sharing what God is doing in your life and circumstances.

Today, as you begin your fasting journey, I encourage you to read chapter 4: The How, which begins on page 15, if you haven't done so already. These sections will help you keep your motives right as you seek to connect with God in a greater way.

Making It Real: Applying Jesus' Teachings

Carve Out Your Secret Space: Challenge yourself to find a daily spot for your private chats with God. It doesn't have to be fancy, just intentional. Find a spot away from distractions that allows you to read your bible/devotional and spend some time in prayer, listening to what God says to you. Keep a pen handy so you can write what God speaks to you.

We have designed this journey with 3 specific moments set aside throughout your day: Morning devotions, Afternoon guided prayers, and Nightly reflections. Make sure you plan a space with that in mind.

The Lord's Prayer Model: Take a few minutes today to slowly pray through the Lord's Prayer, making each line personal. For example, when you say, "Give us this day our daily bread," share with God what you're specifically trusting Him to provide today. Let each section guide you into deeper communion with God, ensuring your prayer life encompasses all aspects of your relationship with Him.

Forgiveness Inventory: Is there anyone you need to forgive? Ask God to reveal any hidden unforgiveness in your heart and ask Him to give you the strength to let it go.

Define Your Fast: What is God leading you to fast from during these 21 days? Make it a meaningful sacrifice that draws you closer to Him.

We have provided some examples and types of fasting (Selective, Partial, Full, Heart, Digital) in chapter 4: The How for you to consider. This would be a good time to flip back there and ask God to lead you about what you need to fast over the next 21 days. Remember, this is not about the rigidity of fasting but instead getting in tune with the heartbeat of God for our lives. Feel free to devise your own plan, maybe even blend them together a week at a time.

Fasting is about disconnecting from the world, and prayer is about connecting to God.

PRAY: Lord, as we step into this journey of prayer and fasting, help us to strip away anything that hinders our connection with You. Teach us the joy of finding our secret place, the power of praying with sincerity, and the discipline of fasting purposefully. May these next 21 days bring us closer to Your heart and align our wills with Yours. Amen.

Ready to Jump In?

That's Day 1, A heartfelt chat about keeping it real with God through prayer and fasting. As we journey through these next 21 days together, expect to see changes—not just in your spiritual practices but in your heart and your relationship with God.

REFLECT: Now it is time to, as they say, “Put your money where your mouth is.” In other words, it’s time to put pen to paper and outline in detail all that you are prayerfully seeking the Lord for over the next 21 days as well as the fasting commitment you are making. Use the lines below to write out these requests, needs, and commitments.

My Prayer Requests/Needs/Focus:

My Prayer & Fasting Commitment to the Lord:

Day 2

"O Lord, answer me! Answer me so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God..." 1 Kings 18:37a

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Psalm 100:4 says "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise." So today, before diving into the day's scripture passage and devotion, take a moment to reflect on the prayer needs and personal commitments you made to the Lord yesterday - taking time to offer Him thanksgiving for all He has done and all He will continue to do in you and through you as you push pause over these next 21 days to hear Him more clearly and know Him more intimately.

READ: 1 Kings 18:1-40

In 1 Kings 18, we witness a powerful demonstration of God's sovereignty and Elijah's unwavering faith. The passage begins with the prophet Elijah receiving a message from the Lord to present himself to King Ahab, who had been ruling over Israel with his wife Jezebel, promoting idolatry and turning people away from worshipping the one true God.

When he presented himself to King Ahab, Elijah was to tell the king that the Lord would soon send rain upon the land after a severe drought, which had lasted for three years, bringing famine and hardship on the people. But before he could say anything, King Ahab went out to meet Elijah and called him a "troublemaker of Israel". King Ahab believed that it was Elijah's fault that God had refused to send rain and caused the drought over Israel.

Elijah stands up to the king and calls him and his family the "troublemakers of Israel" because they had refused to obey God and were worshipping the false god, Baal. So, Elijah challenges King Ahab and tells him to summon all the prophets of Baal and Asherah to see who the one true God of Israel really was. Both Elijah and all the other prophets would each have a wood altar to sacrifice a bull on, calling on the god they worship to send fire and consume the sacrifice. The god who answered by setting fire to the wood, would be the one true God that Israel would worship.

King Ahab ordered all the people of Israel and the prophets to be summoned to Mount Carmel. Elijah stood in front of them all and asked the question, "How much longer will you waver, hobbling between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!" You see, the people had been trying to have it both ways: to worship God and Baal at the same time. But Elijah knew that God alone was worthy to be worshiped. He had a boldness in challenging the prophets of Baal. He had an unwavering conviction.

In a world where our beliefs often clash, we're faced with the same difficult question to answer. Like the people of Israel, we can find ourselves wavering between serving God wholeheartedly or being swayed by worldly influences. Maybe it's not a false prophet that you worship, but what about your social status? What about your need for material possessions and wealth? Elijah's question still rings true today: "How much longer will you waver between two opinions?"

You keep reading in our scripture for today and you see that the prophets of Baal go first in offering their sacrifice and praying to their god. Scripture says that the prophets prepared the offering and began to pray, but there was no response from their god. For hours, they prayed, danced, and even cut themselves hoping and waiting for their god to respond, but it was of no use. Elijah was so confident in his God burning the altar that he told the prophets to "shout louder" in case their god was "asleep or on a trip".

But Elijah wasn't done yet. He told the people to fill four large jars with water and to pour it over the altar that his God was going to burn. He had them do this a total of three times, and the Bible says that there was so much water around the altar that it even filled the trench around it. Then Elijah walked up to the altar and prayed a simple prayer, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. Prove that I have done all this at your command. O Lord, answer me! Answer me so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God and that you have brought them back to yourself." Scripture says that immediately the fire of the Lord came down and burned up the bull, the wood, the stones, the dust and even the water that was in the trenches! The people who watched this were amazed, they fell face down on the ground and cried, "The Lord - he is God! Yes, the Lord is God!"

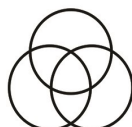
It's easy for us to read a passage like this and be amazed at the power of God in biblical times yet doubt His power today. Maybe today, you're struggling to believe that God can come through on that miracle for you. I want you to notice just a couple lessons from this passage to build your faith when you're praying for a miracle.

The first is that prayerful dependence on God creates powerful faith. Elijah's prayer for fire from heaven showcases the power of fervent, faith-filled prayer. In front of the entire kingdom, he calls on God to reveal His glory. This shows us that our prayers are not in vain. Whether you're facing personal trials or interceding on behalf of others, you can approach God with confidence knowing that He hears and answers according to His will. Our only goal is to live a lifestyle of prayerful dependence, trusting God's ability to intervene mightily in every situation we face.

The second lesson we learn from this story is witnessing God's power increases our faith. The climax of this passage is the display of God's power as fire descends from Heaven, consuming Elijah's sacrifice. In doing so, God demonstrated His supremacy over all other gods to all the people of Israel. Just as Elijah's faith resulted in a profound manifestation of God's glory, our lives can also become a testimony to His power and faithfulness. Then when we share our encounters with God and allow others to witness His transformative work in our lives, it inspires faith and encourages those around us to draw near to Him.

Today, I don't know what giant you're facing. I don't know what mountain you have to figuratively climb. But no matter what that looks like for you, my prayer is that you would learn from the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal that our God alone is worthy to be praised. When you foster a lifestyle of prayerful dependence on Him, and when you witness God's power at work, it creates a powerful faith for your own battle!

"It's easy for us to read a passage like this and be amazed at the power of God in biblical times yet doubt His power today."



[EVENING]

REFLECT: As you close out your day, take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your day, embracing the silence and remembering God’s goodness as you answer the following questions.

In what ways did I see God’s goodness at work in my life today?

Where/in what ways did I see the activity of God in my day today?

What is God speaking to me today?

No matter what difficulties I may have faced, for what things can I give the Lord thanks and praise?



Day 3

"The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men..." Acts 4:13a

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: Acts 4:1-21

(*For full context and a deeper dive into today's passage, take the time to read the entirety of Matthew 5-7.)

The desire to draw near to God is a longing deep within our souls, a yearning for intimacy and connection with the One who created us. It is a reminder that we are not alone in this journey of life, but accompanied by a loving and caring God who desires to walk beside us every step of the way. Drawing near to God requires intentional effort on our part, a deliberate choice to prioritize our relationship with Him above all else.

Conversations between myself and others feeling this longing usually include many obstacles they face in their personal lives and the statement of "I just need to focus more on having a closer walk with God." "Well, that's fantastic!", is what I think, but then I ask "So, what's the plan?" Many times, in response to that question I am looked at with a face of semi-confusion before they gather their faculties and state, "I don't know!" So, in an effort to clarify my question I ask, "What does 'having a closer walk with God' even look like?" "How do you do that?" "What are the steps you are going to take to get there?" Well, as I'm sure you can imagine, the response I receive most often is, "Well, I hadn't thought that far."

So many of these common conversations begin this way, but to truly walk with God we must be intentional in the journey. If you are truly seeking a closer walk then you'll get there; James 4:8 "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." Walking closer to God is not about achieving perfection or having all the answers. It is about surrendering our will to His, seeking His guidance and wisdom in all areas of our lives. Just as a hiker must take deliberate steps to reach the summit of a mountain, we must take deliberate steps to draw near to God. Each step brings us closer to His heart, His will, and His unending love for us.

What happens when we walk with someone? Imagine that you and a close friend are enjoying a walk down a country lane. You are in close proximity. You talk, laugh, listen, and share your hearts. Your attention is focused on this person to the exclusion of almost everything else. You notice the beauty around you or an occasional distraction, but only to point it out to your companion. You share it together. You are in harmony, and you both enjoy the peaceful camaraderie. Walking with God is like that. When we enter into an intimate heart relationship with God through faith in His Son (Hebrews 10:22), He becomes our heart's greatest desire. Knowing Him, hearing His voice, sharing our hearts with Him, and seeking to please Him become our all-consuming focus. He becomes everything to us. Meeting with Him is not an activity reserved for Sunday morning or Wednesday night. We live to fellowship with Him. A. W. Tozer states that the goal of every Christian should be to "live in a state of unbroken worship." This is only possible when we walk with God.

So, how do we get there? Let's look at five steps we can take to cultivate those intimate walks with God.

1. Spend Time in God's Word: The Bible is God's written word, a source of wisdom, truth, and guidance for our lives. Make it a priority to read the Bible daily, allowing God's word to speak to your heart and transform your mind. Start with a daily reading plan (which you are already accomplishing as you journey through this 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting Devotional) or explore a specific book of the Bible that speaks to your current season of life. If there's a specific verse that catches your attention, it's okay to stay there for a while. In fact, to truly study scripture requires deep research and perhaps God is wanting that for you.

2. Prayer and Meditation: Prayer is our direct line of communication with God, a way to share our thoughts, desires, and struggles with Him. Take time each day to pray and meditate on God's goodness and faithfulness. Listen for His voice speaking to you in the quiet moments of prayer, offering guidance and comfort in times of need. If you're unsure of what to say, that's okay too. Just speak from your heart and speak as though you were speaking to your best friend in the seat next to you.

3. Cultivate a Spirit of Gratitude: Gratitude is a powerful practice that opens our hearts to the presence of God in our lives. Take time each day to thank God for the blessings, both big and small, that He has bestowed upon you. Develop a habit of gratitude by keeping a journal or list of things you are thankful for and reflect on them regularly as a reminder of God's goodness.

4. Serve Others: One of the most effective ways to draw near to God is by serving others in love. Look for opportunities in your community, church, or workplace to show kindness and compassion to those in need. By serving others, we reflect the love of Christ and demonstrate His presence in our lives.

5. Cultivate a Spirit of Worship: Worship is a powerful way to draw near to God, offering Him our praise, adoration, and gratitude. Set aside time each day to worship God in spirit and truth, whether through music, prayer, or creative expression. Allow your heart to be filled with awe and reverence for the One who deserves all glory and honor.

It is not difficult to identify people who walk with God. After all, their lives are a stark contrast to the world around them. They are like stars in a nighttime sky (Philippians 2:15), and they produce the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) rather than the fruit of fleshly desire (Galatians 5:19-21). In today's scripture reading, Acts 4, we read about Peter and John, who had been arrested for preaching and were brought before the authorities. Verse 13 tells us,

"The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus."

When we walk with God every day, the world cannot help but recognize that, in spite of our imperfections and lack of knowledge in some areas, we have been with Jesus. Remember, walking with God is a life-long journey. Enjoy your time with Him!

"The goal of every Christian should be to live in a state of unbroken worship."

A. W. Tozer

[EVENING]

REFLECT: As you close out your day, take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your day, embracing the silence and remembering God's goodness as you answer the following questions.

In what ways did I see God's goodness at work in my life today?

Where/in what ways did I see the activity of God in my day today?

What is God speaking to me today?

No matter what difficulties I may have faced, for what things can I give the Lord thanks and praise?



DAY 4

"He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord." Proverbs 18:22

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: Ephesians 5:21-28

I want to start out by asking a seemingly simple question - What is a marriage?

In 1828, Webster defined marriage as:

MARRIAGE, noun [Latin mas, maris.] - The act of uniting a man and woman for life; wedlock; the legal union of a man and woman for life.

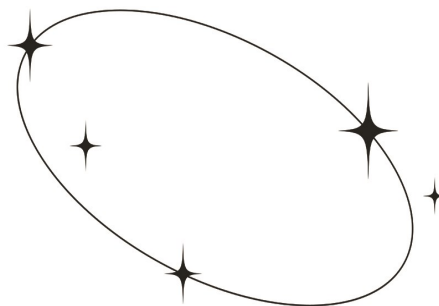
Today there are many definitions of marriage and sadly, rarely do you see "man and woman" mentioned in the definitions.

Today, Webster defines marriage as: the state of being united as spouses in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law.

Notice the absence of man and woman, and "for life" as was written in 1828.

The view of Marriage has been changed by man's sinful perception to fit cultural changes in our increasingly sinful society. Regardless of man's view, God's view of what a marriage is has not changed and will never change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever - Hebrews 13:8.

If you are married and or preparing to marry, you have been influenced by many things to create an expectation of what marriage is. The marriages of your parents, older siblings, grandparents, and other relatives have all impacted your perception of marriage. These experiences can be good or bad depending on what you saw and they, more than likely, are different from what your spouse or future spouse experienced/will experience. These different expectations and lack of preparation have led many couples down very difficult roads. For many, the word divorce is often used as a "safety net" long before the marriage vows are even said by leading with the mindset that "If it doesn't work out we can always get a divorce." Sadly, 50% of the time, even Christian couples end up doing just that. However, I have good news for you! No matter what culture has attempted to teach you, God has a different plan for your marriage! One of blessings and fulfillment. And one, when built firmly in the Lord by both you and your spouse, has a 100% chance of success!



Now, don't get me wrong. I am not saying it is always going to be easy. In fact, every great marriage is one that has two people that worked hard to serve each other above themselves. I promise you every great marriage, no matter how long they have been married, has seen some challenging times that they worked through together, with God helping them through it. Jimmy Evans says that the greatest marriages in the world are where two servants are in love. I believe this to be true. Even my marriage of 38 years, as strong as it is today, has seen days where we questioned if we were going to make it. Praise God, we never gave up! Praise God we learned to communicate and talk through the pain and even sought Godly couples to mentor and help walk us through painful times.

We have learned to serve one another and work to speak blessings and positivity into each other - tearing down the walls of false perceptions, expectations and misunderstandings. Being aligned through God's word and praying together every day has been the greatest tool to continue the strengthening of our marriage while also helping us to heal from past hurts. Incredibly, God takes those past hurts and uses them to create beauty in the midst of pain and even helps other couples as they navigate through similarly difficult times.

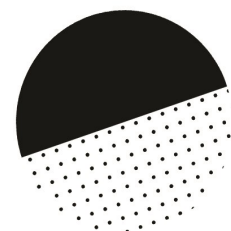
The next question we need to answer is - **Why Marriage?**

Why did God create this unity covenant between one man and one woman? Our heavenly father recognized early on that it was not good for man to be alone. Genesis 2:18 states, "God said, it is not good for man to be alone. I will make a suitable helper for him." The King James version calls this "suitable helper" a "help mate" and in Hebrew the word "Ezer" is used. Praise God for His wisdom to know men could not make it without the beauty, softness and wisdom we gain from their wives.

Ladies, did you know God gave you a special name? Ezer. Ezer in Hebrew means: Helper, Help mate, or one that has the power to help or rescue others! What a wonderful blessing and calling. Ladies - I encourage you to know how God named you and pray that you will come to know clearly who God made you to be! There is incredible strength in this and something you should embrace in your womanhood. Did you know that God is also referred to as Ezer, the helper, 16 times in the Old Testament? God named you after a name he used for himself.

Husbands, our wives should never be made to feel inferior to us. In fact, we, as their husbands, should make sure our wives are seen and known to be co-heirs with us in this gift of life! Many times the passage of scripture found in Peter 3:7 has been used to champion the very opposite. It says, "Wives are seen as weaker physically and should submit to the spiritual and home leadership of their husbands." This word submit has been taken out of context and abused for years and for many ladies, it has become a bad word.

For those who have a negative perception of the word or act of submission, it is more than likely because they have never seen what true submission looks like and, to take it a step further, have probably even seen this concept abused by a male figure in their life. However, when a man truly respects his wife, and when he honors, serves and protects her the way Christ loved, served and even gave himself for the church, something beautiful happens. And the Lord lays out the model for how to cultivate a marriage of beauty amidst the messy in Ephesians 5:25



"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her."

Friends, it is only through the power and example of Christ can we have a fulfilled marriage! Even through pain and difficult times, we can grow and thrive in this thing called marriage! Lisa and I would not be teaching a Marriage Matters class today had it not been for the pain we walked through TOGETHER! One man, One woman, walking together with God. This is the key to a successful marriage! In fact, this is God's plan for marriage.

If you take nothing else away from today's devotion I hope you remember this one thing: God's definition of marriage is "One man and one woman becoming one". That's it. There's no further question, discussion, or debate about it and we should be mindful to not complicate this truth regardless of what Webster or any other definition given may say.

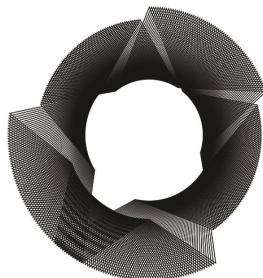
Now, before we close out our time together today, I want to reiterate a few things for all of our married couples:

- You have a 100% chance of success!
- You can make it! Don't ever quit!
- When husbands serve their wives the way Christ served the church, wives will naturally submit and honor their husbands! Act today and don't wait on the other to move first!
- Couples that pray together, stay together!
- Make your marriage a servant competition and I promise you, peace, joy, fulfillment in this marriage covenant will come.
- Be a Marriage of Blessing and watch it also be a blessed generation for your kids and grandkids! Even for a thousand generations! (Deuteronomy 7:9)

Novelist, Susan Elizateth Philips, once said "Anything worth having is worth fighting for." and I promise you, your marriage (be that present or future) is worth the fight!

"Anything worth having is worth fighting for."

Susan Elizateth Philips



[EVENING]

REFLECT: As you close out your day, take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your day, embracing the silence and remembering God's goodness as you answer the following questions.

In what ways did I see God's goodness at work in my life today?

Where/in what ways did I see the activity of God in my day today?

What is God speaking to me today?

No matter what difficulties I may have faced, for what things can I give the Lord thanks and praise?



Day 5

"For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost." Luke 19:10

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: Luke 19:1-10

(*For full context and a deeper dive into today's passage, take the time to read the entirety of Matthew 5-7.)

Many times, as we read through scripture, we can become so awestruck with the many miracles we see Jesus perform (This list of stories would include the provision of Jesus when He fed the five thousand in Matthew 14:13-21 and then feeding the four thousand in Matthew 15:32-35, as well as the healing power of Jesus found Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 1:40-42, and Luke 7:11-15, just to name a few.) that we almost forget about the most important miracle of all like the one we read of today - salvation. A miracle we have all benefited from in our own lives personally, as believers.

Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." Salvation is a gift freely given, unearned and undeserved. And it is when we slow down long enough to allow ourselves to truly grasp the depth of the miracle of our own salvation that we begin to cultivate a heart of gratitude and humility, leading to a deep passion and fire to ignite within us to share this transformative experience with others.

How many of you grew up in Sunday School singing the song "The Lord's Army"? For those of you who began your journey with Jesus later in life or who are simply too young to remember, here's a little taste of that childhood anthem.

"I may never march in the infantry
Ride in the calvary
Shoot the Artillery
I may never fly over the enemy
But I'm in the Lord's Army"

We would then end this declaration with a boisterous and hardy "YES SIR!" Complete with a dramatic salute and all. This little tune is absolutely part of my childhood core memories; however, it wasn't until I was much older - like just a few days ago kind of older - that the weight of the words I have sung countless times over the years truly hit me.

This light bulb moment with the Lord came as I was standing in the sanctuary, praying over our city, my heart breaking for those battling addiction, depression, loneliness, and homelessness. And it was as I was praying "Lord, rescue these people! Provide the resources they need to break free! I'm believing for Damascus Road encounters." that the Holy Spirit dropped the words of the song, The Lord's Army, into my heart and spirit as the Lord spoke clearly to my these worlds to my heart:

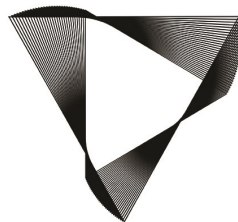


"In the past, yes, I have sent my son and my spirit, and sometimes I send my angels to those in need. But there are also times when the one I choose to send is you."

My initial response was "Ouch, Lord! Can't you take it easy on me? After all, I am here interceding for the lost and hurting in my area." But then the final words of the song resonated with my spirit - "I'm in the Lord's Army." I am not the commander or strategist of the Army - that is the Lord's job. No, I am a soldier. My role is to be down here fighting on the front lines, following His directives. However, in that moment I had to ask myself the humbling and somewhat painful question of - What kind of soldier am I?

When I think of a soldier, the image that immediately comes to mind is that of a man, dirty and in the trenches - someone who fights passionately for the freedom of others with a relentlessness that screams "No man left behind!" This level of sacrifice for the salvation of others is something I admire greatly. There are no words that could ever truly express my gratitude for those who literally lay their life on the line for a nation of strangers every single day. But then, when I look at myself through this lens of a soldier of the Lord, I pale greatly in comparison. There is not nearly enough dirt on my face and it has been far too long since I spent time in the trenches with and for those needing this incredible gift of salvation. Don't get me wrong, those moments of intercession and prayer for the lost are valuable and necessary, but those moments are meant to prepare me FOR the war raging around me, not replace it or excuse me from it. It is in those moments of prayer that we are reminded of the way the Lord fought for and saved us, re-igniting that "first love" flame that has a tendency to grow dim over time, and re-aligning our hearts with His - removing distractions and barriers - so that we are able to hear the voice of the Lord clearly as He give us our marching orders. And it is when we are in tune with His voice and His leading, going through life with a focus on His mission and purpose for our lives that we begin to see the Zacchaeus' in our own lives. Those who could easily be written off as just another face in the crowd but who are, in fact, a Jesus miracle waiting to happen. The only thing needed is one of us - a soldier in His Army - to follow the example of Jesus, deciding to step off the nice, clean, perfectly laid path on which we are walking, to get into the trenches like a true soldier, fighting for the lost and hurting in our area with a determination and passion that screams "No man left behind!"

"In the past, yes, I have sent my son and my spirit, and sometimes I send my angels to those in need. But there are also times when the one I choose to send is you."



[AFTERNOON]

PRAY: During this time of focused prayer, we encourage you to utilize today's guided prayer opportunity, which can be found on the Heritage Church Podcast as well as on our website at heritageag.org. Each day's podcast is 20 minutes in length and offers 10 minutes of guided prayer followed by 10 minutes of music that can continue playing as you pray over any personal prayer needs you have. As you pray, feel free to use the lines below to journal and/or write down anything the Lord lays on your heart or speaks to you. There are also blank notes pages as well as 2 pages dedicated to prayer needs located in the Bonus Materials section at the back of the book. These sections will give you more space to write/take notes, as well as a place to house all of your prayer requests/needs in one, easily accessible place.

[EVENING]

REFLECT: As you close out your day, take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your day, embracing the silence and remembering God's goodness as you answer the following questions.

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Where/in what ways did I see the activity of God in my day today?

What is God speaking to me today?

No matter what difficulties I may have faced, for what things can I give the Lord thanks and praise?



Day 6

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Matthew 6:33

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: Matthew 6:19-34

(*For full context and a deeper dive into today's passage, take the time to read the entirety of Matthew 5-7.)

Provision is the act of providing and or supplying. As a child of God, we believe and know that God supplies the needs of his people; that He is faithful to provide for us - His children. His creation. After all, God is Jehovah-Jireh - Our Provider (Genesis 22:14).

Ask yourself these questions - "Is the God I worship and serve small or big? Can He provide all that I need?" Philippians 4:19 tells us, "And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus." Clearly we serve a big God who can and does provide for us abundantly. Let's take a moment to remind ourselves of the many ways He has provided for us already.

Physical provision: We enjoy these provisions daily without even taking notice as we:

- Live our lives on this beautiful home called Earth.
- Breathe in fresh air, which is constantly being replenished through the God ordained process of Photosynthesis.
- Enjoy peaceful walks or peaceful moments just sitting outside and relaxing as we bask in the sun's warm rays.
- Witness the ebb and flow of the tide thanks to the perfect placement and design of the Moon.
- And our lives are sustained by the blessing of refreshing water and a literally buffet of delicious food options at our fingertips.

Spiritual provision: We see this provision in areas such as salvation, healing, deliverance, peace, joy, hope, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Though we may not have experienced each of these areas of spiritual provision in our own lives personally, we can absolutely see evidence of them all within the pages of scripture as well as in the lives of others around us.

The above lists lay out for us clearly the truth that everything that we have comes from God.

"And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?" 1 Corinthians 4:7

This scripture reminds us that He is the source of everything that we need. (He's even better than Amazon!)

So that leaves us to ask ourselves this question - Do I live a life truly in need of all that God has to offer or do I live a life that only "needs" what I want?

We all have worried at some point about what we need. We fret over what we will eat, what we will wear, and how we will survive. Yet, in the midst of our anxiety, Jesus offers us a solution. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. It may seem odd that Jesus says that when we need help, we are to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. What does that even mean?

Basically what the Lord is saying is, instead of worrying whether we are enough (or that we have enough) to take care of our needs that we are to, instead, acknowledge that God is our priority and the center of our lives. It means we should be lining up our hopes, desires, and ambitions with His will. It means we should acknowledge that He is sovereign over every aspect of our lives and we need to be willing to submit to His authority. You see, when we make seeking God's kingdom a priority, we shape and live our lives towards righteousness and all the fruits of the Spirit. We begin to be like God in our thoughts, as well as in what we speak and what we do. We change our focus to having a deep relationship with our Father God.

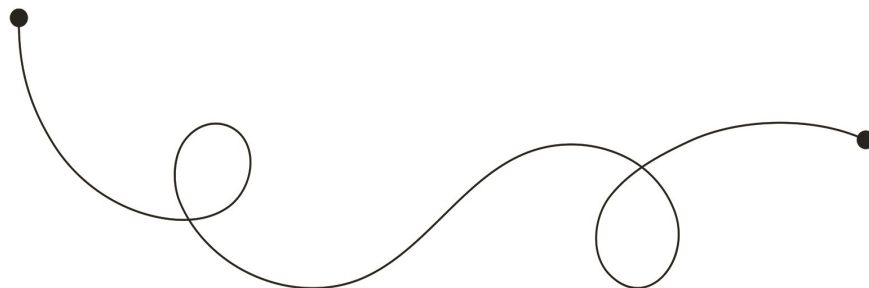
Now, I'll be the first to admit that this decision to seek God's kingdom and righteousness above all else is a commitment. It requires us to focus on Him and His Word. We must be intentional and determined. However, as we seek His kingdom, we begin to experience His love and grace working in us in amazing ways.

Not only that, but Jesus' instruction to seek God's kingdom first is also accompanied by a promise of provision. He says, "and all these things will be given to you as well." What are these "things" that Jesus speaks of? They are our daily needs—food, clothing, shelter, and everything we need to sustain us. This promise of provision extends far beyond mere material necessities. It encompasses our whole life—the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects. When we sincerely seek God's kingdom, He provides for all our needs.

Truly trusting in God's provision requires faith—a deep trust in His goodness and faithfulness. It means letting go of our anxieties and worries and putting them into His hands, knowing that He loves us. It means letting go of our need to control everything.

After all of this talk about the Lord's provision you might be asking yourself, "How does God provide for us?" His provision may come in a variety of different ways—through the generosity of others, through unexpected blessings, or through the fulfillment of our needs in ways we could never have imagined. God's provision is not always immediate and it is not always in the way we expected, but it is always timely and sufficient.

Recently, one of our grandchildren was struggling with being bullied, both physically and emotionally, at school and we feared for his safety every day. His parents had exhausted every avenue with the school and administration. We were at a loss about how to protect him and were asking God to intervene. Unexpectedly, the Lord provided him with a partial scholarship to a Christian school and then a generous friend blessed him by stepping in to help pay for the balance. God provided in a way we did not expect and could not have done on our own. The provision of God was timely and sufficient.

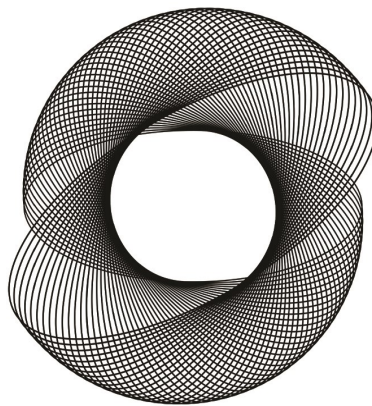


When we follow Christ, our lives should be committed to seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness. This commitment should permeate every priority, value, and decision. We are different. We will no longer measure our lives in terms of how much we possess or by the world's standards, but by our obedience to the will of God. We will prioritize relationships over possessions, generosity over big bank accounts and service to others over our desires.

In Matthew 6:33, Jesus invites us into a new way of thinking and living—pursuing God's kingdom and His righteousness. The result of seeking God above everything else is provision, knowing that He has promised to meet our needs if we follow His instructions.

As we read these scriptures, let's ask God to help us trust Him to be our provision. Let's be encouraged as we pray and read His Word, that we are being faithful to seek His kingdom and His righteousness and that God is faithful to supply all our needs from His glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

“When we make seeking God’s kingdom a priority, we shape and live our lives towards righteousness and all the fruits of the Spirit.”



[EVENING]

REFLECT: As you close out your day, take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your day, embracing the silence and remembering God's goodness as you answer the following questions.

In what ways did I see God's goodness at work in my life today?

Where/in what ways did I see the activity of God in my day today?

What is God speaking to me today?

No matter what difficulties I may have faced, for what things can I give the Lord thanks and praise?



Day 7

"But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth..." John 16:13

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: Genesis 6:9-22

In moments of frustration, when I feel like God has gone silent and has left to me aimlessly roam the Earth - lost, confused, and without direction on what to do or where to go next that I low key wish the Lord would just lay out a step by step plan for me like He did for Noah when He instructed him to build the ark. I mean, come on God! You legit gave Noah all of the details - from the what and the how all the way to the specifics of how long for every single step of the ark building process. And yet, here I am, asking desperately for your leading and all I get are Holy Spirit reminders of scriptures like:

"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."

Matthew 7:7-8

And "Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path." Psalm 119:105

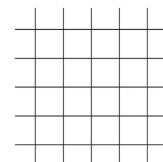
But it is then, amidst my greatest frustrations, that the Lord reminds me of the fact that, no, He has not given me a full scale blueprint for my life as He did for Noah's ark; however, He has given me something far better - the Holy Spirit.

John 16:7 says:

"But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate won't come. If I do go away, then I will send Him to you."

So for those of you seeking the Lord's direction and leading for your life, let's give you the bad news first and burst right through that pipe dream of yours in letting you know that No - God will not be sending down a divine scroll from Heaven with a step by step scripting of your life for you to follow. However, now here's the really GOOD news, He has already given us more than we could ever need and definitely far more than we deserve through the directives given in scripture and the gift of the Holy Spirit. And it is when we realize the power and magnitude of both of these blessings from the Lord that we begin to see a shift in our mindset - no longer feeling jealous of Noah but almost feeling sorry for Him instead. Why?

Because, though Noah had moments of divine providence in which the Lord laid out various directives for his life, we have FULL access to the Lord every minute of every day through the Holy Spirit. And as we walk with the Lord daily, in tune with the Holy Spirit's leading, we don't have to worry about the "what if's" that may lie ahead or stress over that big God-sized thing the Lord is going to call us to in the years ahead. Instead, we simply have to be obedient in the here and now - moment by moment - following the Spirit's leading one tiny step at a time until one day we "somehow" end up right where we are supposed to be - in the middle of God's perfect plan and will for our lives.



That whole thing about God being the “lamp to my feet” thing isn’t sounding so bad now is it? Isn’t it funny how, at times, it is the things that frustrate us most in our walk with the Lord that we end up discovering are actually His grace and blessings to us as well as grand parts of His provision for us?

This truth became very clear to me in a season when the Lord began dealing with my heart about pulling my kids from school and homeschooling them instead. This draw from the Holy Spirit didn’t make sense to me. I had always been very “missions minded” if you will and was regularly praying over my kids and the impact they would have on their school campuses in the years ahead. But this nagging from the Holy Spirit just wouldn’t go away until the day came that I took the leap, pulled my daughter from school, and embarked on this unexpected homeschool journey. Over the years that followed our family ended up living in what I now (somewhat) lovingly call a constant season of transition. It was during this season that the Lord never allowed for us to stay in one singular place for long. It felt like just as we were beginning to feel settled He would speak and we would be on the move again.

It was in the midst of these countless transitions that I found myself thanking the Lord for disrupting my plans and leading me to homeschool my kids. After all, I can’t imagine what their education would have looked like had they had to transition through so many different schools over such a short period of time. Instead, homeschool gave them the blessing of consistency amidst a season of chaos.

Now, what does that have to do with the Lord not giving me a step by step how to for my life? After all, had I known all of that transition was coming and the Lord had just laid out the plan to homeschool ahead of time, couldn’t I have still arrived at the same destination? The answer to that question is - ABSOLUTELY. But the question remains that though I COULD have, WOULD I have? I don’t know how you would answer that question but I can say with a pretty firm confidence that had I known the season our family was about to walk into I would not have been as eager to jump on board with God’s plan. Instead, I would have spent a whole lot of time trying to navigate around the messy parts, laying out alternative options in which the constant transitions would not be necessary, and, essentially, planning God - His time, His plan, and His provision - out of the equation.

So what are we to do when we are desperate to hear the voice of God but He seems to have gone silent?

#1 - Remind yourself of whatever it is that He told you to do last and keep doing it!

#2 - Diligently seek Him daily and when you get that little nudge from the Holy Spirit, follow His leading.

#3 - If you feel a hesitation or check in your spirit as you step out into something new, prayerfully consider whether or not that is the Lord leading you in a different direction.

#4 - Wash, Rinse, and Repeat.

The wonderful thing about the Lord is He wants to be discovered. He isn’t hiding away from you having set up some elaborate scheme to see how dedicated you are to seeking Him out. So even if He feels silent - in the seasons that you feel lost and without direction - remain faithful to Him in the small, singular steps daily because those are what lead you to the big plans He has in store for you.

“The wonderful thing about the Lord is He wants to be discovered. He isn’t hiding away from you having set up some elaborate scheme to see how dedicated you are to seeking Him out.”

[EVENING]

REFLECT: As you close out your day, take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your day, embracing the silence and remembering God's goodness as you answer the following questions.

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What is God speaking to me today?

No matter what difficulties I may have faced, for what things can I give the Lord thanks and praise?



Day 8

"Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts." Psalm 119:2

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: Jeremiah 29:1-14

When I think of our relationship with the Lord, I often think of it like that of a parent and a child. I have a little toddler, who my husband and I are obsessed with. Her love language is literally playing together. She always says, "Mommy, Daddy, play with me?" How can we resist? So, we play with her. Sometimes, this time is filled with conversation. Other times, she wants us to simply be near her because our presence comforts her. This somewhat imperfectly mirrors what our relationship with the Lord can look like.

Many times, when we first give our heart to the Lord, we are on fire for the Lord. Every moment we are talking and thinking about what Jesus has done for us. We are thinking about how incredible He is. We always want to get to the next worship service or life group. We're reading our Bibles and praying as often as possible. Our relationship with him really is the center of our lives. But, if you have been a believer for a while, you know that fire can die down.

Often, as we get further in our walk and our initial enthusiasm for all things Jesus has died down, we begin to focus more on the things of this life rather than the things of Him. Now, let me preface this by saying, even after salvation we do have to live life, continuing to fulfill our daily roles and responsibilities. That means we have to find a way to live life while continuing to foster a deep relationship with God. And it all starts in the heart.

So many verses throughout scripture talk about growing close to the Lord through seeking him. Psalms 119:2 says, "Joyful are those who obey his laws and search for him with all their hearts." This is one of the first of many scriptures that tell us to seek the Lord with all our hearts. To do this, we have to consistently go after him. It means we do not let other things hold a higher place in our hearts. It means surrendering the parts of our hearts that might love the created things more than the creator.

Having more intimacy with the Lord does not simply happen, just like having a deeper relationship with your husband or wife or bestie does not just happen. It is a choice. You have to confidently put yourself in a place to grow your relationship with the people around you. You have to consistently turn from sin and pursue His heart. You have to constantly and consistently spend time with God.

You see, the tribe of Judah in the Old Testament had first-hand experience in drawing away from God. Before the people went into exile in Babylon, they had continuously rebelled against God. They worshiped idols, they disobeyed the Lord, and they would even worship other gods. The Lord continually asked them to repent, but they refused. As a result, they began their exile. And it is during the beginning of this season of exile that Jeremiah writes a letter to them.

Everyone knows Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." But often, we stop there and do not look at the promise that comes after in verses 12-14, "Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you."

Notice He says, you will find Me when you seek Me with ALL of your heart. To seek him with all of their hearts, they could no longer continue to seek after idols. They could no longer worship another god because the Lord required ALL of them. He wanted every piece of their hearts. And the same is true for us today. If we want to be close to God, if we truly want to know Him, we cannot continue to do what is contrary to Him.

James 4:8 says, "Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." This is such a beautiful promise. If we come near to Him, He WILL come near to us.

In John 15, Jesus shares the same teaching. He says in verse 4, "Remain in me, and I will remain in you." And, in verses 10-11, "When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy." In other words, to remain in the Lord's love, we must obey His commands.

The other key component of building a closer relationship with God is to spend time with Him. Like Jeremiah 29:13 says, "Seek Me and you will find Me when you seek Me with all of your heart."

As I previously mentioned, my daughter seeks our love through time. We spend time with those we love. That means we should spend time with God to grow closer to him. It means pouring out your heart to Him. It means listening to what He has to say. But remember, this cannot happen unless you intentionally set aside time to seek him.

It is clear to grow in your relationship with God, you have to seek him with all of your heart. That means turning from sin and spending time with Him. Scripture after scripture shows us that we grow in intimacy by seeking the Lord and pursuing righteousness. Our hearts need to seek Him. Our mind, soul, body, and strength should turn from sin. As your heart grows closer to Him, you turn from sin and you are filled with fulfillment. As you obey His commands, your intimacy with him grows. And as you spend time with Him, He provides you with the knowledge of Him. He gives you joy and peace. And as He does you will quickly discover that, in the most amazing way possible, your life is never going to be the same.

"We spend time with those we love. That means we should spend time with God to grow closer to him. It means pouring out your heart to Him. It means listening to what He has to say. But remember, this cannot happen unless you intentionally set aside time to seek him."

[EVENING]

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Day 9

“Trust the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take.” Proverbs 3:5-6

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: Acts 16:1-10

Have you ever wished that the Lord would give you directions like your car GPS, with verbal turn-by-turn instructions? Or have you waited for an audible voice to come out of the clouds with your next move? It would likely be much easier to follow God’s directions if they showed up as flashing neon arrows, but unfortunately for us, we have to pay more attention than that.

Acts chapter 16 gives a great example of what it can look like to receive direction from the Lord in a very real way, even if it’s not with flashing arrows. Let’s look more closely at a description of how some of the early apostles navigated this from our passage for today:

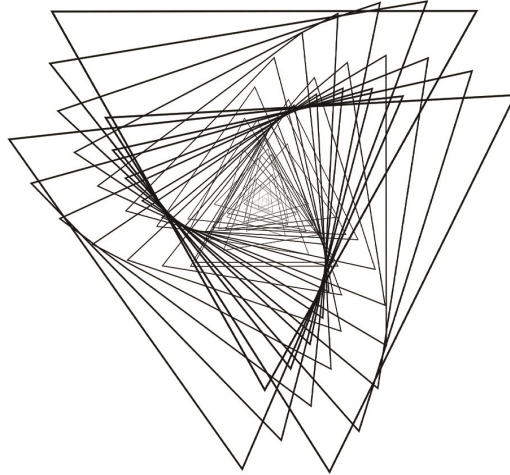
“Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time. Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia, but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there. So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas. That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.” (Acts 16:6-10 NLT)

Luke, the author of the letter we call Acts, describes a series of events that eventually led Paul and Silas to preach in Macedonia. We don’t know exactly what it meant for the Holy Spirit to “prevent” them from going to Asia or Bithynia, but we can imagine that maybe they felt an unease in their spirit about going to those provinces, or maybe there were physical obstacles in their way preventing their journey, or something else entirely. What we do know, however, is that Paul and Silas were so in tune with the Holy Spirit that they understood that the Lord was guiding them somewhere besides their original destination.

So often we can pray for direction and in our hearts hope to hear only the answer we want to hear. Imagine how easy it could have been for Paul and Silas to pray for guidance, but only if it led them to Asia. Or, imagine if they had prayed for direction, then carried on with their original plan and ignored the promptings of the Holy Spirit! Notice that the Holy Spirit didn’t map out every stop on the map for them, but instead nudged them when they started on a path he didn’t want them to follow. Jesus didn’t appear with a voice from heaven telling them to go specifically to Phrygia and Galatia, but he did communicate to them that they were not supposed to go to Asia at that point. The Holy Spirit didn’t demand they preach in Mysia, but He did prevent them from going to Bithynia.

Sometimes, the direction we're looking for from Jesus is like a recipe. First do this, then do this, then do this. But in reality, His direction is often more subtle than that. So pay attention to the things He is prompting you to not do as well as the things He is prompting you to do. There may be more direction in Him preventing certain things than we expect.

“Sometimes, the direction we’re looking for from Jesus is like a recipe. First do this, then do this, then do this. But in reality, His direction is often more subtle than that.”



[EVENING]

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Day 10

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you." Ephesian 4:32

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: 1 Samuel 23

I have a riddle. What costs nothing but is worth everything, weighs nothing, but can last a lifetime, that one person can't own, but two or more can share? Answer: Friendship.

We need people. Humans were never meant to be solitary creatures. The Lord designed us to be interactive and to desire connection. Studies have shown that strong social connection can increase our longevity, strengthen our immune system, and even help us recover from disease quicker. People who feel more connected to others have lower levels of anxiety and depression, and they also have higher self-esteem, and greater empathy for others. However, that connection doesn't come without trials.

Let's be honest. People can be difficult. Yes, even you and me. Relationships can be just as messy as they can be beautiful. They can be harmful just as much as they can be uplifting. Throughout scripture we see examples of unbreakable bonds of friendship.

First, David and Jonathan. Jonathan, by right, was the next in line as the king of Israel. Yet, he was mature enough to see that God had given this right to David. Even as his father sought to destroy David, Jonathan remained loyal to his friend. He sacrificed his armor to David in battle, defended him to his father, the king, and even worked to ensure David's freedom from Saul's relentlessness. The last time the two saw each other, Jonathan was still encouraging David. 1 Samuel 23:17 says,

"Don't be afraid," Jonathan reassured him. "My father will never find you! You are going to be the king of Israel, and I will be next to you."

These two friends remained loyal to one another for as long as Johnathan was alive. Despite circumstances that should have made them enemies, these two men chose the path of friendship instead and saw each other through many hardships.

Next, look at Elijah and Elisha. This is a relationship between a mentor and a mentee. After the dramatic events of Elijah's defeat of the prophets of Baal, he was forced to flee from Queen Jezebel (1 Kings 19). While he is running from his enemies, he begs God to take his life. In 1 Kings 19:4, Elijah says to God, "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died." He is alone in the wilderness with no one to share his burden. However, God doesn't leave him like that.

God understood his needs and led him to Elisha, instructing him to anoint Elisha to take his place as prophet. The two go on to have several adventures together. 2 Kings 2 contains an emotional goodbye between these two men as Elijah is taken up to heaven as they are spending their last moments together “walking and talking.”

Lastly, take a look at the beautiful story of reconciliation between Jesus and Peter. Peter was a part of the inner circle of disciples from the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry. He loved Jesus, there is no doubt of that. And when Jesus predicted in Matthew 26:34 that Peter would deny him three times, Peter vehemently vowed that he wouldn’t. Then, in the human frailty that plagues all of us, Peter did deny Jesus. Not once, or even twice, but three times. When the moment came, and Jesus had been arrested, Peter had been separated from the other disciples, guards were all around the area searching for him and the others, fear and weakness took over and Peter uttered words he would have never imagined - “I don’t know the man.” (Matthew 26:74).

Later, we see a picture of Jesus giving Peter the opportunity to be restored. Jesus asks him three times “Do you love Me?” Peter answers affirmatively all three times, giving him the chance to oppose the three times he denied Jesus. Peter and Jesus went through a lot together and even when Peter was willing to turn his back on Jesus during a time of doubt, Jesus willingly forgave him, restored their friendship, and even selected Peter as the rock He would build his church on. (Matthew 16:18)

We can see several different types of relationships in these examples. Two peers, a mentor and mentee, a leader/friend and disciple/friend. All three of these relationships had plenty of obstacles in the way. I think that’s something we can see in some of our own relationships. There can be circumstances that draw you apart, like David and Johnathan. Or maybe the season of relationship is simply coming to an end and you have to let go, like Elisha had to let go of Elijah. Perhaps, someone has hurt you deeply and left you feeling abandoned like Peter did, or worse, maybe you’ve done that to someone else.

None of us are perfect, and neither is anyone that we are in relationship with. But God is perfect. He loves us perfectly and He also loves them perfectly. He instructs us in Ephesians 4:32 “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Then, Hebrews 12:14 says, “Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.” God not only wants us to be reconciled to Him, He wants us to be reconciled to each other.

I want to encourage you today to pray for the relationships that may be difficult for you right now. Ask the Lord to reveal what you can do to facilitate reconciliation. Accept your part in the situation. James 5:16 says “Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.”

If you have been wronged by someone, seek God on how to forgive that person. If you have wronged someone, seek Him on how to make it right. Remember, we need each other. And what better example of salt and light to the rest of the world than being able to work out our issues among ourselves and move forward in love? We are the church, the body of Christ. Let’s not war amongst ourselves. Let us love each other well, as our Father does with us.

“God not only wants us to be reconciled to Him, He wants us to be reconciled to each other.”

[EVENING]

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Day 11

"Once I was young, and now I am old. Yet I have never seen the Godly abandoned or their children begging for bread." Psalm 37:25

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: Luke 9:10-17

God's daily provision in our lives reflects clearly to us the truth that God is the ultimate source of everything we need in life. One of the places we see this illustration is in the passage we just read from the Gospel of Luke, where Jesus feeds the five thousand with just five loaves of bread and two fish. This miracle is not just a display of divine power but also a powerful lesson in trust and reliance on God's grace for our daily provisions.

The Bible teaches that while human effort is necessary, it is not the ultimate answer to our needs. Our work is a way of participating in God's grace and provision. Jesus' miracle of feeding the multitude underscores that God can take our limited resources and multiply them to meet not just our needs but the needs of others as well.

However, God's provision is not always about material wealth or abundance. Sometimes, it's about the presence of God in our lives through the Holy Spirit, assuring us that we are never alone.

John 14:16-17 says, *"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive Him, because it isn't looking for Him and doesn't recognize Him. But you know Him, because He lives with you now and later will be in you."*

And we read in Hebrews 13:5b that He will never fail us or abandon us. A promise that I am so thankful for. How about you?

But the provision of the Lord doesn't stop there. It's also about the wisdom, discernment, and guidance we receive from God's Word, which when applied to our lives, helps us discern good from evil and make choices that align with God's will.

James 1:22 tells us, *"But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves."*

And then we also read in Hebrews 5:14 that, *"Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong."*

Even more so, God's provision can come in unexpected ways and challenge our preconceived notions of what we think we need. We see this kind of provision from the Lord when we read of how the Israelites in the desert received manna from heaven (Exodus 16), a daily reminder that human limitations do not limit God's care.

However, ultimately, the greatest provision we have received is the gospel of Jesus Christ, which secures for us every good thing in eternity. Philippians 4:19 declares, *"And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."*

So how do we live a life full of the provision of the Lord?

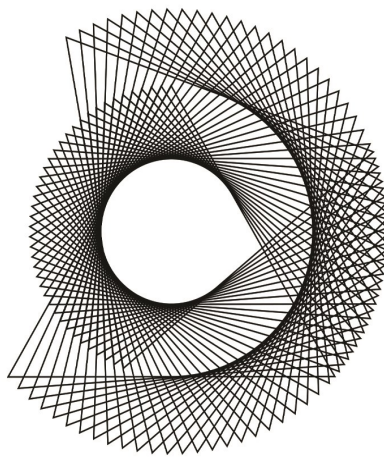
#1: Seek First the Kingdom of God: Matthew 6:33 instructs us to prioritize our spiritual life and relationship with God above all else. By doing so, we align ourselves with God's purposes, and in turn, He promises to take care of our needs. This step involves a shift in focus from our desires to God's will for our lives.

#2: Practice Generosity and Trust: Luke 12:33 encourages us to sell our possessions and give to the poor, highlighting the importance of generosity as a means of participating in God's provision for others. When we give, we express our trust in God as our provider and open ourselves up to receive His blessings in return.

#3: Engage in Prayer and Meditation: Prayer is our direct line of communication with God, where we can express our needs and desires. Paired with meditation on God's Word, it helps us to internalize His promises and understand how they apply to our lives. This process strengthens our faith and equips us to recognize and receive God's provision when it comes.

Here's the amazing thing about God's provision - it is multifaceted, encompassing not only our physical needs but also our spiritual and emotional well-being. And by seeking God's kingdom, practicing generosity, and engaging in prayer and meditation, we can open our hearts to the fullness of God's grace and care in our lives.

“God’s provision is not always about material wealth or abundance.”



[EVENING]

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Day 12

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." Psalm 147:3

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: Acts 3:1-11

In a broken and hurting world, the need for healing – physically, emotionally, and spiritually – is ever-present. We all carry wounds, scars, and burdens that weigh us down and hinder our ability to live fully and abundantly. But the good news is that God is a God of restoration and healing. He is the Great Physician who brings healing to the brokenhearted, restoration to the weary, and wholeness to the wounded. Psalm 147:3 says plainly, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds". Today, as we dive in, I pray that as we explore the theme of healing, we will find our faith being built in seeking God's healing touch and experiencing the transformative power of His love in our lives.

Healing is a multifaceted process that encompasses physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of our being. It is not simply the removal of pain or the resolution of problems, but the restoration of wholeness and well-being in all areas of our lives. So often we want the healing without the dealing. But God has to deal with the source of our pain – the rejection, the hurt, or perhaps the betrayal – to heal us. As we embark on this journey of healing, let us remember that God is the source of all healing, the One who brings light to our darkness, hope to our despair, and restoration to our brokenness. Allowing us to, as we read of the man healed in Acts 3, walk, leap, and praise God in celebration of our healing.

As you seek your own healing from the Lord, here are 5 steps you can take when seeking healing and restoration in the Lord.

1. Acknowledge Your Need for Healing: The first step towards healing is acknowledging our brokenness and need for God's healing touch. Take time to reflect on areas of your life that need healing – whether it be physical illness, emotional wounds, spiritual struggles, or relational brokenness. Surrender these areas to God in prayer, inviting His healing presence to bring restoration and wholeness.

2. Seek God's Word for Healing: The Bible is a treasure trove of healing promises, words of comfort, and stories of restoration. Spend time in God's Word daily, seeking out passages that speak to your current season of healing. Allow God's promises to speak truth and hope into your life, guiding you towards healing and wholeness.

3. Practice Self-Care: Healing requires tending to the needs of our body, mind, and spirit. Practice self-care by prioritizing rest, healthy eating, exercise, and spiritual disciplines. Take time to care for yourself – nurturing your physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Listen to your body and emotions, seeking out activities that bring peace, joy, and restoration to your soul.

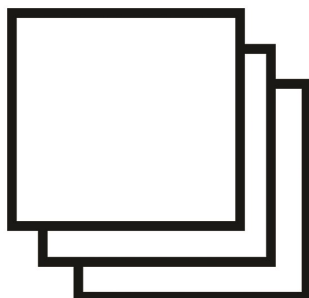
4. Lean on Your Support System: Healing is often a communal process, requiring the support and encouragement of others. Lean on your support system – friends, family, mentors, and spiritual leaders – for companionship, guidance, and prayer. Openly and honestly share your needs and struggles with trusted individuals, allowing them to walk alongside you on your journey towards healing.

5. Embrace Forgiveness and Grace: Healing often involves releasing past hurts, bitterness, and resentment in exchange for forgiveness, grace, and healing. Extend forgiveness to yourself and others, letting go of the burdens that weigh you down and hinder your ability to heal. Embrace God's grace and mercy, allowing His love to heal and restore your wounded heart.

Today, as we pray for healing, may we remember the promise in Psalm 103 that reminds us there is great healing coming for all who place their faith in Jesus. It is significant. It is valuable to hold on to the fact that even though there is suffering in this world, it is temporary and our spiritual freedom and healing are eternal. Though we may ask for physical or emotional healing, we can stand confident that no matter God's plan and answers, He has spiritually revived our former hopeless souls.

Today, I pray that the healing presence of God would be felt in the depths of your soul, bringing restoration, comfort, and peace to every area of your life. Remember, healing is a journey, not a destination – continue to seek God's healing touch, trust in His promises, and surrender your brokenness to Him. As you walk this path towards wholeness, may you experience the fullness of God's love, grace, and healing power in abundance. Amen.

“So often we want the healing without the dealing. But God has to deal with the source of our pain.”



[EVENING]

REFLECT: As you close out your day, take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your day, embracing the silence and remembering God's goodness as you answer the following questions.

In what ways did I see God's goodness at work in my life today?

Where/in what ways did I see the activity of God in my day today?

What is God speaking to me today?

No matter what difficulties I may have faced, for what things can I give the Lord thanks and praise?



Day 13

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep." John 10:11

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: John 10:1-21

Imagine you're in a crowded restaurant, enjoying a meal amid the chattering and conversations of those around you, when all of a sudden, you hear your best friend's voice. Without looking around for them, how do you know it's them? How can you pick their voice out from the dozens of other voices in the restaurant? You know because you've spent time with them. Over and over and over again, you've heard their voice as you've spoken with them, listened to them, gotten to know them. The same principle is true about hearing God's voice.

Jesus described it this way in today's reading in John chapter 10:

"I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep." (verses 14-15)

And later in the same chapter:

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." (verse 27)

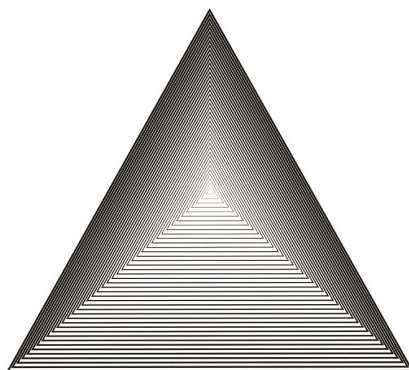
How do you get to know someone so well that you can identify their voice without seeing them? In this case, how do you get to the point where you can identify God's voice? The answer lies in knowing His character. God will never contradict himself, and He has provided examples of His voice to us in Scripture. Therefore, we can know that if something contradicts something in Scripture, it is not from God. However, that means we have to actually spend time in Scripture to learn what it says.

Going back to the example of your best friend, you probably didn't become their best friend by talking their ear off. There likely was an exchange, a back-and-forth conversation that led to each of you learning more about the other person. Again, the same is true with God. We will never learn to hear His voice clearly if we only come to Him to talk at Him without leaving space for listening. Like any other conversation partner, God wants us to listen to Him as well as talk to Him. You would never call your best friend, talk incessantly for ten minutes, asking questions and pleading for answers, then hang up before they had a chance to respond! And yet, this is often how we approach conversations with God.



It will take time to still our minds enough to allow God the space to speak. Start by taking one minute each time you sit down to pray in silence, then try expanding that silence to five minutes, then ten, then however long you need. Don't fill the space with your own words, with worship music, with reading the Bible, not even with saying Jesus' name over and over again. Embrace the silence. Remember, He is already there with you, and He is always speaking. We just need to slow down and be quiet long enough to listen.

“Embrace the silence. Remember, He is already there with you, and He is always speaking. We just need to slow down and be quiet long enough to listen.”



[EVENING]

REFLECT: As you close out your day, take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your day, embracing the silence and remembering God's goodness as you answer the following questions.

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Where/in what ways did I see the activity of God in my day today?

What is God speaking to me today?

No matter what difficulties I may have faced, for what things can I give the Lord thanks and praise?



Day 14

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise." Proverbs 11:30

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: Matthew 28

John Wesley, an Anglican clergyman, evangelist, and co-founder of the Methodist movement in the Church of England, is often remembered for his passionate commitment to the spiritual well-being of others. His quote, "You have one business on earth - to save souls," emphasizes a profound calling for you and I to prioritize the salvation of others as one of our primary missions in life. In our time together today, I want to explore with you the impact of Wesley's words as well as offer practical ways that we can apply this calling to our own lives.

Taking a moment to reflect on that quote, we quickly realize that John Wesley's statement is a powerful reminder of our responsibility to evangelize and disciple others. It emphasizes that one of our primary goals is not to accumulate wealth, seek personal success, or pursue the ideas of worldly happiness but to guide others toward a relationship with Jesus Christ. This mission aligns with the Great Commission, which instructs, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you..." (Matthew 28:19-20). We see in these two verses Jesus' command to His followers to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything He has commanded. In other words, you have been given a great gift - now don't keep it to yourself! Go out there and share it with others!!

Now, I think we all have a solid grasp on WHAT we are to be doing - sharing the good news of the Gospel and discipling anyone and everyone who will listen. So now we need to dig deeper into HOW we can accomplish just that! Though there are truly countless ways we can share Christ with others and literally thousands of books out there on discipleship, today, we are going to focus on 6 ways that we can all apply Wesley's words to our lives personally and individually.

1. Live a Life of Witness: Our lives should reflect the love, grace, and holiness of God. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 states, being in Christ means we are a new creation, with old things having passed away and all things having become new. Our transformed lives can then serve as a testimony to the power of the Gospel.

2. Share the Gospel: Romans 10:9 emphasizes the importance of confessing with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believing in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead for salvation. Sharing this truth with others is a direct way to engage in the business of saving souls.

3. Pray for Others: 1 Timothy 2:1-5 encourages us to pray, intercede, and give thanks for all people. Prayer is a powerful tool in the battle for souls, asking God to open hearts and bring others to a saving knowledge of Him.

4. Serve in Love: Galatians 5:14 reminds us that the entire law is fulfilled in loving our neighbor as ourselves. Acts of service and love can open doors for conversations and demonstrate the love of Christ to others.

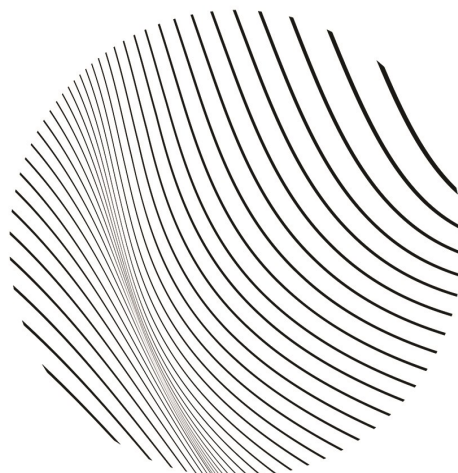
4. Disciple Believers: Discipleship is not just about leading someone to Christ but also about helping them grow in their faith. Matthew 28:19-20 doesn't stop at baptism; it includes teaching new believers to obey Christ's commands, guiding them in their faith journey.

5. Be Prepared to Give an Answer: 1 Peter 3:15 encourages us to always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks us to give the reason for the hope that we have, doing so with gentleness and respect. Knowing Scripture and being able to share the Gospel effectively are crucial aspects of leading people to salvation.

John Wesley's quote is a timeless reminder and conviction that we all have a responsibility to BE the gospel to those we encounter. By following these steps, we can actively participate in reaching our world and fulfilling the call that has been placed on us all. This quote is a call to action. It's a reminder not to become complacent in our faith but to continually keep our eyes open to those around us that need to see and hear the Gospel message of Christ.

"You have one business on earth - to save souls,"

John Wesley



[EVENING]

REFLECT: As you close out your day, take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your day, embracing the silence and remembering God's goodness as you answer the following questions.

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Day 15

"Make every effort to live in peace with everyone..." Hebrews 12:14a

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: Hebrews 12:1-17

Relationships. I'm not sure you could come up with another word that carries such conflicting feelings. Relationships can be complicated, right? Why? Because people are complicated! Because we are all human. Flawed, broken, trying to heal from our own hurts and disappointments, yet we must interact with each other on a daily basis all while trying to work through life's complex challenges.

Every relationship will experience moments of misunderstanding, conflict, and hurt. It's natural for disagreements to occur and for emotions to run high, but it's how we choose to handle these situations that defines our ability to reconcile differences in our relationships. Healthy relationships require us to be gracious, to work through our offenses and to forgive on a regular basis.

None of those things I just listed are easy to do! But they are possible. Whether it's a romantic relationship, a friendship, or a familial bond, relationships can bring immense joy but they can also bring devastating disappointments and hurt. But despite the complications that may arise, it's essential to navigate them with grace, understanding, and forgiveness. Instead of allowing grievances to fester and relationships to deteriorate, we must learn to address offenses with empathy and humility. This requires a willingness to listen, communicate openly, and acknowledge our own shortcomings.

I cannot tell you how important those last two sentences are! They have saved and allowed restoration to so many relationships and hurts in my past. If we want God's grace to flow to us, we have to let it flow through us. However, in order to be able to give grace, we need to know what it means. So what is grace? Grace is unmerited favor. Ephesians 2:8 says it like this,

"God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God."

It isn't something we earn, it's a gift. So if we can't earn it from God, why do we often try to make people earn it from us? Learning to be gracious in relationships is an ongoing process that requires patience, compassion, and a willingness to extend grace even when it feels undeserved. Grace allows us to see past imperfections and love unconditionally. I find that when I understand someone's why (or reason) behind their actions or words, it helps me to more easily offer grace, because I am able to see past their imperfections. Not everything is personal. Recognizing that not everything is about me allows me to maintain a healthy perspective in relationships. Embracing this principle of not taking everything personally is closely intertwined with the concept of grace.



Remember, if we desire to receive grace from God, it is imperative that we extend grace to others. Just as we seek understanding and compassion for our own shortcomings, we must also extend the same to those around us. By letting go of the tendency to internalize every action or comment directed towards us, we create space for grace to flow freely in our relationships. Understanding that people's actions are often a reflection of their own experiences and emotions helps me not to take everything personally.

So how do we show grace in our relationships? By overlooking offense. Just because someone puts an offense down, doesn't mean we have to pick it up. Proverbs 19:11 tells us, "A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense." While we may not always get to choose what people say or do to us, we do have control over how we react. As one of my favorite life quotes fittingly puts it, "The only kind of control God gives us is self-control." Regardless of whether the offense is warranted or not, we retain power of self-control over our responses. This involves consciously choosing not to react impulsively when offended. Overlooking offense enables us to focus on the bigger picture and avoid getting bogged down by petty grievances, preventing resentment from festering and poisoning our relationships.

By practicing this, we also pave the way for reconciliation and the restoration of trust within our relationships. Giving grace in overlooking an offense is forgiveness in real-time. Hebrews 12:14-15 says:

"Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord. Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many."

The imagery here is powerful, depicting bitterness as something that grows up. Bitterness never remains small; it steadily grows over time, affecting not only us as individuals but also those around us. Knowing this truth we can see clearly the reality that we, as believers, must learn to walk in forgiveness.

Forgiveness is a decision. And a process. If forgiveness isn't understood, it might seem like a harsh or cruel command. However, it's not cruel; it's actually God's mercy for our human hearts that can so easily turn hurt into hate. Forgiveness isn't really about doing something for the sake of a relationship, rather it's about being obedient to what God tells us to do. Ephesians 4:31 says,

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

Forgiveness is something that we can only do with God's help. Forgiveness doesn't depend on our own strength, but it does require our cooperation. How do we do this? By leaning into what the Lord has done for us, just like the Bible says in Ephesians 4:7, "But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift."

One of the best books I have ever read on forgiveness is written by Lysa TerKeurst and it's called "Forgiving What You Can't Forget." In that book she says, "While salvation is what brings the flesh of a human into perfect alignment with the Spirit of God, forgiveness is the greatest evidence that the Truth of God lives in us."

At times, forgiveness can seem like one of the most exasperating things Christ has asked of us. It feels incredible to get, yet so challenging to give. However, when we accept it graciously from the Lord but withhold it from others, a heavy weight can begin to accumulate within our hearts. C.S. Lewis says it like this, "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive."

OUCH. There is so much truth to that statement! While there is SO much more (literally an entire book's worth) I can get into on this topic of forgiveness, I think we will end with this thought...You can forgive. You can heal. You can move forward. And none of those beautiful words are held hostage by the person who hurt you.

To wrap up, despite the challenges and hurts that may arise, choosing to extend grace, overlook offense, and forgive serves as a powerful catalyst for healing and reconciliation. When we engage in relationships with humility and a genuine sense of empathy, we create spaces where people can truly understand and accept each other, allowing genuine relationships to grow and strengthen. Before going on with your day, go over some of the questions below and allow the Lord to speak to you about your relationships.

1. Colossians 3:13 says, "Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others." Can you think of any relationships where you haven't practiced this verse so well? If so, ask the Lord to show you the next steps to take towards forgiveness, reconciliation or restoration. Write it below.

2. If you are having a hard time bringing yourself to forgive someone for the hurt that they have caused you, maybe look at it from a different perspective. Pretend you are the one who caused the hurt and think of ways that you would want that person to respond to you in forgiveness. List them below.

3. There will be bad days. Days where the hurt comes flooding back and that's okay. Remember forgiveness is a process. One we have to push through at times. Memorizing scriptures helps with this. Write one or two below that might help you at times where you are struggling to overlook offense and forgive.

“Learning to be gracious in relationships is an ongoing process that requires patience, compassion, and a willingness to extend grace even when it feels undeserved.”

[EVENING]

REFLECT: As you close out your day, take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your day, embracing the silence and remembering God's goodness as you answer the following questions.

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What is God speaking to me today?

No matter what difficulties I may have faced, for what things can I give the Lord thanks and praise?



Day 16

"My sheep hear my voice; I know them and they follow me." John 10:27

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: 1 Samuel 3:1-10 (For a deeper dive into this story, read 1 Samuel 1-3)

Imagine sitting down over a cup of coffee and a great friend and diving into a heart to heart about how we can tune into what God is trying to tell us. It's like when Jesus talks about being the good shepherd in John 10:27, which says,

"Jesus said, 'My sheep hear my voice; I know them and they follow me.'"

In this passage, Jesus is comparing himself to the shepherd and us to sheep. Sheep follow the shepherd because of trust. They know He leads them to safety and provision. They know that they belong to Him, and He cares for them. So, if Jesus is our shepherd, then how do we come to know and hear His voice?

First, we must be convinced that God wants to speak to us individually and personally. He Does!! He wants to speak to all of us; no exceptions if we are his child. Unfortunately, we convince ourselves that God only speaks to our pastors, teachers, or those more experienced in their faith. However, in 1 Samuel chapter 7, we are shown clearly the Lord's desire to speak to all of us - no matter how young! In this passage we see Samuel as a boy serving in the temple. He was very young and inexperienced in the things of God. In verse 7 it says,

"Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The Word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him."

As you look at this passage you see that Samuel didn't recognize that the voice he was hearing was God's. Not until the priest, Eli, told him that it was God speaking to him, did he understand and answer.

Just as God spoke to Samuel even though he was only an inexperienced boy, God wants to speak to each of us; regardless of our age, experience, or education if we belong to Him.

Now, once we are convinced that God wants to speak to us, then how do we hear?

1. STOP- Are you too busy "doing"? Do you have so many tasks to accomplish that you can't hear because you never stop? I have a 4-year-old grandson who runs more than he walks. I think he's been training for a marathon since he took his first steps. He runs and runs and I'm behind him calling stop, or be careful, or don't go there and he just keeps on running. Occasionally, he will glance over his shoulder and grin as he runs away. He hears me but he doesn't stop to listen. This leads us to #2.
2. LISTEN- Are you willing to not only hear but listen? There is a difference between hearing and listening. Have you ever been in a conversation with someone, and you hear their voice but don't have any idea what they just said because you weren't listening?

3. DON'T ASSUME- Don't assume that God only speaks one way. We often miss God's voice because it didn't come the way we expected it or didn't come in the way He spoke to someone else. Do you think it will be like thunder, loud and drowning out everything else? Do you think it will be when someone says the Lord spoke to me about you? Do you think it will be a whisper of a thought in your heart while you are quiet? Will it be a phone call that confirms what you have been praying? Will it be a sermon or lesson that jumps out at you and your spirit says, yes! Will it be an audible voice like Samuel?

Truthfully, the answer could be in all these ways and more! He is God and knows not only what we need to hear, but how (and when) we need to hear it.

4. CHECK- God always speaks in ways that agree with His Word. Just like we fact check information before we accept it as truth, we can fact check what we believe God is saying by holding it up to the truth of the Bible. You can also seek out the wisdom of a pastor or faith filled mentor to confirm.

5. BE PREPARED- Just like an athlete trains for competition, we should prepare our spirits and our minds to receive what God is trying to say to us. How do we prepare? We read our bibles, so we know the truth. We pray and talk to God about what we need and what He wants and then we listen for Him to speak. We sing and worship to acknowledge that He is God, and we expect Him to communicate with us. We walk in His Spirit every day with great expectation of what the Lord is going to say to us.

We know that, as a Christian, God desires to speak to us. He said that as His sheep we hear His voice and follow Him. We HEAR HIS VOICE! It wasn't a maybe we will hear His voice or if we are a pastor we hear His voice, or if we are a teacher, we hear His voice. His Word said, "My sheep hear my voice."! That's you and that's me!

Do you want to hear God speaking to you? I know I do. I was studying late one night when my family had all gone to bed. As I was sitting at the table in the dining room I began to talk to the Lord. I told Him I knew that He loved me, and I wanted to be in His presence more and more. I wanted to see His glory. As I sat there quietly, God's presence tangibly filled the whole room. It was so indescribably amazing, and I was so overwhelmed by the presence of God being there with me. I knew that God had heard me and had spoken to me that He loved me in a way that I had never dreamed possible.

Friends, God loves you and wants to talk to you - to show Himself to you. Yes, to you personally. So I encourage you to come like Samuel did, as a child, with expectations of hearing from your heavenly Father, and say, "Speak to me Lord, because I am listening!"

"Are you willing to not only hear but listen? There is a difference between hearing and listening."

[EVENING]

REFLECT: As you close out your day, take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your day, embracing the silence and remembering God’s goodness as you answer the following questions.

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Day 17

“But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home...[and] prayed... just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God.” Daniel 6:10

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: Daniel 6:1-28

Have you ever been in a lions’ den? You know, that situation where you feel trapped, with no options and no way out. Maybe you’ve been hurt or betrayed by the people you trusted, and now it’s impossible for you to trust again. Maybe you’ve even questioned whether God is big enough to pull you out of that lions’ den as you look up from the bottom of that pit?

In Daniel 6, the entire nation of Judah was in captivity. These people probably often felt defeated, like there was no hope. But they clung to the hope and the promise of a coming Messiah to save them. In the midst of this, Daniel, a Judean, is working for King Darius as one of three administrators who assisted the king in ruling the empire. Scripture says that because of Daniel’s great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire. But some of the other rulers became jealous of Daniel’s influence and conspired against him. They begin searching for a fault in Daniel’s service, but can find none, so they set a trap. They knew Daniel served the God of Israel, which was in direct opposition to what the king had commanded.

So, the officials convinced the king to issue a decree that for 30 days, the kingdom would be required to pray in Darius’ name alone. And if anyone doesn’t obey this decree, they would be thrown into the lions’ den. I want you to see Daniel’s response in Daniel 6:10. It says: “But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God.” Daniel didn’t put his faith on the back burner. He didn’t pray in secret. The scriptures say that he went to his upstairs, with the windows open, and prayed! He knew the consequence of praying to his God but was willing to do it anyway because Daniel didn’t let anything keep him from spending time with God.

But, even with this bold showing of his faith and dependance on the Lord, things didn’t magically change just because Daniel had done the right thing. If you know the story, Daniel was still arrested and sentenced to the lions’ den. When the other, jealous officials saw Daniel praying to God. They rushed to the king to tell him what they had seen. King Darius was deeply troubled by this because he had respected Daniel and all that he had done for the kingdom. He even tried to think of a way to save Daniel, spending the rest of that day trying to get him out of this predicament. But the officials appeared to the king again and reminded him that no law once it is written could be changed. So King Darius orders Daniel to be thrown into the lions’ den.

It seemed as if the jealous officials had won when the king ordered the stone to be rolled over the mouth of the lion’s den and sealed it with his royal seal. But God was about to do something incredible in this story.

King Darius spent the night fasting and worrying about Daniel. Early the next morning, he rushed to the lion's den and found Daniel alive without even a scratch on him. The Lord had shut the mouths of the lions and protected Daniel because he had trusted in God.

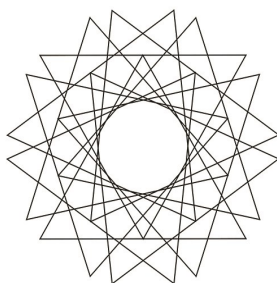
Oftentimes we read this story as if it ends there. Daniel is safe, God shows up miraculously to shut the mouths of the lions and then we move on. The good guy wins, right? But I want you to understand the rest of this story. King Darius issues a new decree. No longer will the people of his kingdom pray in his name. They will pray in the name of the one true God, the God of Daniel. He decrees that everyone throughout his kingdom will tremble with fear and serve the God of Daniel.

An entire kingdom's history was radically transformed by the faith of one man who had trusted in God. So, what's the lesson we're to learn? Today, I want to focus on the phrase used to describe Daniel's prayer life: "Just as he had always done". Daniel didn't wait for adversity to strike to begin praying to God as if He were a genie who solved all our problems. Daniel had a habit of prayer. No matter the situation he faced, his default response was to go to and trust God in prayer.

Today, what's your default? How do you respond to life's circumstances? When things are going great or when things are going horribly wrong? What's your "just as he had always done"? When you're in that lions' den, is your response to trust God with the outcome, or is it to blame God and wonder where He is in the midst of your circumstance? In what area of your life are you having a hard time trusting God to be faithful? What is that seemingly impossible situation that looks like there's no way out?

No matter how bad things may look, there is no situation that God cannot change. God is still the rescuer, the deliverer, the miracle worker that we find in scripture, even (or should I say especially) when circumstances are difficult. You may not see a light at the end of the tunnel yet, but you can trust that the living God is in that den with you. And He alone has the ability to shut the mouths of lions in your life.

"No matter how bad things may look, there is no situation that God cannot change."



[EVENING]

REFLECT: As you close out your day, take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your day, embracing the silence and remembering God's goodness as you answer the following questions.

In what ways did I see God's goodness at work in my life today?

Where/in what ways did I see the activity of God in my day today?

What is God speaking to me today?

No matter what difficulties I may have faced, for what things can I give the Lord thanks and praise?



Day 18

“So she did as Elijah said, and ... there was always enough flour and olive oil left in the containers, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.” 1 Kings 17:15

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: 1 Kings 17

There are numerous stories and examples of God’s provision woven throughout the entire Bible, but today I want to look at one in particular: The story of Elijah and the widow at Zarephath. As we journey through this passage together, we will uncover timeless principles that reveal God’s unwavering commitment to meet His children’s needs and His capacity to transform scarcity into abundance.

Elijah was the first in a long line of prophets that God sent to Israel and Judah. Israel, the northern kingdom, had no kings who were faithful to God. In fact, they were all wicked and were actually leading God’s chosen people to worship other gods. In 1 Kings chapter 17, we see Elijah go to King Ahab, who was married to the infamous pagan Jezebel, and give him a message from the Lord that there will be no more rain or dew during the next few years until God himself gives the word. After this, God sends Elijah to go east to Kerith Brook to hide. In verse 4, He tells him, “Drink from the brook and eat what the ravens bring you, for I have commanded them to bring you food.”

Elijah did just as the Lord told him. The ravens brought him bread and meat each morning and evening and he drank from the brook. But after a while the brook dried up because of the lack of rainfall. This is where the widow comes in. Verse 8 says, “Then the Lord said to Elijah, “Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon. I have instructed a widow there to feed you.”

So Elijah went, and as he came up to the village gates, he saw a widow there gathering up sticks. He called out to her and asked her to bring him some water and bread. She replied to him in verse 12, “I swear by the Lord your God that I don’t have a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and then my son and I will die.”

Here is his response...“Don’t be afraid! Go ahead and do just what you’ve said, but make a little bread for me first. Then, use what’s left to prepare a meal for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There will always be flour and olive oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain and the crops grow again!” And here’s the BEST part in verse 15, “So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her family continued to eat for many days. There was always enough flour and olive oil left in the containers, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.”

There is so much provision here on both sides. It shows God’s continued provision for Elijah and now provision for this widow and her son. Let’s take a look at some things we can learn from this passage.



1. God often provides for us in unexpected ways.

In ways that go beyond our narrow expectations. This widow was not a Jewish woman. She wasn't a follower of God. She was a foreigner from Jezebel's (King Ahab's wife) home territory. The fact that God sent Elijah there is kind of ironic. Also ironic is the fact that ravens were considered unclean birds, yet God used them too. No matter how difficult our trials are that we are facing, if we look for God's provision, we WILL find it, and sometimes in some strange places!

This reminds me of my own personal story of God's provision. When I became pregnant with our first daughter, Presleah, I felt the Lord asking me to become a stay-at-home mom. Now, this was very unexpected as I had always been adamant that I wanted to work. I was so headstrong, in fact, that when my now husband and I became engaged, we had our first big argument because he grew up with a mom who stayed at home, and he wanted that for his kids. I very quickly and strongly let him know that would not be the case with me, haha! Don't you love it when God changes your plans?

Anyway, after the Lord's leading and my somewhat reluctant obedience, I took the leap and embraced my new role as stay-at-home mom. However, for me to do so didn't just mean giving up my workplace independence; it also meant cutting our income in half, and we were struggling to adjust to living on such a small budget. One of the things that was the most burdensome for us was the monthly payment for my husband's truck, which we got when we had a surplus of income. We were able to make the payments, but it was definitely uncomfortable.

One day, as my husband, Tim, was traveling back from a speaking engagement a few cities away in the rain, he hydroplaned and hit the side wall, spun around, went over three lanes of traffic, hit the other side wall, and finally stopped facing oncoming traffic. Thankfully, he was unharmed! But my car, which he was driving to save gas mileage, was completely totaled. This was the car we didn't have a payment on. Like really, God? Why couldn't he have been driving the vehicle we had a big payment on?

Long story short, a few weeks later we received the check from the insurance company for my car. It was almost to the exact penny that we needed to be able to pay off the truck with that big, uncomfortable payment! Wouldn't it be just like God to take a super frustrating and scary situation and turn it into a blessing? We paid off the truck and got an incredible deal on an economy car that would save so much money on gas with all his traveling. That car actually ended up paying for itself with the mileage payment he got from each trip. This is the kind of unexpected provision that God so graciously gives to His kids. He didn't cause the accident, but He most definitely used it!

2. A simple act of faith can produce a miracle.

When the widow went to make bread for Elijah, she genuinely thought she was using the last of her flour and oil, preparing her last meal, and she did it anyway! She trusted Elijah and what God was speaking through him and gave all she had in order to feed him. This account exemplifies clearly that faith is the step between promise and fulfillment. Every miracle, large or small, begins with obedience. We may not see the solution until we take that first step of faith. Or maybe it's the tenth step of faith, but it will require us to move.

This is something Tim and I flesh out daily, or rather monthly, with our monthly tithing. We have given 10% of everything we make back to God since before we were even married. And God has ALWAYS blessed the other 90% and provided. We have never gone without basic needs or necessities, even when we barely made anything.

One time, near the beginning of our marriage, our HVAC system went out in the dead of summer. It was going to need to be completely replaced, and it would cost a whopping \$7,000! There was absolutely no way we would be able to afford that. However, as we prayed, wrestling with our fears and anxieties, God sent three of the church’s board members to our house with window units. You guys, this was before we had ever even told anyone about your need! They just showed up and installed them! That is the faithful God we serve. When we walk in obedience to God, we also get to walk in the abundance of His blessings.

Matthew 6:25-26 put it like this, “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are?”

God stretched the resources of flour and oil for the widow, her son, and Elijah in a season of scarcity and drought. He provided these provisions until it started to rain again, and the crops were about to grow. Until the scarcity was GONE. And God can do that for us, too.

When we are in a season of scarcity and drought—whether financially, physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually - He can and will provide.

Have you ever experienced God's provision in unexpected ways or places in your life? Reflect on a specific instance and write how it impacted your faith.

What steps of faith are you currently hesitant to take, even though you feel God prompting you? How can you overcome your doubts and take that step of obedience? Write down your answers below.

In what areas of your life do you need to trust God more for His provision, whether it's financial, emotional, relational, or spiritual? How can you cultivate a deeper sense of trust and reliance on Him in those areas? List them below.

“Every miracle, large or small, begins with obedience. We may not see the solution until we take that first step of faith.”

[EVENING]

REFLECT: As you close out your day, take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your day, embracing the silence and remembering God's goodness as you answer the following questions.

In what ways did I see God's goodness at work in my life today?

Where/in what ways did I see the activity of God in my day today?

What is God speaking to me today?

No matter what difficulties I may have faced, for what things can I give the Lord thanks and praise?



Day 19

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever"
Revelation 21:4

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: Daniel 3 (For a deeper dive, read Daniel 1-3)

The story that unfolds in Daniel chapter 3 is one of my all-time favorite showings of God's power and provision. Here we have this group of friends banding together against a culture devoid of true devotion and worship to the One true God, standing up for their convictions and obediently fulfilling all the Lord has spoken to them to do.

As a kid, I was drawn to the incredible miracle that took place when, though put into the fire, this band of spiritual brothers walked away completely unharmed. In fact, as they stepped out of that fiery and blazing hot furnace (verse 22), their clothes weren't even singed!! Even from a young age, this story always caused me to stand in awe and wonder at just how big and mighty our God is. And it was this story from Daniel 3 that always came first to my mind when, in kids church, we sang "My God is so BIG, So strong and so mighty, There's nothing my God cannot do." (Any other 80's kids gonna have that stuck in their head the rest of the day now??) But my connection to this story didn't stop there.

Fast forward several years. I am now a young teen barreling quickly toward young adulthood when the Lord brings to my attention a new and deeper revelation of this story as I was reading this story once again. Verses 23-25 say,

So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, securely tied, fell into the roaring flames. But suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?" "Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did," they replied. "Look!" Nebuchadnezzar shouted. "I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god."

Now, clearly, even as a young child, I found it incredible and could see the miraculous at work when, though only three men were thrown into the furnace, there were now, in fact, four in there roaming around. But now, after several more years of wrestling through life with Jesus under my belt, the presence of this supernatural fourth took on a whole new level of appreciation and understanding for me. For what younger me saw as simply God coming to rescue and save, older me now saw in a tangible way the way the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, shows up in our lives even in our most difficult of moments. His presence is a constant. I now understood that the Lord doesn't always just come and swoop in to save and rescue us. Sometimes, He joins us in the fire. Walking us out the other side.

Fast forward yet again. I am now very much an adult, doing all the adult things and living the responsibility filled adult life. I was a mom of two, a worship pastor, and a youth pastor's wife. And it was in the season of life that I was thrown into the most fierce fiery furnace I had ever (and I sincerely pray I will ever) encountered when I received a call from my sister, Erika, that she had been experiencing some irregular pain in her chest and would be going to her doctor tomorrow just to have it checked out. I will never forget her saying, "I'm sure it's nothing, but if you could just pray, I'd appreciate it." And pray I did!

I prayed. My parents prayed. My husband and my kids prayed. Our church staff and church family prayed. Close friends and long-distance family-They. All. Prayed. And we all stepped into the next day confident that the Lord had heard our prayers and Erika was going to walk out of that doctor's office with a clean bill of health. So when she called me the next afternoon I answered with a low-key sense of excitement-ready and eager to hear the good report! That the pain was gone, the scans were clear, and if there had, in fact, been something there before, then the Lord had miraculously healed her. Unfortunately, that is not how our conversation went. Instead, as she began to speak, relaying the news she had just learned, my heart sank, and my world shattered. It was cancer. It was stage 4. And it was aggressive.

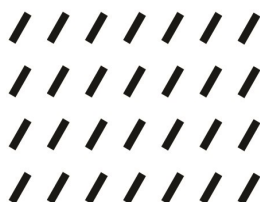
That phone call set the stage for my entrance into a season in a fiery furnace. As treatments began, we remained steadfast in the Lord. Fasting, prayer, believing, and praying some more. But week after week and month after month, she continued to receive bad report after bad report. And it was somewhere in that season that I began to grow angry with God. I got to the place where I couldn't even read stories in the Bible like we read today in Daniel 3 because those words were all about how God showed up for His people, but He wasn't showing up for me! This was my darkest hour-the moment of my fiercest fiery furnace - and yet it seemed God had decided to pass me over with His promise to heal, His promise to rescue, His promise to save. I was hurting, and I was broken. And it was in the midst of my anger, frustration, confusion, and doubt that the Lord showed up for me in a new and powerful way.

I will never forget this moment. It was a Wednesday night, and I was slated to preach for that night's youth service. And so, of course, it was late that afternoon that I received the newest piece of bad news - the cancer had spread too far, and my sister had been deemed terminal. So there I was, trying to wrap my brain around the news I had just received, with the word "terminal" reverberating through my mind, crying out to God and asking Him why? Why did my sister get sick in the first place? Why hadn't He healed her? And WHY did this news have to come on this day of all days? A day when I am going to have to stand up in front of a group of teenagers and preach about His goodness and His faithfulness-two things I wasn't positive I truly believed in at that moment.

It was in this moment of utter brokenness that I grabbed my Bible, snuck away to the youth room, turned down the lights, cranked up the music, and just sat there, crumpled on the floor, sobbing and utterly broken at the feet of Jesus. After I had cried to the point there were no tears left, I opened my Bible and just automatically turned to Daniel chapter 3. And it was then that, for the third time in my life, the Lord used this story to teach me something new about Him. A lesson that the Holy Spirit reminds me of almost weekly to this very day. Let's take a moment to re-read verses 13-18 together.

"Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they were brought in, Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."



Had I been sitting in a chair I think I may have fallen out of it as I read the words of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in verses 17 and 18. Did you catch what they said? “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us...But even if He doesn’t...”

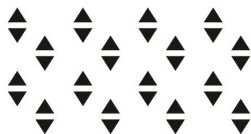
These three men were willing to straight up step into a blazing fire, fully confident that the Lord would rescue them, but then they continued, “But even if He doesn’t...” Those five words have reverberated in my spirit ever since. They have been a lifeline to my faith more times than I can count. My prayers began to shift from “God, You better..” to “God, I know You can...but even if you don’t...” and the Lord began to build in me a strong foundation in this new and deeper “But even if you don’t...” kind of faith.

I tell you this raw, real, and personal story to tell you this - sometimes God doesn’t show up in the way you are hoping, believing, and praying for. Sometimes, the family member still gets sick, even though you pray daily for the health and strength in your bodies. Sometimes, the scans don’t come back clean even though you have fasted and prayed with more fervency and diligence than ever before. Sometimes, the bad reports keep coming even though you stood on God’s promises, trusting His every word. And sometimes, that miraculous healing you sought for years comes but not in the way you had hoped. Instead of coming in the form of a cancer-free sister here on Earth, it comes as a fully whole and healed sister in Heaven with Jesus.

Friends, I want to encourage you, if you are praying for a miracle and believing for God’s healing-KEEP PRAYING! After all, He is MORE THAN ABLE to do it! Ephesians 3:20 says, “Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.” But I challenge you to take a step deeper in your faith and trust in His sovereignty to add to those cries of desperation that “Lord, I know you can...But even if you don’t...” Even if you don’t, I will still love you. Even if you don’t, I will still serve you. Why? Because, even if you don’t, You are still good, You are still holy, and You are still God.

Lord, I pray today that you will encourage our hearts and our spirits in You today. Help us to see beyond our circumstances and, instead, fix our eyes solely on You. And as we do, I pray that we will discover the same faith we saw in the lives of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. A faith that cries out, “the God that we serve is able to save us...But even if He doesn’t...”

“Even if You don’t, I will still serve You. Why? Because, even if You don’t, You are still good, You are still holy, and You are still God.”



[AFTERNOON]

PRAY: During this time of focused prayer, we encourage you to utilize today's guided prayer opportunity, which can be found on the Heritage Church Podcast as well as on our website at heritageag.org. Each day's podcast is 20 minutes in length and offers 10 minutes of guided prayer followed by 10 minutes of music that can continue playing as you pray over any personal prayer needs you have. As you pray, feel free to use the lines below to journal and/or write down anything the Lord lays on your heart or speaks to you. There are also blank notes pages as well as 2 pages dedicated to prayer needs located in the Bonus Materials section at the back of the book. These sections will give you more space to write/take notes, as well as a place to house all of your prayer requests/needs in one, easily accessible place.

[EVENING]

REFLECT: As you close out your day, take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your day, embracing the silence and remembering God's goodness as you answer the following questions.

In what ways did I see God's goodness at work in my life today?

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Day 20

“But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus” Acts 20:24a

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: Acts 20:22-24; Acts 21:13; Acts 16:6-7 (Want to take a deeper dive? Read the Acts 19-22)

Imagine standing at a crossroads with no visible sign pointing the way forward. Yet, deep inside, a whisper urges you to take a step in a direction that seems counterintuitive. This scenario mirrors our spiritual journey when the Holy Spirit nudges us toward God’s will, sometimes against all human logic.

Apostle Paul’s life offers a vivid blueprint of such divine guidance—a journey not just of destinations but of unwavering faith and obedience.

Diving into today’s passages allows us to witness the compelling narrative of Paul, a man who walked the tightrope of faith, led by an unseen hand, and discover how his story illuminates our path today.

Paul’s travels were not charted by personal ambition or wanderlust but orchestrated by the Holy Spirit’s direction. His commitment to follow this guidance, despite knowing the trials it would bring, highlights a profound aspect of spiritual life: obedience to God often requires walking into known challenges with eyes wide open to His presence and promise.

In Acts 20:22-24, Paul speaks of being compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem, fully aware that hardships awaited him. This compulsion wasn’t a fleeting emotion but a deep, spiritual conviction. It’s akin to knowing deep in your bones that you’re meant to take a certain path, even when it leads through valleys of shadow. Paul’s journey teaches us that divine guidance doesn’t always promise ease. Instead, it offers something far greater: purpose and the presence of God Himself. It’s a reminder that our spiritual path is not measured by the absence of trouble but by the fulfillment of God’s will in our lives.

As Paul continued towards Jerusalem, he encountered fellow believers who, through the Holy Spirit, warned him of the impending dangers (Acts 21). These warnings were not contradictions of God’s will but affirmations of the cost of discipleship. They highlight an essential truth: the Holy Spirit doesn’t only guide but also prepares us for what lies ahead. Paul’s response to these warnings is a masterclass in spiritual discernment. He recognized that the same Spirit warning him of danger was also leading him into it for a higher purpose. This discernment between prohibition and preparation is crucial for us as modern-day followers of Christ.

Paul’s unwavering determination to proceed, despite knowing the risks, underscores a vital spiritual principle: the courage to embrace God’s will is born out of confidence in His guidance. Paul’s journey was not a blind leap into the dark but a step into the light of God’s promise, armed with the assurance that no hardship could derail God’s plan for his life. When we have the confirmation that we have heard from God, no matter what comes, good or bad, easy or hard, blessings or hardships, we can continue to walk confidently down the road.

I have often found it helpful that when God speaks direction to me, I write it down and file it away somewhere. Then as I begin to hit resistance in the journey I can pull out in my handwriting what God said to me. That reminder in my words and my handwriting helps me remember the confidence in which I started this journey on. The confidence that comes from knowing it is His direction in our lives that makes all the difference.

What drove Paul was not merely a sense of duty but a profound commitment to the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace. His life was anchored in the mission to share the gospel, making every other consideration secondary. This single-mindedness is a beacon for us, highlighting that clarity in our divine purpose can propel us through the most daunting challenges.

Like Paul, we are on a journey marked by divine encounters and challenging terrains. The key to navigating this journey lies in our ability to tune into the Holy Spirit's voice, discerning His guidance amidst the cacophony of life's demands and distractions.

Have you ever put on noise-canceling headphones in a crowded space? The general volume of life and occasional peaks of noise are erased, and you find yourself sitting in the midst of busyness and the hustle and bustle of life, yet not hearing any of it. It's a break from the world. This is what it's like to tune in the Holy Spirit's voice in your life. His frequencies block out the other noise and allow us to walk in the quiet confidence of God's leading.

As we reflect on Paul's journey, we're invited to consider our paths. Are we attuned to the Holy Spirit's leading? Do we possess the spiritual discernment to differentiate between God's preparation and prohibition? And most importantly, are we ready to embrace God's will with the same courage and conviction as Paul?

Before we close out our time together today, I would like to take some time in the next section to delve into practical steps and reflections to help us tune our hearts to the frequency of the Holy Spirit, ensuring that, like Paul, we can walk our paths with confidence and clarity.

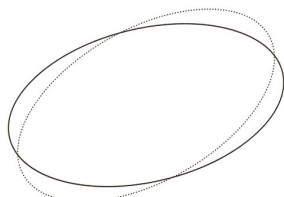
Spiritual Echoes: Recall moments when the Holy Spirit's whisper guided your steps. Reflect on the outcomes of those steps. Were there times you hesitated or resisted? What did you learn from those experiences?

Silencing the Noise: Identify distractions or fears that muffle the Holy Spirit's voice in your life. Commit these areas to God, seeking His strength to overcome and hear Him more clearly.

Learning from Modern Faith Walkers: Consider the lives of those a few steps further in their faith journey who exemplify a confident walk with the Holy Spirit. Draw inspiration from their stories of faith and obedience. And now, after that time of deep personal reflection, I invite you to take the next few moments to put what you have learned into action!

A Quiet Inquiry: Dedicate time today to quietly ask God, "What are you speaking into my life?" Sit in stillness, open to hearing His voice, trusting in His desire to communicate with you.

Journal of Journeys: Start maintaining a spiritual journal. Document your dialogues with God, the nudges from the Holy Spirit, and the outcomes of acting on those promptings. This practice will enhance your discernment and confidence in recognizing God's voice.



Fostering Spiritual Friendships: Share your aspirations to hear and follow the Holy Spirit more intimately with a friend, family member, or even a spiritual mentor, and ask them how they hear the Lord's voice.

Let's close our time together today with a word of prayer.

Lord, thank You for the constant presence of Your Holy Spirit, guiding us through life's complexities. Grant us the sensitivity to discern Your voice, the courage to follow Your lead, and the faith to embrace the journey, regardless of the challenges we may face. Like Paul, may we consider our lives as nothing compared to the joy of fulfilling Your purpose. Strengthen us to testify to Your grace with our lives.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

“When we have the confirmation that we have heard from God no matter what comes, good or bad, easy or hard, blessings or hardships, we can continue to walk confidently down the road.”



[EVENING]

REFLECT: As you close out your day, take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your day, embracing the silence and remembering God's goodness as you answer the following questions.

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Where/in what ways did I see the activity of God in my day today?

What is God speaking to me today?

No matter what difficulties I may have faced, for what things can I give the Lord thanks and praise?



Day 21

"At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom." Matthew 27:51

[MORNING]

PRESS PAUSE: Before you do anything else, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate all the Lord did in you, for you, and spoke to you yesterday.

READ: Matthew 27:11 - 28:20 (For a deeper dive, also read Acts 1-2)

Beyond the Veil - Living Every Day in God's Presence

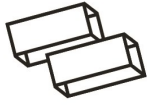
As we stand at the threshold of this fasting journey's end, we're not just marking a conclusion but celebrating a commencement—a beginning of living every day in the extraordinary reality of God's presence. The last 21 days have been a testament to the power of setting aside time to seek God's face, to hear His voice, and to witness His supernatural activity in our lives. But the most remarkable truth we carry forward is this: the access to God we've experienced during this fast isn't confined to a season of fasting. It's ours every day, thanks to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus. As we look ahead, the true journey is just beginning. This isn't merely a return to "normal life" but an invitation to a new way of living, where every day is infused with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus promised.

The Torn Veil: Access Granted

When Jesus breathed His last on the cross, and the veil in the temple was torn in two (Matthew 27:51), it wasn't just a physical barrier (a curtain that separated the holy place from the most holy in the temple) that was destroyed but a spiritual divide that was forever bridged - giving us direct access to our Heavenly Father through the Holy Spirit. This act symbolized the end of an era where only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, the very presence of God, once a year. Now, because of Jesus, we all are invited to come boldly into God's presence (Hebrews 4:16), not as distant observers but as beloved children.

This singular moment in history was (and is) nothing short of revolutionary. Imagine the profound impact it had on those living at the time—a people who had always known a separation from the direct presence of God. This direct access to God's presence didn't just completely transform their spiritual lives but also their physical religious practices. But, praise the Lord; the gift of the Holy Spirit and direct access to the Father didn't stop there. It wasn't just for that group of people during that time in history. No, it is for all of us! And now, because of Jesus' sacrifice, we have also been given access to the Father at all times. The One who was and is the atonement for our sins, the perfect sacrifice, enduring our punishment so we might receive His reward. Can I get an Amen?!?





Living Every Day in His Presence



Throughout these 21 days, many of you have shared stories of insight, direction from God, and supernatural encounters. Believe it or not, these supernatural God moments aren't meant to be rare moments but daily experiences. Just look at the life of Jesus. We don't have to look hard to see His daily life was riddled with supernatural moments and God power moves. (For a deeper dive into Jesus' earthly journey, we invite you to dive into our 2023 Dwell Series: A Journey Through the New Testament. Even if it's a journey you have taken before, it is one worth taking again...and again...and again.)

So how did He do it? How did He operate so freely in the supernatural-not just after an intense time of prayer and fasting but every single day and in every single moment He walked with Earth? Was life easier then? The world less corrupt? Far from it! Jesus not only saw it but experienced it firsthand as He was, on more than one occasion, run out of a city or town and even had more than one plot to kill Him raised against Him. When Jesus said in John 16:33 that "In this world you will have trouble..", He wasn't just talking from a place of supernatural knowledge but rather a place of firsthand experience.

We also have a tendency to fool ourselves into believing that Jesus had been given an extra dose of faith or wisdom or power with which to face the chaos of the world around Him. He is, after all, the Son of God. However, scripture tells us clearly that He was sent to this Earth as a baby-fully God and yet fully man-Enduring the difficulties. Embracing the miraculous. And operating in the supernatural. We see this outlined clearly in several places of scripture, but Hebrews 4:15 puts it all so succinctly: "This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin."

So I again ask, how did He do it? If He did, in fact, face the same broken and messy world we face every day, how did He stay so in step with the Father every single day? Unlike you and me, Jesus never tried to put God, a supernatural being, into a proverbial box with natural limitations. He stood firmly on the truth that God was and is the God of the impossible, boldly declaring in Matthew 19:26: "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible."

Far too often, we live our lives with words that say, "I serve a bigger-than-life God," but with actions that tell a very different story. We allow ourselves to get caught up in the "what ifs" that keep us from stepping out and allowing ourselves to be used supernaturally in our day-to-day lives as Jesus was. "What if I ask if I can pray with them, and they say no?" "What if I pray for their healing, and they continue to battle sickness?" "What if...?" "What if...?" "What if...?"

Ever been there? I know I have. But I want you to take a moment to read back over those questions we just read. There is a singular, teeny tiny word that shines a giant spotlight on the problem with the way we are thinking and living. Do you see the word? It's the word "I". "But what if I..." These four seemingly insignificant words serve as a make shift veil to God's presence in our own lives. Yes, the temple veil has been torn, allowing us direct access to the Father. However, we, because of our own personal insecurities, doubts, and fears (more so in ourselves than in Him), have erected a veil of our own which is keeping us quasi-separated from the Lord-Limiting, through our own self-imposed divides, our direct and daily access to Him in "temple moments".



No, we have not literally rebuilt the temple of the Old and New Testament. However, we have lulled ourselves into a rhythm of living our lives as if we must “be in the temple,” the “Holy of Holies,” if you will, in order to truly encounter the power of God’s presence. Somewhere along the way, the move and power of the Holy Spirit has become attached to Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights. To intense moments of fasting and week long revivals. Somewhere along the way, we lost sight of the magnitude of the moments in Matthew 27, when the veil was torn, and Acts 2, when those in the upper room were baptized in the Holy Spirit. These weren’t just momentary moments in history. They were moments that set into motion a movement for God’s people. A new season. A new “lease on life,” if you will. A movement that ripples centuries later into our lives today, making a way for us, here in modern-day America, to live and work and walk in God’s presence every single moment of every single day of our lives! By subconsciously minimizing the true power of His presence, we have inadvertently put limitations on a limitless God, all the while wrestling with frustration when we don’t feel like He is working and moving in power “like He did in the Bible.”

Friends, He hasn’t stopped showing up to the party - we have! He is always there, at the ready with all of the strength, wisdom and power we need in order to hear His voice, follow His leading, and be a part of the supernatural work He desires to accomplish in and through us all. It is us who have stopped listening. Now, I’m not talking about those set aside “Jesus moments”. (Ones much like this time we have just spent in a season of intentional fasting and prayer.) We, as Christians, tend to be pretty good at listening for His voice when that is our only task at hand. But the moment we step out of that “temple moment” and back onto the streets...“Bueller” anyone??

Oh, but just because that is how we have lived up to this point does not mean that it has to stay this way! For just as Jesus made a way for us to enter God's presence, He continually invites us to remain in that sacred space every single day. So, how do we do just that? First and foremost, through the Empowerment of the Holy Spirit

The Empowerment of the Holy Spirit

Jesus' parting promise to the disciples was the gift of the Holy Spirit, who would dwell within us-guiding, empowering, and equipping us for every challenge and mission (Acts 1:8). The baptism of the Holy Spirit, as witnessed in Acts 2, is not just a historical event but a present-day promise for empowerment in God's mission, marking the birth of the Church and the beginning of a new era where the Holy Spirit dwells within each believer-guiding, comforting, and empowering us for God's mission (Acts 2:1-4). Now we know at salvation, the Holy Spirit comes in us like we saw when Jesus spoke to the disciples to receive the Holy Spirit after his resurrection, but what we see here in Acts 2 is a second endowment of power through the Holy Spirit for the advancement of the mission of God.

Now let me take a quick little detour to say that if you've never experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, I encourage you to ask God for this gift. It's not just a gift available to Pastors or preachers or teachers or church elders. It is for everyone who is seeking to live a life fully surrendered to God's purpose and presence. That's you. And that's me. So, if you want to see the incredible impact that the Holy Spirit can make in your life, ask Him for this gift. And over the next couple of weeks, start studying the book of Acts, paying close attention to how God uses such ordinary people (people who are no different from you and me) who have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to do extraordinary things - encouraging your heart and building your faith.

Keeping God in Focus

As we transition back into our "normal" routines, let's challenge ourselves not to lose the perspectives, insights, and habits we've cultivated during this fast. If we could prioritize God over even our basic need for food, we can certainly continue to make sacrifices to keep Him first amidst our busy schedules. Will it be easy? Ummm, that's a big no! But will it be worth it? Without a doubt, 100%, YES!!

The disciplines of prayer, studying Scripture, and listening for the Holy Spirit's guidance are not just for fasting periods; they are the bedrock of a vibrant spiritual life. Let this fasting journey serve as a launching pad into a lifestyle of deep communion with God and dedication to His mission.

Consider how you can integrate these practices into your daily routines going forward. Perhaps it's starting each day with a moment of prayer, studying a scripture verse during your commute, or setting aside regular times to listen for the Holy Spirit's direction. Maybe it means implementing a short-term fast once a week, month, or year as a way to intentionally keep your heart, mind, and spirit in alignment with His. Whatever form it takes, the goal remains the same—to keep our spiritual senses sharp and our hearts attuned to God's presence and voice.

Sharing Your Story Continuing the Journey

Just as was true at the moment of salvation—that moment you decided to surrender your life fully to Christ as your Lord and Savior - your experiences over the last 21 days are powerful testimonies of God's faithfulness and movement in your life. One of the most powerful outcomes of your fasting journey might be the testimonies it provides. Sharing the ways you've seen God move in your life will not only encourage your faith, but can also encourage and inspire others to seek a deeper relationship with Him. Whether it's through personal conversations, social media, or participation in a life group, let your story be a beacon to others of God's faithfulness and power.

We would also love to hear your story so we can celebrate with you all that the Lord has done, and we have made it incredibly easy for you to do just that. Simply visit heritageag.org/mystory and fill out the form provided. We can't wait to hear all about the incredible ways the Lord moved in your life over the past 21 days.

Now, as we near the end of this journey together, I want to leave you with this reminder: This fasting journey isn't the finish line in our pursuit of the Lord but a refueling station for the real race set before us. It is our greatest desire that you will walk away from this time of fasting and prayer with a heart that cries the words of Philippians 3:10-14:

"I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!"

I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us."



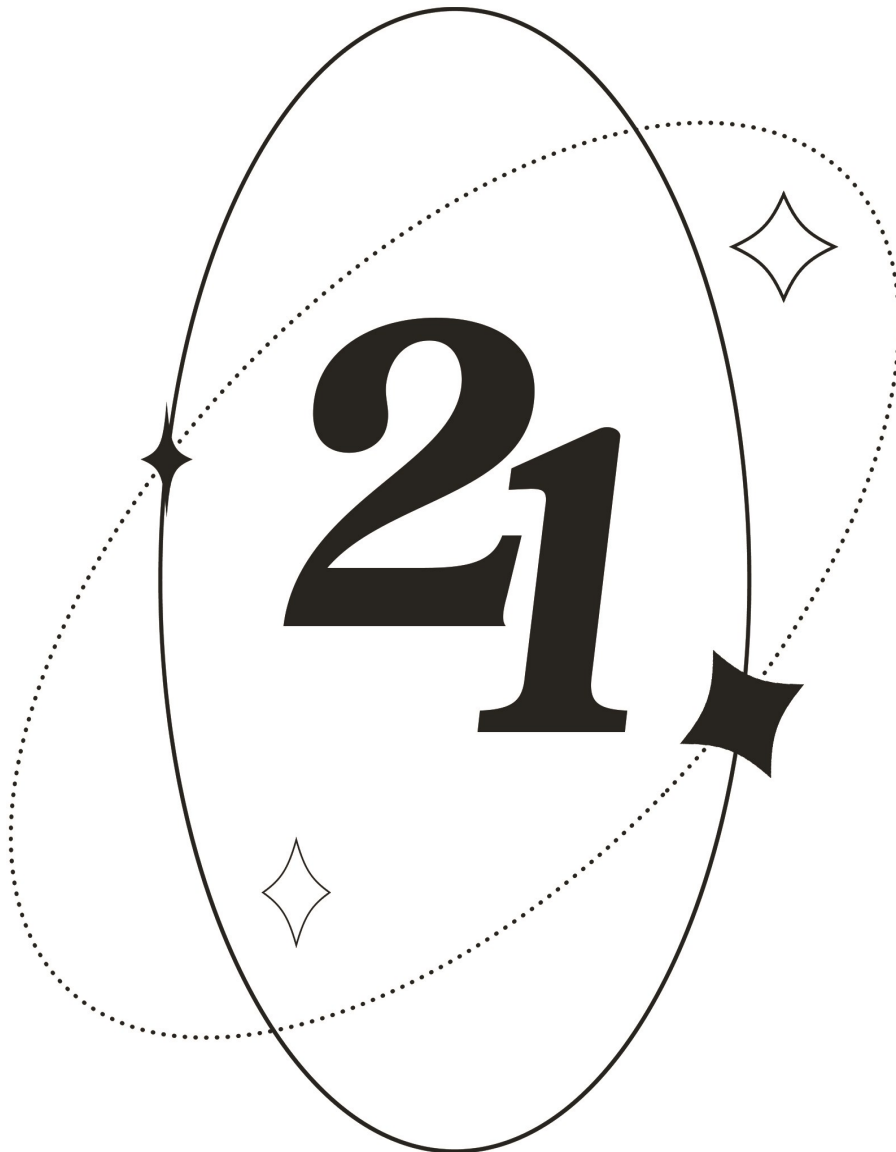
The Starting Line

As you reflect on your fasting journey and the devotional themes we've explored, consider what God might be calling you to next. How has He spoken to you during this time? What steps of faith is He inviting you to take? Whether it's a call to deeper personal devotion, a nudge towards ministry or service, or the courage to share your faith more openly, trust that the same Spirit who empowered the early church is with you, guiding and strengthening you for all that lies ahead.

Also, take time to reflect on the disciplines, insights, and spiritual growth you've experienced. Ask God how He wants you to integrate these into your everyday life. What are the next steps for YOU in your journey of faith and mission with God?

Let's Pray.

"Lord, thank You for the incredible journey we've been on these past 21 days. As we step forward, help us to keep our hearts and lives open to Your presence and leading every day. Empower us by Your Holy Spirit to live out Your mission, sharing the story of Your faithfulness with all we encounter. Amen."





Bonus Materials



FASTING

What To Expect

Here you are. You've made the decision to commit to a 21-day fast, and though you are excited to embark on this journey with the Lord, you are also likely experiencing a few butterflies. If that's you, first, what I want you to do is take a deep breath and relax! Those thoughts, feelings, uncertainties, and nerves are 100% normal! Fasting requires a big step of faith and comes with a lot of unknowns. And though there is no way we can predict exactly what your personal fasting journey will look like, there are several fasting "norms" that we can discuss that will help better prepare you for the ways a fast (especially a long-term fast) may affect you both physically and mentally as the Lord does something new in you and through you spiritually. Since this book is all about a 21-day fast, the "timetable" below will focus on a full 21 days.

DAYS 1-3:

It is during the first 3 days of your fast that you will likely have to fight the mental battle of fasting the most. I think we can all agree—we tend to be creatures of habit. We tend to eat the same things and (for the most part) at the same general times of the day. And just like Pavlov's dogs would salivate at the sound of a ringing bell, our mouths will begin to water at the sight or smell of a delicious cheeseburger, causing our brains to tell us that we're hungry, even if we hadn't felt hungry in the least just moments before!

Just a little heads up: when you are fasting, these moments of desire or craving are heightened even more because of what I call The Law of Want, which can be summed up like this: "I can't have it, so I want it." During this time, it will be your brain telling you you need to eat, even though your body does not yet NEED it. You will be reminded constantly of what you can't have, causing you to want it even more, and setting the stage for the mental battle to ensue. But don't give up—because victory is coming!

DAYS 4-6:

This is, for most, the easiest time of transition as your body and mind adjust to this fasting journey. Why? Because you fought the hard mental battles in days 1-3, and your body hasn't yet switched itself into starvation mode.

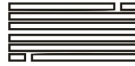
DAYS 7-11:

Somewhere in the range of days 7 to 11, your body will really begin to notice that it is not only no longer receiving the food supply it is accustomed to, but it is, in fact, not receiving a food supply at all! At this time, a biological survival mode switch is flipped, and your body begins to go into starvation mode, eating its own fat reserves. Expect to experience lots of hunger pangs during this phase as your body is now working overtime to signal hunger. Just as days 1-3 were a mental battle, days 7-11 will be a hunger battle.

DAYS 11-21:

Many people think that a fast would get more difficult over time; however, by the time you reach days 11-21, your body goes into a kind of "rest mode," if you will. It has stopped wasting energy trying to send you those hunger signals and is now conserving energy but sending your digestive system into a somewhat dormant state. Many say they even gain energy or feel an energy "boost" as their body preserves energy from those other biological areas that are not being used at the moment.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES



Fasting, while a powerful spiritual discipline, isn't always straightforward. Let's chat about some common hurdles you might encounter on this path and how to gracefully leap over them, with a little help from scripture, of course.

Obstacle 1: Hunger Pangs and Physical Discomfort

Let's be real; when you fast, your body doesn't get the memo that this is a spiritual exercise. Hunger pangs don't care about your spiritual goals. They can be distracting, to say the least, and for some, downright discouraging. Thankfully, Jesus Himself walked out for us in Matthew chapter 4 what it looks like to overcome this very obstacle. Remember Jesus in the wilderness? (Matthew 4:1-2). He fasted for 40 days and nights and faced temptation at His weakest. His response? He leaned on Scripture for strength. The lesson here is not to ignore your physical sensations but to expect them and prepare spiritually and mentally to face them. Use these moments to deepen your prayer life, focusing on God's word for sustenance.

Obstacle 2: Lack of Understanding or Support

It's just a fact-Not everyone will get why you're fasting. You might hear things like, "Why would you do that to yourself?" from well-meaning friends or family who don't understand the spiritual significance of your fast. So, what can you do to help counteract the nay-sayers in your life? Remember these three words: Knowledge Is Power. Dive into scriptures like Isaiah 58, which offers a profound look at God's view on fasting, emphasizing the heart over mere ritual. Share these insights with curious or concerned loved ones. Sometimes, a little biblical context can turn skepticism into support-or at least respect-for your spiritual journey.

Obstacle 3: Losing Focus or Motivation

The Reality is, the initial "fasting zeal" can wear off, especially if you're undertaking a longer fast. The spiritual highs might ebb, leaving you wondering why you started in the first place. One key to overcoming this obstacle is keeping a spiritual journal. Document your prayers, reflections, and any passages that speak to you during this time. Reviewing your journal can reignite your motivation, reminding you of the purpose behind your fast.

Obstacle 4: Misinterpreting the Purpose

It's incredibly easy to see fasting as a divine transaction-fast in exchange for blessings. But that mindset misses the heart of fasting completely. It's not about twisting God's arm but aligning our will with His. During this time, instead of putting such a heavy focus on what you desire FROM the Lord during this time, be intentional to simply focus on Him-focusing on the relationship, not the reward.

Fasting is a time to draw nearer to God, to listen and align your heart with His purposes. Reflect on Joel 2:12-13, which calls for a return to God with all your heart through fasting, weeping, and mourning, emphasizing the internal transformation over external ritual.

Obstacle 5: Feeling Overwhelmed by Guilt or Failure

You will notice that this section is much more lengthy than the previous 4 because this is the big one for most of us. Far too often, we put a lot of pressure on ourselves to live our lives to an unattainable level of perfection, and that remains true for many of us, even in the area of fasting. Fasting is meant to be a time of refreshing, renewal, and reconnection with the Lord, but, at times, we come to the end of a fast feeling guilty or like a failure.

To help us better understand this obstacle, we need to first answer the question, what might cause you to feel something like guilt or failure when coming off of a fast?

1. The breaking of your fast “accidentally” with mindless snacking or eating.
2. The breaking of your fast because you caved to those hunger pains or cravings.
3. The breaking of your fast “intentionally” due to health concerns.
4. Reaching the end of your fast without having experienced the profound spiritual revelations you hoped for.

In each of these scenarios, it’s tempting to view ourselves and our fast as a failure or to let guilt weigh you down. However, in these moments, it is vitally important that we remember, God’s grace is sufficient. 2 Corinthians 12:9 reminds us that His power is made perfect in weakness. So, if you stumble, don’t get bogged down by guilt. Instead, reflect, learn, and lean into His grace, knowing that every step-forward or backward-is a part of your spiritual growth journey.

Once you have addressed the spiritual aspect of this obstacle with the Lord, there is also some practical advice we can offer in helping you move forward.

1. Don’t allow an “accidental” slip up derail your fasting journey. I don’t know about you but I can walk by a bowl of M&M’s, mindlessly grab a small handful, and begin munching away without even thinking. If this happens, **YOU DID NOT FAIL AT FASTING!** Use this “slip up” as a teaching moment-realizing that you need to be more mindful and intentional with your eating habits. It’s time to go off auto-pilot and make sure you are making choices wisely and intentionally in the future.
2. If you find yourself binge eating anything and everything in sight mid-fast in response to those hunger pangs or intense cravings or even find yourself having to break your fast early due to health concerns, **DON’T GIVE UP**, and don’t feel like you have to start over! Instead, assess what caused you to break the fast, make any changes or realignments that need to be made moving forward, and then simply start again.
3. As we have stated several times throughout this book-fasting is not a bargaining chip with God. It is a spiritual discipline in which we disconnect from the noise of life and internally focus on connecting with God. So even if you didn’t receive the miracle, answer, or clear direction you were seeking-take time to reflect on and celebrate all that the Lord **DID** do over the past 21 days. During the fast, did the Lord encourage you and comfort you? Were there moments when you just sat in the Lord’s presence, allowing His peace to wash over you? Did you see God work and move in the lives and situations of others? I have no doubt that you can answer yes to one, if not all, of those questions. This means that even if you didn’t receive that one healing, hear God’s direction in that one area, or see Him work and move in the specific way you have hoped - He. Still. Moved. He still showed up in a mighty and powerful way that only God can. He simply may not have shown up and shown off in the way you had initially hoped.

Now, as for those unanswered prayers-as the lovable character, Dory, from the movie Finding Nemo would likely put it-Just Keep Praying! Why? Because God is always working and moving in our situation-sometimes He’s just working behind the scenes in a way we can’t yet see. But the day of victory is coming! The words of the song “Alive & Breathing” by Matt Maher say it perfectly:

*“Joy still comes in the morning
Hope still walks with the hurting
If you’re still alive and breathing
Praise the Lord
Don’t stop dancing and dreaming
There’s still Good News worth repeating
So lift your head and keep singing
Praise the Lord.”*

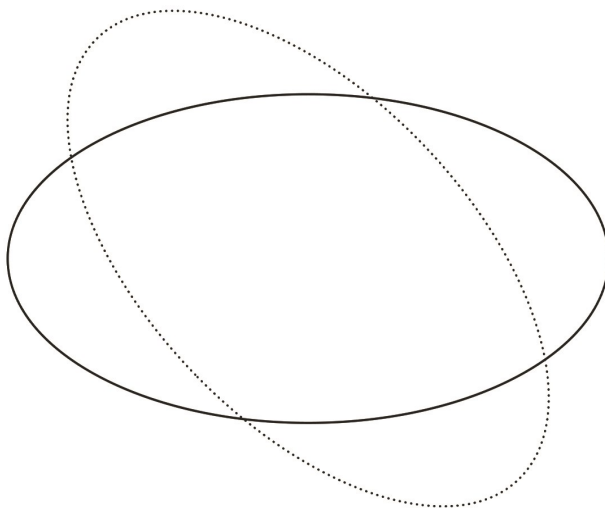
Obstacle 6: Navigating the “What’s Next?”

You did it! You’ve completed your fast. So, now what? There can be a bit of spiritual disorientation after coming off a fast, especially if you’ve had a profound experience. Though there is not a one-size-fits-all answer for post-fast next steps, here are a few suggestions you will want to keep in mind and consider.

#1: Plan for re-entry. Gradually reintroduce foods. Heading to the local buffet on the day you break your fast may seem like a good idea to your taste buds, but you must remember, just as it took your body time to adjust to NOT having it, it also needs the opportunity to adapt to receiving it and digesting it once again. So start light, start small, start slow. If you need some inspiration on what post-fast healthy eating could look like for you, check on Daniel 1.

2: Seek guidance. The spiritual clarity and gains you’ve made and received over the past 21 days are a gift and blessing from the Lord that can and will impact your life far beyond the past 21 days. So, first, if you haven’t done so already, take time to write down all the Lord did in you and spoke to you during your fast and seek Godly wisdom and counsel on how to continue to lean into the words of wisdom, encouragement, healing, etc. that you received. After all, God is a God of order and intentionality. He doesn’t do or say anything just to fill time or space-so whatever work He began in you in the past 21 days, I can promise you it will serve as a launching point for something new, not a finish line.

#3: Pray for wisdom. As is true with every aspect of our walk with the Lord, make a plan, seek wise counsel, but then, before you do anything else, PRAY. Ask the Lord to bless your steps moving forward and pray for a continued sensitivity to His leading as well as a boldness to readily obey when He re-routes you because you were getting off course. Fasting is a journey with its ups and downs, but the key is to keep your eyes on the One who calls you deeper. Remember, it’s not about perfection but progression. Each time you fast, you’re taking steps closer to the heart of God, learning a little more about His will and, hopefully, a lot more about the strength and grace He provides along the way.



MVP's in Training

Encouraging Accounts of some of the Bibles fasting MVP's

Sometimes, we all just need a little extra encouragement. If at any point on this journey, you need a solid reminder of the fact that fasting and prayer really is a spiritual power move, take a moment to reach one of these stories of some fasting MVP's from scripture.

As you read the following passages, take time to make note of three key components of each: The Individuals Need. The Action(s) the Took. And God's Response. I am confident that as you do, you will begin to see a powerful common thread weaving through them all-that when God's people seek Him first and foremost (Matthew 6:33), He comes in with all of His might and power and wisdom and does what only He can do. Moving in ways that far exceed anything that could have been dreamed up in our own limited minds or accomplished in our own limited abilities.



MVP #1: MOSES

Exodus 34:

Then the Lord told Moses, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones. I will write on them the same words that were on the tablets you smashed. Be ready in the morning to climb up Mount Sinai and present yourself to me on the top of the mountain. No one else may come with you. In fact, no one is to appear anywhere on the mountain. Do not even let the flocks or herds graze near the mountain." So Moses chiseled out two tablets of stone like the first ones. Early in the morning he climbed Mount Sinai as the Lord had commanded him, and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. Then the Lord came down in a cloud and stood there with him; and he called out his own name, Yahweh. The Lord passed in front of Moses, calling out,

"Yahweh! The Lord!
The God of compassion and mercy!
I am slow to anger
and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.
I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations.
I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin.
But I do not excuse the guilty.
I lay the sins of the parents upon their children and grandchildren;
the entire family is affected-
even children in the third and fourth generations."

Moses immediately threw himself to the ground and worshiped. And he said, "O Lord, if it is true that I have found favor with you, then please travel with us. Yes, this is a stubborn and rebellious people, but please forgive our iniquity and our sins. Claim us as your own special possession." The Lord replied, "Listen, I am making a covenant with you in the presence of all your people. I will perform miracles that have never been performed anywhere on the earth or in any nation. And all the people around you will see the power of the Lord—the awesome power I will display for you. But listen carefully to everything I command you today. Then I will go ahead of you and drive out the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites."

"Be very careful never to make a treaty with the people who live in the land where you are going. If you do, you will follow their evil ways and be trapped. Instead, you must break down their pagan altars, smash their sacred pillars, and cut down their Asherah poles. You must worship no other gods, for the Lord, whose very name is Jealous, is a God who is jealous about his relationship with you."

"You must not make a treaty of any kind with the people living in the land. They lust after their gods, offering sacrifices to them. They will invite you to join them in their sacrificial meals, and you will go with them. Then you will accept their daughters, who sacrifice to other gods, as wives for your sons. And they will seduce your sons to commit adultery against me by worshipping other gods. You must not make any gods of molten metal for yourselves."

"You must celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread. For seven days the bread you eat must be made without yeast, just as I commanded you. Celebrate this festival annually at the appointed time in early spring, in the month of Abib, for that is the anniversary of your departure from Egypt."

"The firstborn of every animal belongs to me, including the firstborn males from your herds of cattle and your flocks of sheep and goats. A firstborn donkey may be bought back from the Lord by presenting a lamb or young goat in its place. But if you do not buy it back, you must break its neck. However, you must buy back every firstborn son."

"No one may appear before me without an offering."

"You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but on the seventh day you must stop working, even during the seasons of plowing and harvest."

"You must celebrate the Festival of Harvest with the first crop of the wheat harvest, and celebrate the Festival of the Final Harvest at the end of the harvest season. Three times each year every man in Israel must appear before the Sovereign, the Lord, the God of Israel. I will drive out the other nations ahead of you and expand your territory, so no one will covet and conquer your land while you appear before the Lord your God three times each year."

"You must not offer the blood of my sacrificial offerings together with any baked goods containing yeast. And none of the meat of the Passover sacrifice may be kept over until the next morning."

"As you harvest your crops, bring the very best of the first harvest to the house of the Lord your God."

"You must not cook a young goat in its mother's milk."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write down all these instructions, for they represent the terms of the covenant I am making with you and with Israel."

Moses remained there on the mountain with the Lord forty days and forty nights. In all that time he ate no bread and drank no water. And the Lord wrote the terms of the covenant—the Ten Commandments—on the stone tablets.

When Moses came down Mount Sinai carrying the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, he wasn't aware that his face had become radiant because he had spoken to the Lord. So when Aaron and the people of Israel saw the radiance of Moses' face, they were afraid to come near him.

But Moses called out to them and asked Aaron and all the leaders of the community to come over, and he talked with them. Then all the people of Israel approached him, and Moses gave them all the instructions the Lord had given him on Mount Sinai. When Moses finished speaking with them, he covered his face with a veil. But whenever he went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with the Lord, he would remove the veil until he came out again. Then he would give the people whatever instructions the Lord had given him, and the people of Israel would see the radiant glow of his face. So he would put the veil over his face until he returned to speak with the Lord.



MVP #2: DANIEL

Daniel 1:1-14

During the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. The Lord gave him victory over King Jehoiakim of Judah and permitted him to take some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God. So Nebuchadnezzar took them back to the land of Babylonia and placed them in the treasure-house of his god.

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives. "Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men," he said. "Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon." The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. The chief of staff renamed them with these Babylonian names:

Daniel was called Belteshazzar.

Hananiah was called Shadrach.

Mishael was called Meshach.

Azariah was called Abednego.

But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods. Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel. But he responded, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has ordered that you eat this food and wine. If you become pale and thin compared to the other youths your age, I am afraid the king will have me beheaded."

Daniel spoke with the attendant who had been appointed by the chief of staff to look after Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. "Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water," Daniel said. "At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king's food. Then make your decision in light of what you see." The attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days.

Daniel 10:1-14

In the third year of the reign of King Cyrus of Persia, Daniel (also known as Belteshazzar) had another vision. He understood that the vision concerned events certain to happen in the future—times of war and great hardship.

When this vision came to me, I, Daniel, had been in mourning for three whole weeks. All that time I had eaten no rich food. No meat or wine crossed my lips, and I used no fragrant lotions until those three weeks had passed.

On April 23, as I was standing on the bank of the great Tigris River, I looked up and saw a man dressed in linen clothing, with a belt of pure gold around his waist. His body looked like a precious gem. His face flashed like lightning, and his eyes flamed like torches. His arms and feet shone like polished bronze, and his voice roared like a vast multitude of people.

Only I, Daniel, saw this vision. The men with me saw nothing, but they were suddenly terrified and ran away to hide. So I was left there all alone to see this amazing vision. My strength left me, my face grew deathly pale, and I felt very weak. Then I heard the man speak, and when I heard the sound of his voice, I fainted and lay there with my face to the ground.

Just then a hand touched me and lifted me, still trembling, to my hands and knees. And the man said to me, "Daniel, you are very precious to God, so listen carefully to what I have to say to you. Stand up, for I have been sent to you." When he said this to me, I stood up, still trembling.

Then he said, "Don't be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day you began to pray for understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer. But for twenty-one days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the archangels, came to help me, and I left him there with the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia. Now I am here to explain what will happen to your people in the future, for this vision concerns a time yet to come."



MVP #3: EZRA

Ezra 8: 15-36

I assembled the exiles at the Ahava Canal, and we camped there for three days while I went over the lists of the people and the priests who had arrived. I found that not one Levite had volunteered to come along. So I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, who were leaders of the people. I also sent for Joiarib and Elnathan, who were men of discernment. I sent them to Iddo, the leader of the Levites at Casiphia, to ask him and his relatives and the Temple servants to send us ministers for the Temple of God at Jerusalem.

Since the gracious hand of our God was on us, they sent us a man named Sherebiah, along with eighteen of his sons and brothers. He was a very astute man and a descendant of Mahli, who was a descendant of Levi son of Israel. They also sent Hashabiah, together with Jeshaiiah from the descendants of Merari, and twenty of his sons and brothers, and 220 Temple servants. The Temple servants were assistants to the Levites—a group of Temple workers first instituted by King David and his officials. They were all listed by name.

And there by the Ahava Canal, I gave orders for all of us to fast and humble ourselves before our God. We prayed that he would give us a safe journey and protect us, our children, and our goods as we traveled. For I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to accompany us and protect us from enemies along the way. After all, we had told the king, “Our God’s hand of protection is on all who worship him, but his fierce anger rages against those who abandon him.” So we fasted and earnestly prayed that our God would take care of us, and he heard our prayer.

I appointed twelve leaders of the priests—Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten other priests— to be in charge of transporting the silver, the gold, the gold bowls, and the other items that the king, his council, his officials, and all the people of Israel had presented for the Temple of God. I weighed the treasure as I gave it to them and found the totals to be as follows:

24 tons of silver,
7,500 pounds of silver articles,
7,500 pounds of gold,
20 gold bowls, equ value to 1,000 gold coins,
2 fine articles of polished bronze, as precious as gold.

And I said to these priests, “You and these treasures have been set apart as holy to the Lord. This silver and gold is a voluntary offering to the Lord, the God of our ancestors. Guard these treasures well until you present them to the leading priests, the Levites, and the leaders of Israel, who will weigh them at the storerooms of the Lord’s Temple in Jerusalem.” So the priests and the Levites accepted the task of transporting these treasures of silver and gold to the Temple of our God in Jerusalem.

We broke camp at the Ahava Canal on April 19 and started off to Jerusalem. And the gracious hand of our God protected us and saved us from enemies and bandits along the way. So we arrived safely in Jerusalem, where we rested for three days.

On the fourth day after our arrival, the silver, gold, and other valuables were weighed at the Temple of our God and entrusted to Meremoth son of Uriah the priest and to Eleazar son of Phinehas, along with Jozabad son of Jeshua and Noadiah son of Binnui—both of whom were Levites. Everything was accounted for by number and weight, and the total weight was officially recorded.

Then the exiles who had come out of captivity sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel. They presented twelve bulls for all the people of Israel, as well as ninety-six rams and seventy-seven male lambs. They also offered twelve male goats as a sin offering. All this was given as a burnt offering to the Lord. The king’s decrees were delivered to his highest officers and the governors of the province west of the Euphrates River, who then cooperated by supporting the people and the Temple of God.





MVP #4: ESTHER

Esther 3:1-6

Some time later King Xerxes promoted Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite over all the other nobles, making him the most powerful official in the empire. All the king's officials would bow down before Haman to show him respect whenever he passed by, for so the king had commanded. But Mordecai refused to bow down or show him respect.

Then the palace officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why are you disobeying the king's command?" They spoke to him day after day, but still he refused to comply with the order. So they spoke to Haman about this to see if he would tolerate Mordecai's conduct, since Mordecai had told them he was a Jew.

When Haman saw that Mordecai would not bow down or show him respect, he was filled with rage. He had learned of Mordecai's nationality, so he decided it was not enough to lay hands on Mordecai alone. Instead, he looked for a way to destroy all the Jews throughout the entire empire of Xerxes.

Esther 4

When Mordecai learned about all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on burlap and ashes, and went out into the city, crying with a loud and bitter wail. He went as far as the gate of the palace, for no one was allowed to enter the palace gate while wearing clothes of mourning. And as news of the king's decree reached all the provinces, there was great mourning among the Jews. They fasted, wept, and wailed, and many people lay in burlap and ashes.

When Queen Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her about Mordecai, she was deeply distressed. She sent clothing to him to replace the burlap, but he refused it. Then Esther sent for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs who had been appointed as her attendant. She ordered him to go to Mordecai and find out what was troubling him and why he was in mourning. So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the square in front of the palace gate.

Mordecai told him the whole story, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. Mordecai gave Hathach a copy of the decree issued in Susa that called for the death of all Jews. He asked Hathach to show it to Esther and explain the situation to her. He also asked Hathach to direct her to go to the king to beg for mercy and plead for her people. So Hathach returned to Esther with Mordecai's message.

Then Esther told Hathach to go back and relay this message to Mordecai: "All the king's officials and even the people in the provinces know that anyone who appears before the king in his inner court without being invited is doomed to die unless the king holds out his gold scepter. And the king has not called for me to come to him for thirty days." So Hathach gave Esther's message to Mordecai.

Mordecai sent this reply to Esther: "Don't think for a moment that because you're in the palace you will escape when all other Jews are killed. If you keep quiet at a time like this, deliverance and relief for the Jews will arise from some other place, but you and your relatives will die. Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?"

Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die."

So Mordecai went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

Esther 5:14

Haman's wife, Zeresh, and all his friends suggested, "Set up a sharpened pole that stands seventy-five feet tall, and in the morning ask the king to impale Mordecai on it. When this is done, you can go on your merry way to the banquet with the king." This pleased Haman, and he ordered the pole set up.

Esther 6:1-10

That night the king had trouble sleeping, so he ordered an attendant to bring the book of the history of his reign so it could be read to him. In those records he discovered an account of how Mordecai had exposed the plot of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the eunuchs who guarded the door to the king's private quarters. They had plotted to assassinate King Xerxes.

"What reward or recognition did we ever give Mordecai for this?" the king asked.

His attendants replied, "Nothing has been done for him."

"Who is that in the outer court?" the king inquired. As it happened, Haman had just arrived in the outer court of the palace to ask the king to impale Mordecai on the pole he had prepared.

So the attendants replied to the king, "Haman is out in the court."

"Bring him in," the king ordered. So Haman came in, and the king said, "What should I do to honor a man who truly pleases me?"

Haman thought to himself, "Whom would the king wish to honor more than me?" So he replied, "If the king wishes to honor someone, he should bring out one of the king's own royal robes, as well as a horse that the king himself has ridden—one with a royal emblem on its head. Let the robes and the horse be handed over to one of the king's most noble officials. And let him see that the man whom the king wishes to honor is dressed in the king's robes and led through the city square on the king's horse. Have the official shout as they go, 'This is what the king does for someone he wishes to honor!'"

"Excellent!" the king said to Haman. "Quick! Take the robes and my horse, and do just as you have said for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the gate of the palace. Leave out nothing you have suggested!"

Though this portion of our book contains four powerful accounts of the power of prayer and fasting, there are so many more accounts to discover in scripture, through the stories of others in our lives, and in your life personally through your own seasons of prayer and fasting. As we encourage our hearts and prepare our spirits for the story of victory the Lord is writing for each one of us I can't help but think of the song we sing regularly on Sunday mornings, Same God.

*"I'm calling on the God of Jacob, whose love endures through generations.
I know that you will keep your covenant.*

*I'm calling on the God of Moses. The one who opened up the oceans.
I need you now to do the same thing for me."*

He did it before, and we know He can (and will) do it again!

PRAYER NEEDS

Use the space below to write your prayer needs.
Write your needs in blue or black ink, and when the Lord
answers, directs, speaks, write what He said in red.

SPECIAL THANKS

We would be remiss if we were to close out this book without offering an extra special THANK YOU to all who contributed their time and talents in helping write the 21 Days of Prayer Devotional included in this book. It has been so fun being on this writing journey, with you and we can't wait to see what new and exciting adventure the Lord has for us in the future!

Adam Weinberg

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Jenn Kopp

Kristin Gilbreth

Mandey Puckett

Rae Johnson

Robert & Lisa Baxter

Steve Kopp

Tara Poche

Tim Puckett

"You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others." 2 Timothy 2:2



