

A large, solid red circle is positioned on the left side of the image, partially overlapping the text '21 days'.

**21**  
**days**

**prayer &  
fasting**

# PRAY FIRST

Dear Friend,

Since Active Church first began, Stacy and I have set our hearts to be people of prayer. Our rally cry has been, "Pray First." In every situation, whether good or bad, we try to pray before we act. People often act first and then want God to bail them out of that situation, but prayer should be our first response, not our last resort.

Understanding the necessity of prayer is not enough — for it to become a part of our life, it needs to become something we look forward to doing. I'm convinced most people don't enjoy prayer because they have never been taught how to pray. That's where this simple prayer guide can help. Using several prayer models from the Bible and having some guides to make prayer more personal, this booklet is designed to bring joy into your time with God. When you discover the beauty of daily conversation with Him, you'll experience the presence of God that will change your life.

Once you learn to pray, prayer can become a part of everyday life. And then...

**Before the day begins...**

**Before you go to bed...**

**Before you go to work or school...**

**Before you send that text...**

**Before you eat, drive or travel...**

**When bad things happen...**

**Before bad things happen...**

**In every situation — PRAY FIRST!**

Prayer changes everything!



Pastor Adam Magana

## **PURPOSE**

We are making it a priority to seek God first through the prayer and fasting. As a church, we collectively gather together in January and August through a 21 Days of Prayer. These two months begin the new seasons for the year. Together as a family, we will seek God first, trusting God to make a difference in our lives, our church, and our world.

## **TYPES OF FASTS**

Your personal fast should present a level of challenge, but it is very important to know your body, your options, and most importantly, to seek God in prayer and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

### **COMPLETE FAST**

In this type of fast, you drink only liquids, typically water with light juices as an option.

### **SELECTIVE FAST**

This type of fast involves removing certain elements from your diet. One example of a selective fast is the Daniel Fast, during which you remove meat, sweets, and bread from your diet and consume water and juice for fluids and fruits and vegetables for food.

### **PARTIAL FAST**

This fast is sometimes called the “Jewish Fast” and involves abstaining from eating any type of food in the morning and afternoon. This can either correlate to specific times of the day, such as 6:00 am to 3:00 pm, or from sunup to sundown.

### **SOUL FAST**

This fast is a great option if you do not have much experience fasting food, have health issues that prevent you from fasting food, or if you wish to refocus certain areas of your life that are out of balance. For example, you might choose to stop using social media or watching television for the duration of the fast and then carefully bring that element back into your life in healthy doses at the conclusion of the fast.

## **TIMING OF A FAST**

We encourage fasting for 21 days each year in the month of January. This is part of 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, a season of focused prayer as a church family. You may also choose to fast at other times during the year for your own spiritual development. It's very typical to fast a single meal, a whole day, or three days or more. The timing of your fast is not as important as the strength of your focus on God as you fast.

## S.O.A.P

A great, simple way to journal your devotions is to use the SOAP method.\*

Our prayer for you over the next 21 days is that your passion for God and His word will be ignited, and that you will develop a heart that captures and lives God's dreams for you.

As you read these daily devotionals, keep in mind the following three things:

- **Read daily**
- **Read prayerfully**
- **Read expectantly**

## S.O.A.P STANDS FOR:

### Scripture

Read the daily passage and then identify a scripture from the passage that stands out to you.

### Observation

Focus on that scripture and ask the Holy Spirit to show you what God is saying.

### Application

How does this apply to your life right now?

### Prayer

Thank God for revealing His truths to you. Remember, prayer is a two-way conversation, so listen for what God wants to say to you.

We encourage you to read the passages and prepare your own SOAP in addition to what has been provided. God will definitely reveal Himself and His purposes to you—He is eager to.

## WE WANT TO PRAY WITH YOU

During this series, share your prayer requests with us, and we will pray for them as a leadership. Post them on Facebook and Instagram and tag them using the hashtag #ACTIVE21DOP.



## 7 BASIC STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL FASTING AND PRAYER

By Bill Bright

I believe the power of fasting as it relates to prayer is the spiritual atomic bomb that our Lord has given us to destroy the strongholds of evil and usher in a great revival and spiritual harvest around the world. Increasingly, I have been gripped with a growing sense of urgency to call upon God to send revival to our beloved country. In the spring and summer of 1994, I had a growing conviction that God wanted me to fast and pray for forty days for revival in America and for the fulfillment of the Great Commission in obedience to our Lord's command.

At first, I questioned, "Is this truly God's call for me?" Forty days was a long time to go without solid food. But with each passing day, His call grew stronger and clearer. Finally, I was convinced. God was calling me to fast, and He would not make such a call without a specific reason or purpose. With this conviction, I entered my fast with excitement and expectancy mounting in my heart, praying, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" I believe such a long fast was a sovereign call of God because of the magnitude of the sins of America and of the Church. The Lord impressed that upon my heart, as well as the urgent need to help accelerate the fulfillment of the Great Commission in this generation.

As I began my fast, I was not sure I could continue for forty days. But my confidence was in the Lord to help me. Each day His presence encouraged me to continue. The longer I fasted, the more I sensed the presence of the Lord. The Holy Spirit refreshed my soul and spirit, and I experienced the joy of the Lord as seldom before. Biblical truths leaped at me from the pages of God's Word. My faith soared as I humbled myself and cried out to God and rejoiced in His presence.

This proved to be the most important forty days of my life. As I waited upon the Lord, the Holy Spirit gave me the assurance that America and much of the world will, before the end of the year 2000, experience a great spiritual awakening. This divine visit from heaven will kindle the greatest spiritual harvest in the history of the Church. But before God comes in revival power, the Holy Spirit will call millions of God's people to repent, fast, and pray in the spirit of 2 Chronicles 7:14:

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. The scope of this revival depends on how believers in America and the rest of the world respond to this call. I have spent fifty years studying God's Word and listening to His voice, and His message could not have been clearer.

This handy reference guide, *Seven Basic Steps to Successful Fasting and Prayer*, will help make your time with the Lord more spiritually rewarding. I encourage you to keep it with you during your fast and refer to it often because it gives easy-to-follow suggestions on how to begin your fast, what to do while you fast, and how to end your fast properly.

During my forty-day fast, God impressed me to pray that two million Christians in North America will fast for forty days by the end of the year 2000 and pray for national and worldwide revival and for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. I urge you to prayerfully consider this challenge.

Before you fast, I encourage you to read my book, *The Coming Revival: America's Call to Fast, Pray, and "Seek God's Face."* It will help equip you for the coming spiritual awakening.

## HOW TO BEGIN YOUR FAST

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

### STEP 1: SET YOUR OBJECTIVE

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

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

### STEP 2: MAKE YOUR COMMITMENT

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

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

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

### STEP 3: PREPARE YOURSELF SPIRITUALLY

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

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

### STEP 4: PREPARE YOURSELF PHYSICALLY

Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision.

Physical preparation makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so that you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer.

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

### WHILE YOU FAST

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

- o Avoid drugs, even natural herbal drugs and homeopathic remedies. Medication should be withdrawn only with your physician's supervision.
- o Limit your activity.
- o Exercise only moderately. Walk one to three miles each day if convenient and comfortable.
- o Rest as much as your schedule will permit.
- o Prepare yourself for temporary mental discomforts, such as impatience, crankiness, and anxiety.

- o Expect some physical discomforts, especially on the second day. You may have fleeting hunger pains, dizziness, or the “blahs.” Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches. Physical annoyances may also include weakness, tiredness, or sleeplessness.  
The first two or three days are usually the hardest. As you continue to fast, you will likely experience a sense of well-being both physically and spiritually. However, should you feel hunger pains, increase your liquid intake.

## **STEP 5: PUT YOURSELF ON A SCHEDULE**

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

### **MORNING**

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

### **NOON**

- Return to prayer and God’s Word.
- Take a short prayer walk.
- Spend time in intercessory prayer for your community’s and nation’s leaders, for the world’s unreached millions, for your family or special needs.

### **EVENING**

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

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

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



### **5 A.M. - 8 A.M.**

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

### **10:30 A.M. - NOON**

- Fresh vegetable juice made from lettuce, celery, and carrots in three equal parts.

### **2:30 P.M. - 4 P.M.**

- Herb tea with a drop of honey. Avoid black tea or any tea with caffeine.

### **6 P.M. - 8:30 P.M.**

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

### **TIPS ON JUICE FASTING**

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

## **BREAKING YOUR FAST**

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

## **STEP 6: END YOUR FAST GRADUALLY**

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

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

- Break an extended water fast with fruit such as watermelon.
- While continuing to drink fruit or vegetable juices, add the following:
- First day: Add a raw salad.
- Second day: Add baked or boiled potato, no butter or seasoning.
- Third day: Add a steamed vegetable.

- Thereafter: Begin to reintroduce your normal diet.
- Gradually return to regular eating with several small snacks during the first few days. Start with a little soup and fresh fruit such as watermelon and cantaloupe. Advance to a few tablespoons of solid foods such as raw fruits and vegetables or a raw salad and baked potato.

## STEP 7: EXPECT RESULTS

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

A single fast, however, is not a spiritual cure-all. Just as we need fresh infillings of the Holy Spirit daily, we also need new times of fasting before God. A 24-hour fast each week has been greatly rewarding to many Christians.

It takes time to build your spiritual fasting muscles. If you fail to make it through your first fast, do not be discouraged. You may have tried to fast too long the first time out, or you may need to strengthen your understanding and resolve. As soon as possible, undertake another fast until you do succeed. God will honor you for your faithfulness.

I encourage you to join me in fasting and prayer again and again until we truly experience revival in our homes, our churches, our beloved nation, and throughout the world.

# CREATING A LIFESTYLE OF PRAYER

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed.

MARK 1:35

Prayer is most effective when it isn't something we do every now and then, but when it's a lifestyle we cultivate. To understand how to have a lifestyle of prayer, we can look at the example Jesus gave during His life on earth.

## **HAVE A CERTAIN TIME**

Jesus got up early in the morning to spend time with His Heavenly Father. Make a daily appointment with God — whether it's first thing in the morning, at lunch, or in the evening — and faithfully keep it.

## **HAVE A CERTAIN PLACE**

Jesus had a specific place He went to pray. Having a designated place to pray helps us remove distractions and frees us to worship and pray out loud.

## **HAVE A CERTAIN PLAN**

When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He gave them a prayer outline. We call it “The Lord’s Prayer.” This outline, along with several other tools, is available in this guide. As we pray every day, our plans for our prayer time can vary, maybe including worship music, Bible reading, and quiet time to listen to God. It doesn't always have to look the same; it just helps when we have a plan for connecting regularly with God.



**FOCUS ON**  
**faith**



# DAY 1

2 SAMUEL 23:20

## “STALK OR BE STALKED”

Scripture doesn't explain what Benaiah was doing or where he was going when he crossed paths with the lion. We don't know the time of day or his frame of mind. But Scripture does reveal his reaction, and it was a gutsy one.

Put yourself in Benaiah's snowshoes.

Your vision is obscured by falling snow and frozen breath. Out of the corner of your eye you detect movement. Pupils dilate. Muscles flex. Adrenaline rushes. It's a prowling lion stalking its prey, you. In the wild, man vs. lion scripts the same way every time. Man runs, lion chases, King of the Beasts eats manwich for lunch. But Benaiah flips the script. That's what courage does! I don't know if it was the look in his eye or the spear in his hand, but the lion turns tail and Benaiah gives chase.

He tracks paw prints in the freshly fallen snow, finally coming to the place where the ground has given way beneath the lion's five-hundred-pound frame. Yellow eyes glare back from out of the pit. Benaiah takes a leap, disappearing into the darkness. A deafening roar echoes off the walls of the cavernous pit, followed by a bloodcurdling battle cry.

Then silence, dead silence.

What has happened? Who has won?

At last a human form reaches up and climbs out of the pit. Drops of blood color the snow crimson. Claw marks crisscross Benaiah's spear arm.

Against all odds, the valiant warrior from Kabzeel has earned an epic victory.

In every dream journey, there comes a moment when you have to quit living as if the purpose of life is to arrive safely at death. You have to go after a dream that is destined to fail without divine intervention. You have to go big or go home.

**You have to take the road less traveled or settle for status quo.**

**You have to bite the bullet or turn your back on your dreams.**

*Chase the Lion devotional by Mark Batterson*

If you find yourself in a pit with a lion on a snowy day, you've got a decision to make. A decision that will determine your destiny. You can run away from what you are afraid of, but you'll be running the rest of your life. Or you can face your fears, taking a flying leap of faith, and chase the lion!

## **REFLECTION**

What is your "lion"? What are you going to do with it?

## **PRAYER**

Dear Father, I trust that with your strength, I can overcome my lion. I thank you that I will conquer my lion this year. Thank you for your wisdom and your strength.

# DAY 2

2 CORINTHIANS 10:5

## “FROM DREAMING TO DOING”

Growing up, I heard today's verse interpreted in negative terms. Take sinful thoughts captive and keep them out of your mind. And that is half the battle. But if we focus on the negative implications while ignoring the positive possibilities, it becomes a half-truth. It's also about capturing creative thoughts and keeping them in our minds. Simply put, it's about stewarding every idea inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Every dream is created twice. The first creation is mental. Every invention, every business, every building, every painting is conceived in the right-brain imagination first. It's nothing more than a single-cell idea at that point. The second creation is physical. You make it obedient to Christ via blood, sweat, and tears.

If your dream is a book, you make it obedient with a keyboard.

If your dream is playing professional sport, you make it obedient at the gym.

If your dream is making music, you make it obedient one note at a time.

Your dreams will never exceed your imagination. You can't achieve what you don't believe. So idea generation is important. But idea execution is where the rubber meets the road.

I like thinkers. They make me think. And I applaud their ability to plot. But I love doers even more. They inspire me to action. And it's the plodders, not the plotters, who make things happen.

God isn't going to say, "Well planned, good and faithful servant." He won't say well thought, well said, or well strategized either. There is one commendation: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Setting goals is fun and games. Going after them is another matter. Without perspiration to match your inspiration, your dream imagined will turn into a dream deferred.

**What do you need to start?**

**What are you waiting for?**

Maybe it's a diet. Maybe it's a graduate program. Maybe it's a church or a business. Whatever it is, the hardest part of finishing is starting. Going after a dream is like riding a bike—you've got to get a little momentum to really get going.  
Consider this your push.

## **REFLECTION**

Where do you stand on the road to execution of your God-given idea?

## **PRAYER**

Father, I thank you that this year is dedicated to pursuing my God-sized dreams. Father, give me dreams for my life and provide with the 'God-moments' to seize them.



# DAY 3

PROVERBS 16:18

PROVERBS 18:12

## **“THE PROLOGUE TO EVERY SUCCESS STORY”**

The American Puritan preacher Cotton Mather invited a young Benjamin Franklin over for dinner one night and showed him his library. As they walked through a narrow passage into the library, Mather yelled back at Franklin, “Stoop! Stoop!”

Franklin didn’t understand the exhortation until it was too late, bumping his head on a low beam.

Mather turned the situation into a sermon. “Let this be a caution to you not always to hold your head so high. Stoop, young man, stoop—as you go through this world—and you’ll miss many hard thumps.”

Many years later, Franklin told Mather’s son that he never forgot that moment. “This advice, thus beat into my head, has frequently been of use to me,” said Franklin. “And I often think of it when I see pride mortified and misfortunes brought upon people by carrying their heads too high.”

One of the defining moments of my life was getting cut down to size by a summer intern. I made a prideful statement about our church, National Community Church, and he called me on it. At first I was defensive. But now I’m so grateful he had the courage to call me out.

I certainly don’t want to give the impression that I’ve conquered pride. Like each of the seven deadly sins, pride has nine lives. You have to fight the battle every single day, but there are decisive victories. And that was one of them for me.

There is a sequence in Scripture that is sacrosanct. Pride goes before destruction. Likewise, humility comes before honor. In the spiritual order of things, it’s inviolable.

**Pride is the first chapter in the book of failure.**

**Humility is the first chapter in the book of success.**

God won't put you in a position of leadership until you take a posture of servanthood. So as you're pursuing your God-sized, God-given dream, remember the attitude you need to keep from beginning to end. Stoop!

And meanwhile here's a tip. There are two ways to get humility. You can humble yourself or let God humble you. Choose the former so you don't have to experience the latter.

## **REFLECTION**

How can you make yourself less conspicuous so that others can see God in you more clearly?

## **PRAYER**

Father, I thank you for humility. I thank you that what is most important is others seeing you more than me. I lay my attitude aside in favor of becoming a servant.

# DAY 4

## REVELATION 3:7

### “GOD’S GREATEST PRE-MOVES”

For thirteen years, National Community Church met in the movie theaters at DC’s Union Station, where a hundred thousand people pass through every day. That not only put us in the middle of the marketplace, it put us on the map. Not many churches have their own metro stop, train station, or taxi stand that drops off at their front door!

That golden opportunity started with a phone call informing me that Giddings School, the public school where we met, was closing its doors because of fire code violations. My immediate reaction was fear because it put us on the verge of becoming a homeless church. But I soon discovered that some of God’s best pre moves are closed doors.

As I look back, I laugh at the fact that I was so scared when the doors to Giddings School closed. I even have the journal entry where I wrote that we had been “backed into a corner.” It felt like we had fallen into a pit with a lion on a snowy day. I couldn’t see a way out at the time.

And the same thing happened when I got a phone call informing me that the movie theaters at Union Station were shutting down thirteen years later. At first I was scared. How do you relocate a congregation that has grown into the thousands? Yet in the years since Union Station closed its doors, God has given us prime properties of our own worth more than \$50 million. That’s unbelievable to me, and it’s no coincidence that it started with a closed door.

Think about Revelation 3:7: “What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.” I love the first half of that promise. The second half? Not so much. But you can’t claim half of God’s promises. It’s a package deal.

If you’re like me, you love open doors. But some of the greatest miracles in my life—and I bet in yours—have started with a closed door. So praise God for both!

Now let me shift the metaphor to give you some encouragement if you’re feeling worried right now:

God won’t put you in a position of leadership until you take a posture of servanthood. So as you’re pursuing your God-sized, God-given dream, remember the attitude you need to keep from beginning to end. Stoop!

And meanwhile here’s a tip. There are two ways to get humility. You can humble yourself or let God humble you. Choose the former so you don’t have to experience the latter.

## **REFLECTION**

How can you make yourself less conspicuous so that others can see God in you more clearly?

## **PRAYER**

Father, I thank you for humility. I thank you that what is most important is others seeing you more than me. I lay my attitude aside in favor of becoming a servant.



# DAY 5

GENESIS 50:20

## “DEALING WITH WOULD-BE DREAM DESTROYERS”

For thirteen years, National Community Church met in the movie theaters at DC’s Union Station, where Remember the story of Joseph? His heartless brothers fake his death, selling him to human traffickers. Things go from bad to worse, and Joseph ends up in an Egyptian dungeon. Thirteen years later, in the most amazing rise to political power ever, Joseph becomes Pharaoh’s right-hand man. That’s when his brothers come begging for food. But instead of taking revenge on his brothers, Joseph says, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”

Let me reverse-engineer this.

Do you remember why Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery in the first place? The short answer is Genesis 37:8: “They hated him all the more because of his dream.” They mockingly called Joseph “the dreamer” (verse 19).

Your dreams will inspire many people, no doubt. But your dreams will also summon opposition. They will cause a wide variety of reactions, including jealousy and anger. Some people might even want to kill you because of them. Why? Because you are disrupting the status quo.

Every dreamer has to deal with naysayers, and I’ve had more than my fair share. So let me tell what I’ve learned about dealing with criticism. First of all, don’t let an arrow of criticism pierce your heart unless it first passes through the filter of Scripture. Second, you’ve got to come to terms with the fact that you can please all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time, but you cannot please all of the people all of the time.

You’re going to offend someone. You’ve got to decide who. My advice? Offend Pharisees, those who nitpick and belittle while walking apart from the Spirit of God. Jesus did this very kind of offending with intentionality and regularity.

Your dream is going to ruffle some feathers, but don’t play chicken. Operate in a spirit of bold humility, knowing that God goes before you. He turns the harm others would do to you into the kind of good that only he can accomplish.

And remember this: a compliment from a fool is really an insult, and an insult from a fool is really a compliment. Make sure you consider the source. And never abandon the dream.

## **REFLECTION**

What kind of criticism or opposition have you been receiving? How do you need to respond to it?

## **PRAYER**

Thank you Father for opposition! Thank you that every opposition is my set up for my God-sized dreams to be accomplished.

# DAY 6

1 SAMUEL 7:12

## “SO FAR SO GOD”

After the Israelites pulled off an upset victory over the Philistines, the prophet Samuel built an altar and named it Ebenezer, signifying that the Lord had helped them up to that point. The altar was a way of saying to the people, “The God who did it before can do it again.”

We all need Ebenezers. Reminders that the God who got us here will get us there. That the God who did this will do that. An Ebenezer is a way of recognizing and celebrating the success God has given us along the way in pursuing our dream.

After our church built our coffeehouse on Capitol Hill, we decided to name it Ebenezers. We were afraid that some people would associate it with Ebenezer Scrooge, but it was a risk worth taking. There were so many miracles in the process of purchasing, rezoning, and building our coffeehouse that we wanted to name it what it was.

On our coffee sleeves at Ebenezers, there is a Scripture reference that looks like a SKU code—ISAM712. There are also initials, SFSG. The initials stand for So Far So God.

In every dream journey, there are Ebenezer moments. You’ve got to celebrate those milestones by building altars. Then you’ve got to surround yourself with those life symbols so you don’t forget what God wants you to remember.

I don’t believe that our greatest shortcoming is not feeling bad enough about what we’ve done wrong. I think our greatest shortcoming is not feeling good enough about what God has done right. When we under-celebrate, we fall short of the glory of God.

One of the commands in the Old Testament Law is a seven-day celebration (Leviticus 23:39-43). Question: when was the last time you celebrated anything for seven days? God challenged the Israelites to celebrate longer, to celebrate better. That’s like a command to eat cupcakes!

And God didn’t just mandate weeklong celebrations. He also commanded a yearlong honeymoon for newlyweds (Deuteronomy 24:5). Hubba-hubba!

**We need to celebrate more.**

**We need to celebrate better.**

**Why? Because thus far the Lord has helped us.**

## **REFLECTION**

What God-given victories can you celebrate in the course of chasing your God-given objective so far?

## **PRAYER**

Father, I celebrate every single victory on this journey of chasing my God-given dream. I declare that your goodness and mercy will follow me!



# DAY 7

JEREMIAH 1:5

## “YOUR DESTINY UNFOLDS”

“Before I formed you in the womb.” This phrase should fill you with a sense of destiny. It’s your spiritual birthright. God has ordained your days, ordered your footsteps, and prepared good works in advance. And he did it before you were even conceived.

The irony of destiny is that it’s rarely discerned at the time. Sometimes it’s not even revealed until after we die. David may have reigned over a kingdom of millions, but his psalms have inspired billions. That is David’s longest legacy, whether he knew it at the time or not. And I’m guessing not. Your greatest influence might be posthumous. It’s one more way God gets the last laugh and gets the glory!

Your greatest influence might be the children or church or charitable trust that outlive you. For the record, this is one reason why I write. Books are time capsules. I write because I want my great-great-grandchildren to know what I lived for, what I was willing to die for. And if others want to read my books while I’m living, all the better. But I write for the third and fourth generations.

Just because something isn’t part of your life plan doesn’t mean it’s not a part of your destiny. Without me even knowing it, God has been fulfilling his call on my life. My job is to obey God with a keyboard, with a pulpit. God takes it from there. And the same is true for you. God is working his plan whether you know it or not. And God will get all the glory!

God is working his good, pleasing, and perfect plan for your life in a thousand ways you aren’t even aware of. Everything in your past is preparation for something in your future. God wastes nothing. Even when you have a setback, God has already prepared your comeback. The God who works all things together for good will leverage every experience, every skill, every mistake, and every bit of knowledge you have acquired.

Your destiny predates you. Before you were even conceived, God had a script for your life. And he is in the process of fulfilling it today.

## REFLECTION

What God-given victories can you celebrate in the course of chasing your God-given objective so far?

## PRAYER

Father, I celebrate every single victory on this journey of chasing my God-given dream. I declare that your goodness and mercy will follow me!



**FOCUS ON**

**finances**

# DAY 8

2 CORINTHIANS 9:10

ECCLESIASTES 2:24

## “BREAD & SEED”

“It’s not how much money you make, but how much money you keep, how hard it works for you, and how many generations you keep it for.” - Robert Kiyosaki

The Bible teaches that you should be careful in how you divide your money and introduces the principle of bread and seed. “Bread” represents survival costs, and “seed” represents what we use for future growth. It suggests that you do not “eat” your seed (apart from seed not tasting good) as it is for planting so you can secure future income for yourself and your family. This wisdom suggests part of your earnings should be set aside to care for your family now and into the future and may be used for housing, savings, investment, and increasing income through business, investment or the purchase of assets.

The Scripture commands us to not eat our seed for if you do, your future will look bleak and there will be nothing for you tomorrow. This passage’s wisdom also addresses “bread” and says it is for your family to eat (survival costs) and should not be planted as it won’t cause anything to grow (bread is as useless for planting as much as seed is for eating.) The Bible is telling us there are specific uses for our income and it should be divided as such.

### KEYS TO APPLY

1. **List what you believe is bread and seed.**
2. **Make provision for it in your Money Plan.**

*More devotional by Church of the Highlands*

# DAY 9

2 CORINTHIANS 9:10-11

PROVERBS 3:5-6

PROVERBS 12:11

## “SURPLUS”

As we learnt yesterday, the Bible talks about two categories you can divide your money into: bread (what you require) and seed (what you use for future investment). There is a third category I would like to address which the Bible is silent on - the matter of surplus.

I am a Financial Advisor and I had a client approach me after a Sunday church service to ask me if I thought it was ok if he bought a Harley Davidson motorcycle, as he had always wanted one. I knew this man as a client and had insight into his financial affairs. He had done it tough for many years, but now was enjoying his prospering business. He was a hard worker and his skills were becoming known within a thriving industry. (Prosperity inevitably follows such a situation!)

I commended him on seeking wise counsel before spending such a significant amount of money as it showed he was wanting to be a good steward of the increase God was bringing his way. I asked him if he was meeting his financial obligations (business—trade creditors, employee wages and personal—mortgage and general living expenses) as they fell due, to which he responded “yes”. I queried whether he was providing well for his wife and children, to which he also responded in the affirmative. I asked if he was tithing, and once again he said yes. I asked if he was setting money aside for his future and growing his assets. Again he responded “yes”.

My answer to him was that I was of the view he had dealt prudently with his bread and seed, and that the leftover was surplus - and this surplus was certainly for him to enjoy! He went and bought a nice Harley that week.

I believe if you are rightly dividing your bread and seed and have come to a position where there is surplus, then I encourage you to enjoy it to the full.

### KEYS TO APPLY

1. **Seek wise counsel if you are ever unsure about your money management as the Bible is clear there is wisdom in seeking wise counsel.**
2. **If you have leftover, then it is surplus and the Bible commands you to enjoy it (and why not bless others with it along that way as that will multiply your satisfaction).**



# DAY 10

MATTHEW 6:33

PSALM 37:23

## “KEEP FIRST THINGS FIRST”

“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.”

– Albert Einstein

I love to read the Scriptures about trusting God and seeking first His Kingdom. They remind me that He holds me, my family, my finances, and my future in the palm of His hand. While circumstances in life arise which I did not foresee, good and bad, nothing is a surprise to Him. In fact I choose to embrace every circumstance that comes, as I believe He is in the midst of any storm that arises and He is directing my steps. Psalm 37:23 reminds us that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. When I keep my eyes on God and put Him before my worries, my ambition, and material things around me, I allow His hand to move in my life.

These scriptures first really came to life for me when I received my final year-12 results. Despite working hard and diligently throughout the year, the final exams did not roll my way and I did not score the grades I expected or needed for law school. I was bitterly disappointed. My dad suggested I repeat year 12, but I did not have peace about that. I knew that this was not a surprise to God and I had not been slack. I had truly worked hard and to the best of my ability throughout my senior years. There was nothing I would have done differently. It was a circumstance of life which was adverse and unexpected.

In that moment I chose to trust in Him and let Him lead my steps. It was the first time I really stood on this promise and believed God was going to lead me where He wanted, notwithstanding life's curve balls. My job was to walk in faith. His job was to lead. After a series of incredible coincidences (some may even call them miracles), I made it into law school. And many years later as I write this, I look back and marvel at where He has led me and can clearly see His fingerprints over my journey. To this day I continue to lean on this promise that if I trust in Him and seek Him first then He will lead the way. And there is no better place than to be in the center of His will for your life.

### KEYS TO APPLY

- 1. Set aside regular time to talk with God about the situations of life. He is very interested in you!**
- 2. Give Him thanks. Praise Him. Worship Him and tell Him how much you love Him.**

# DAY 11

1 JOHN 5:14-15

## “KINGDOM-MINDED”

I often get asked about some of the keys to my law firm’s consistently phenomenal growth and how I manage to secure the work we do. While there are many things I diligently do on purpose to facilitate this, I smile to myself inside knowing the primary and central reason for the success the firm has enjoyed is simply because God has brought it my way. It is a regular prayer of mine on the way to work in the morning to ask God to bring in new work and increase to my business, blessings to my staff and family, wisdom to the situations I encounter, and opportunity to bless and assist the needy. And every time He has met me with more than I could even hope or imagine. I smile when members of my team who don’t yet have a personal relationship with Jesus ask if I have been praying again because there’s been yet another influx of work. Even they can see the results flowing from the power of prayer and seeking God first!

Life is noisy and it is busy and the clutter around us can often divert our focus from what we should be seeking out first—time with Him. Bringing our requests before Him (whatever they are regardless of how significant or trivial) with thanksgiving. He just loves spending time with us. Remember the scripture does not say to seek nothing else. It just says let’s put the most important thing first. Then the rest can follow once we bring God and the supernatural into the equation. I encourage you today to regularly bring your family, relational, financial and health cares before God and put them in His hands. Let Him in on the situation and ask Him to bring solutions, healing, increase, or whatever is needed, and see what happens.

### KEYS TO APPLY

- 1. Choose to look to Him whenever tough situations arise, knowing He is in the midst of the storm with you and there is nothing to be afraid of. He is not surprised by your present situation and He knows the way through it.**
- 2. Choose to embrace every situation as a chance to learn and grow.**
- 3. Don’t neglect other matters—just seek Him first.**



# DAY 12

## EXODUS 14:14

### “WHY TITHE?”

“I have grown up having a strong inclination to tithe, even in my late teens, as I had seen plenty of blessing in my parents’ life linked to their faithful giving. My dad had been made redundant during the Global Financial Crisis and had not been able to find work for 6 months. I remember during this time that my brother and I often ate dinner while my parents said “they weren’t hungry” and would watch us eat, or at other times they ate only the veggies and we ate the meat with veggies. It was during this time that I remember driving to church with my parents. My dad turned to my mum and said that the \$20 note in his pocket was the last money they had. Period. And they were talking about whether they were going to put in the tithing bag. Finally, dad said “I have faith that God provides and we, as a family, need to have faith in that.” So he put it in.

When we came back from church and pulled into the driveway of our house, there was a basket full of food and groceries left at the front door. I have never forgotten that moment.

10 years on, I found myself in a similar position. I had just started a business and had used all my savings getting it off the ground. It was then that my eldest son was diagnosed with cancer. I had to move the family to another city while he got treatment and stopped being able to see clients. I had staff wages to pay, and the bills kept rolling in. We were renting, plus had a mortgage back home. My wife and I were still tithing and found ourselves questioning whether we should stop. But we eventually decided to keep tithing and trusting that God had a plan and would see us through. The next week we received a cheque from an old school friend that I hadn’t spoken to for ages for \$1000. This covered all the rent we needed until we could move back home! It was incredible! It also came with this verse found in Exodus 14:14: “The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

I have held onto that verse, and my business has not gone bankrupt when it really should have. It has continued to grow and now has over 25 staff. There are still times when we get tight. But every week, God provides and all bills are paid, wages are paid, and the local community gets the advice and support they need. I still need to remind myself to be still, not fear, not be anxious of potential outcomes. God is bigger than I give him credit for, and he has not let me down!

### KEYS TO APPLY

- 1. What battles are you having that you could take to God rather than fight alone?**
- 2. Do you feel nervous or confident when it comes to putting God first in your finances?**
- 3. What is one step you could take in increasing your faith in God for finances?**

# DAY 13

2 CORINTHIANS 9

ROMANS 10:17

EPHESIANS 3:20

HEBREWS 11:6

## “FUNDING A BIG VISION”

Whenever a church enters a season of growth and expansion, we see an excitement of people encountering God in amazing ways—the flow of salvations, healings and an awesome expectation that God is doing something great. There is always a need for finances to fund vision and an expectation that God will provide the provision. The exciting part is that God uses people just like you and me! Why doesn't He just drop the cash from heaven? It appears that He wants people to experience faith and the joy of giving. The great promise we have is that He is the one who provides seed for giving and bread for eating.

Giving in faith is different from giving out of emotions. When the vision is presented and the needs are quantified with great media and moving preaching, it is easy to feel compelled emotionally. Can I encourage you? Seek to hear from God and what He wants you to give. A word from God allows you to give confidently! It gives you a platform of faith to pray and build from.

The Bible encourages us that faith comes from hearing: this is a word from God (rhema), not just a word from the Bible (logos). As you speak out the promise, and I would love to encourage you to speak it out loud, you hear your words and it stirs faith in your heart. It is a prophetic word, not only to the realm of the spirit, but to you.

Write out the promise you have, keep it before your eyes, put it on the fridge, put it on the sun visor of your car—wherever you will see it every day. Build faith for your promise and allow the promises of God become a reality for you. God promises exceedingly abundantly MORE than you can ask or think!

Be the person that God uses to bring provision to the vision. Expect God to blow your expectations away. Always remember that God loves a cheerful giver! You are loved.

### KEYS TO APPLY

1. **Take the time to ask God what He wants you to give. Write it down and pray expecting God to answer your prayer.**

# DAY 14

MATTHEW 5:13-16

## “IS YOUR GENEROSITY CONTAGIOUS?”

I’ve got some news for you! You’re contagious!

Have you experienced a time when a friend started giggling for some unknown reason? You start to question their sanity, and yet curiously you begin to feel the urge to let out a small chuckle yourself. That chuckle soon gives way to a large grin, and before you know it you’re both cackling away for no real reason.

Our emotions are contagious. Psychologists call this phenomenon emotional contagion, a three-step process through which one person’s feelings transfer to another person.

The first stage involves nonconscious mimicry, during which individuals subconsciously copy one another’s nonverbal cues. The second is the feedback stage: because you frowned, you now feel sad. And finally, in the last stage individuals share their experiences until their emotions and behaviors become synchronized. Have you ever noticed when you encounter a friend on a bad day, you may unknowingly pick up their nonverbal behaviors and begin to morph into an unhappy state? Mimicry, however, is not always bad; a person can also adopt a friend’s good mood!

As Christians, we are called to be contagious. We are called to influence the world around us. Matthew 5 talks about how we are to be like salt, where even the smallest pinch can spread into an entire meal, enhancing its flavor. In much the same way, we are like light, where even a pin light in the darkness can illuminate the things around it.

We are called to be contagious as the salt and light of this world. God seasons our situations with His abundance and grace and lights our life with His wisdom and joy. It is through God that we are transformed into the kind of people that others want to be around—salty, lit up, and completely contagious. It’s through what God has given to us that we can be generous to others.

A story comes to mind of a friend who recently decided to pay for a stranger’s fuel. The stranger was so blessed by the gesture that he contacted the local newspaper to share his experience. Through the newspaper this simple act of generosity was shared with more people than my friend would have ever thought possible! His act of generosity was contagious and spread!

We don’t always know the effect a simple act of generosity can have on others, just from who we are and what we have in the moment. I’ve found when we shine a generous heart before others, not only does it bring God glory, but it is contagious to all those who experience it and see it. The change it brings in one individual’s life today may bring change to another generation tomorrow.

## **KEYS TO APPLY**

- 1. We are all called to be contagiously generous! Is what you have worth catching?**





**FOCUS ON**

**family**

# DAY 15

1 JOHN 4:7-9

## “THE SHOVEL AND THE SPOON”

I want to ask you a question: Are you the kind of person who is able to relate to others? Let me put this another way. If you are a husband, can you relate to your wife? If you work in an office, can you relate to your coworkers? Are you able to interact with others even if you are not a “people person”?

I believe the health of our relationships and our ability to show mercy to others is directly linked to our ability to receive mercy from God. Right now, God is offering us amazing things. But are we taking all of what he is offering? Perhaps we aren’t receiving from God because we don’t think we’re worthy. Or maybe we’ve been led to believe that what we have right now is better than what God has for us. Whatever the reason, we aren’t able to receive God’s love. And as a result, we aren’t able to share that love with others.

When we come to God, he dispenses grace and mercy on us with a shovel. God says, “You need grace? Well, let me give it to you in abundance. You need more today? Well, my mercies are new every single day, so before you even hit the snooze button tomorrow I will be pouring it into your life.” He’s got lots of angels and lots of shovels, and he’s heaping these big shovelfuls of mercy on us every single day. But what happens if we can’t receive it? We will go to the people in our lives who have messed up and say, “Oh, you need some grace? Sure, let me give you some with this spoon.” We will expect more from them than we want God to expect from us. We will treat them differently than the way we want God to treat us.

This is why our capacity to receive God’s mercy is at the heart of our role in reconciling relationships that have been busted apart. When we are more prone to give the spoon than the shovel, it means we have really not received the fullness of God’s grace. It means we only believe that God has given us the spoonful of grace.

To relate to others, we have to understand how Jesus relates to us. We have to recognize he took on the constraints of entering this world so he could relate to us. We also have to recognize that Jesus does not give us what we deserve. We deserve death, but he gives us life. Also, we need to recognize that Jesus comes all the way to us. He is merciful when we are wrong, gracious when we are stubborn, and loves us before we are lovable. He loves us before we are even able to love him.

So, in the same measure you receive from God, you will give to others—and this will determine if you are relatable. As John sums up, “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God” (1 John 4:7). That’s the goal: to love one another and dispense mercy with the shovel—not the spoon—because we recognize what we have received from God.

*Relatable Making Relationships Work by Louie Giglio*



## **KEYS TO APPLY**

- 1. What is one thing you learned about relationships from the family in which you grew up? How has your family influenced your relationship with God?**
- 2. How have you received the amazing gifts that God offers you? In what ways have you been reluctant? How has this affected your relationship with God and with yourself?**
- 3. How has your understanding of God impacted your relationships with others? Are you more likely to dispense grace to others with a shovel or a spoon? Explain.**

# DAY 16

MATTHEW 22:37-39

## “THE MAN/WOMAN IN THE MIRROR”

Outside of your relationship with God, your relationship with you is the most important relationship you have. In fact, sometimes, your relationships with others will be messed up because of the relationship you have with yourself. You are influenced more by what you think about yourself than by what anyone else thinks about you.

Before you can start working on relationships with others, you need to start with the person you see in the mirror. In Matthew 22:37–39, Jesus says you are to love God and love your neighbor as you love yourself. Often it's easier to focus on loving God, and on loving your neighbor, but not put enough emphasis on loving yourself. It's important to understand the essential value of embracing God's love for you and translate that into love for yourself.

If you don't love yourself, you are actually negating the fact that God loves you. If you don't love yourself, it means you don't really understand God's perception of you—that you are an awesome, precious, one-of-a-kind treasure, valuable enough to warrant the pain and sacrifice of Jesus. Yes, God will hold you to a high standard, but he is willing to extend mercy and grace to you in appropriate ways so you can fulfill the special purpose he designed for you.

When the truth of God's love sinks into your heart, you can look in the mirror and say, “Well, if God sees me that way, then I'm going to see myself that way.” When you do, you are acknowledging what God has already spoken from heaven about you. God is reflecting your worth and purpose into the mirror, and you are then receiving and reflecting what God says about you. It doesn't originate with what you think about yourself.

At some point, you have to say, “I love me. I don't have it all together, I know, but I love me just like God does when I'm not perfect. God loved me when I had issues, so I can love me with my issues.” You need to be able to be thankful for yourself, because God is thankful for you. You need to tell yourself you are a rare and beautiful treasure, because that's what God thinks about you. You need to extend to yourself the same forgiveness and grace that God extends to you. It does not honor Jesus for you to be hard on yourself and beat yourself up, because he already took the beating for you. God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit all believe in you. And they are cheering you on with a great company of the heavenly host!

As you begin to love yourself, you can begin to love the world. Loving the world happens when you start listening to what God says and start seeing what God sees and then start speaking what God speaks over you. Loving yourself is thus critical, because if you don't believe that God loves you, you will have an impossible time of trying to convince others that God loves them. In the end, what the world understands about Jesus will come from the love that they see you reflect from him in your life.

## **KEYS TO APPLY**

- 1. Do you believe that God would say he is pleased with you? Do you experience him as someone who cheers for you? Why or why not?**
- 2. “It does not honor Jesus for us to be really hard on ourselves.” Can you relate to this statement? Do you ever beat yourself up? What triggers that kind of behavior?**
- 3. What picture of God’s love do you reflect to the people in your life? How would a stronger sense of your value in God’s eyes influence others around you?**

# DAY 17

1 JOHN 3:1

## “A GOD TO CALL FATHER”

Outside your relationships with God and with yourself, your relationships with your mom and your dad are the next most important. These are the formative relationships in your life. Your ability to relate to others—and the kind of person you’ve turned out to be—is largely wrapped up in the relationships you had with your mom and dad.

Your relationship with your dad is especially critical. There are lots of different kinds of dads. Some are amazing and empowering. They dispense love and hugs freely. And some dads . . . are not. Maybe you had an absent dad—due to death, or divorce, or work schedules, or emotional distance. Maybe you had an abusive dad who brought damage into your story. You might be struggling with your sense of place in the world, and a lot of it could be rooted in the kind of father that raised you. Your dad may still be present in your life, for better or worse.

The enemy knows that God is a perfect heavenly Father. He also knows the way you will perceive God as Father will be impacted by how you view your earthly father. So, if he can disrupt that relationship with your earthly father, he can keep you from fully understanding who God is and how you can live in a relationship with him. The enemy has been quite successful at this.

For many people, trying to understand God as their Father, based on their experience with their earthly father, is like looking through a cracked glass. Their relationship with their earthly father is broken, so the reflection they see of God as Father is broken as well. Their earthly and heavenly relationships need a revolution in order to succeed.

Thankfully, the gospel is powerful enough to bring healing into all relationships, no matter how messed up they are. Through the gospel, we receive a new identity when we come to know Jesus. We don’t just believe in something, we become someone—a loved son or daughter of God. It is a family construct where God Almighty becomes your Father and a new relationship is born. God is not the reflection of your earthly dad; he’s the perfection of your earthly dad—the version that you long for deep inside your heart.

Jesus died on the cross so that you could be grafted into a new story with a new Dad and a whole new possibility and a whole new future. You don’t have to be afraid of thinking about God as a father. You don’t have to dwell in the deficit of your relationship with your earthly father. You can lean into this new possibility and see God as the perfect Father.

Leaning into this gospel relationship with God will allow you to reflect his love back to your parents, even if they are not the reflection of the love of God to you. As you do this, you will honor them in godly ways—even when they aren’t honorable—and healing will begin. When others see you reconciling in this way, they will want to know how you are doing it. They will see a reflection of Jesus in you and want to know how this can happen in their lives.

## **KEYS TO APPLY**

- 1. Describe your relationship with your earthly father when you were younger. How has this relationship influenced your understanding of God as your heavenly Father?**
- 2. In what ways have you seen your relationship with one or both of your parents affect your relationships with others? Were these impacts positive or negative?**
- 3. What does it mean for you to honor your father and mother? How can a restored relationship with your parents attract others to God? How can it demonstrate the power of God to others?**



# DAY 18

ROMANS 12:17-18

ROMANS 12:9-11

## “THE FRIEND EVERYONE LONGS FOR”

We all have a mental picture of the kind of friends we want to have in our lives. We want friends who will be supportive. Who will stick with us when life is tough. Who will encourage us and not tear us down. Who will not judge us. But today we're going to flip this around. We are going to consider how we can become the kind of friend for others that we want to have.

Life always begins with becoming rather than finding. Dating is not about finding the right person for your life. Marriage is not about finding the perfect man or woman. No, it's about becoming the person God wants you to be. In this way, whether you do date and get married... or you don't... you still win, because you are becoming the person that God wants you to be.

So, with this in mind, we need to look at what it takes to be the kind of friend we want to have in our lives. First, we need to be a friend who is sincere and not phony. A friend with no hidden agendas. A friend who isn't hypocritical or two-faced. A friend who doesn't just tell others what they want to hear but speaks the truth.

Second, we need to be a friend who extinguishes evil and celebrates good. We do this by de-escalating conflict instead of fanning the flames of conflict. We speak the truth as we extend mercy and forgiveness, just like Jesus did for us. While we do not turn a blind eye to the truth, we assume the best of people and are ready to humbly work to restore relationships without thought of personal gain.

Third, we need to be a friend who is open-handed with our resources. We share and actively meet needs.

Fourth, we need to be a friend who rises above the situation. We don't have to show up to every fight in which we are invited to participate. We can choose to politely withdraw from conflict. To do the unexpected by blessing those who curse us. There is freedom in not having to get even. As we follow God's purpose and leave it to him to deal with those who curse us, we honor the size of our God and trust he will take care of everything in the very best way.

Fifth, we need to be a friend who moves freely among all people. We all want the friend who says, “I can float with the up-and-ups and the down-and-outs. I can float with the high-and-mighty and be just as happy with those in lower states.” A true friend is there in all circumstances, whether we are at the top or the bottom. The gospel doesn't treat people differently, and neither should we.

Sixth, we need to be a friend who is a peacemaker. We need to recognize that while we don't have the power to change others, we can change ourselves. We may not be able to have peace with another person in our lives, but we can have peace toward that person. And if we are at peace with that person, then we are reflecting the gospel. We are living free.

So, today try to be the friend you want to have. By doing so, you will find friends who will recognize the power of the gospel in your life and be drawn closer to God.

## **KEYS TO APPLY**

- 1. How would you describe the bulk of the friendships that you have had? What do you look for in a friend?**
- 2. What is the difference between finding a friend and being a friend? What do you find is the most challenging part about being a friend?**
- 3. If God could do one thing in your life to empower you to “live at peace with everyone,” what would you want it to be?**

# DAY 19

MATTHEW 6:25-26

## “BECOMING SOMEONE VS. FINDING SOMEONE”

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught a kingdom message about what it means to live in relationship. Jesus, after describing God’s care for the smallest parts of his creation—the birds of the air and the flowers in the field—poses this question: “Are you not much more valuable than they?” Jesus says that God is going to provide for us more abundantly than he provides each day for them. We don’t have to be anxious for anything.

Unfortunately, anxiety tends to be a huge part of our lives. We worry about what job we will have. What house we will have. How others will perceive us. This anxiety carries into our relationships. We worry about meeting that special person. The wedding we will have. The children we have to raise. But Jesus says don’t worry about tomorrow, for you have a Father who promises if you will make seeking him a priority, he will make providing for you a priority.

God knows that what you need most is a Maker, not a mate. When you’re focused on the Maker, you won’t be distracted by the cares of this world. When you’re working on falling in love with your Maker, you become the person someone else wants in his or her life.

You can’t control the people who come into your life and how they respond to you, but you can control how you invest in becoming the person God wants you to be. You can burn a lot of energy seeking that right person and miss what you need to work on in yourself.

When you submit yourself to God to be molded, he will move you toward the people he wants you to meet. You don’t have to be anxious about being in the right place at the right time or fear who will miss out. If you commit to submitting to the process of becoming, God will be responsible for the process of bringing. So, if you want to get close to somebody, the answer is to move toward Jesus.

The enemy will try to get you to stress about your relationships and whether you will meet that special person. He knows if he can get you to worry about the future, it robs the power of what God wants to do in you today. The power you need is not in what God has done in the past, though you should certainly celebrate that. It is not in what you hope God will do in the future, though you can have confidence in that. The true power is what God, through Christ, wants you to become in the here and now.

There’s a whole world of people who think their happiness depends on their ability to get what they think they need right now. But true happiness is rooted in a Father who sees what we need and is able to provide into our lives at just the proper time. We have the same needs as everyone else on planet Earth. Food. Clothes. Shelter. We all need the same stuff—we just believe the solution is in bringing those things to God and trusting that he will provide.

## **KEYS TO APPLY**

- 1. How easy or difficult is it for you to take Jesus' words at face value and not worry about the future? What do you tend to worry about the most?**
- 2. What do you find yourself worrying about more: the past or the future? How does this worry affect your relationship with Jesus?**
- 3. What does it mean to shift your priority from finding somebody to becoming someone? Where do you need God to shape, sculpt, and form you?**

# DAY 20

ROMANS 12:17-18

ROMANS 12:21

## “HANDSHAKE OF PEACE”

Is there a relationship in your life that has in some way been severed or shattered? Is there a gap in a relationship that you feel is irreconcilable? Today, I want you to think about the possibility of reconciliation, restoration, and resolution in those relationships.

If you belong to Jesus, God’s purpose and plan is that you would find a way to live at peace with everybody. You may think this is impossible, but remember that with God all things are possible. Through the cross God made peace with you. He didn’t have to do this—he wasn’t threatened by you or need something from you. He wanted a relationship with you.

Thus, the cross is the template for reconciliation in your relationships. And the most important element in that reconciliation is the gospel. Jesus overcame evil with good, and he asks you to do the same by loving your enemies. However, if there is going to be reconciliation in your life, you are going to have to take the axe of grace and cut down the tree of bitterness and resentment. You are going to have to ask God to make that situation with the other person into a story that reflects his mercy.

Now, to do this will require supernatural power. After all, it’s not natural to forgive others who have wronged you. But as a Jesus follower you can see this possibility for peace, because you know that if God can make peace with you, he can make peace with anybody.

This is not to say peace will always happen—but it does rest on you to offer the opportunity. Scripture says “as far as it depends on you,” because you are the one who’s got the supernatural power of Jesus in your life. So it is on you to go as far as possible to seek the peace.

If you want to really stand out in life and become a peacemaker, you will have to go the second mile. You will have to refuse to allow destructive patterns to be reestablished in your life. You have to own your part in the hurt and let go of your need to get even or keep record of the wrong. You may have to end the relationship peacefully to live free of the unhealthy dynamics that brought the relationship down.

It is the Holy Spirit within you who enables this process of reconciliation to take place in shattered relationships. The same Spirit of God who birthed the Son of God, the Prince of Peace, can birth the process of peace between you and the person with whom you seek reconciliation. Your prayer needs to be, “God, I want you to be glorified in this more than I want to be right. I want this relationship restored—but Spirit of God, you are going to have to do this in me.” Then you can retire from retaliation, bankrupt your endeavor to get even, and walk with all the weight off of your shoulders. Because as far as it depended on you, you chose to live at peace with others—regardless of their response.



## **KEYS TO APPLY**

- 1. How have you responded in the past to broken relationships? How does your relationship with God impact how you handle hurt in a relationship?**
- 2. What mindset is required for you to live at peace with others? What is God's role in achieving justice in a wrongdoing? What part of this process is the most difficult for you?**
- 3. How can you offer peace and forgiveness without enabling destructive behavior? How do you know when reconciliation is not possible?**

# DAY 21

ROMANS 12:19

## “LEAVING JUSTICE TO GOD”

There is definitely a tension when it comes to forgiving others who have wronged you. In some cases, the other person won't want peace. Instead, they will elevate conflict... and if there isn't any conflict, they will try to create it. For others, you may be saying, “That person does not need reconciliation. That person needs justice in the form of a prison sentence.”

It is important to remember that the grace of God and the reconciliation process don't abdicate the process of justice. It just reassigns justice. When you forgive, you resign from being the arbiter and the effector of the justice against that person. You choose to assign that role to God.

You can seek peace, and if necessary, seek justice, but then you leave the outcome in God's hands. You focus on peace, not on making someone pay for his hurt against you. You refuse to allow seeking retribution to become your mission in life.

Now, being an agent of peace doesn't mean you choose to be blind to danger. If you and/or your family is at risk from someone, your mission is to get yourself and them in a safe place. In some relationships, you may need to adjust some things, set some boundaries, and establish some distance. But from a place of protection, you can still live with an attitude that says, “I have to get away from you right now, but I want to try, by the power of God, to live at peace with you in my heart. If it's possible for me to do that with you, that's what I'm going to seek. But if it's only possible for me to do that away from you, that's what I'm going to seek.”

Always remember that the Holy Spirit is the agent of peace. He brings your spirit to life. And when your spirit comes to life, Christ takes up residence in you and you have a brand-new life! You now live by the power of the Spirit, not by your sinful nature. The fruit of the Spirit includes love, joy and peace, patience, goodness, and self-control—and these are all things you need for reconciliation. These are the gifts you need in relationships where there is real hatred, animosity, bitterness, pain, and big-time wounds.

You can depend on the power of the Spirit as you walk in the Spirit and live in peace not in war. For what purpose? So that Jesus can be glorified and so that many people's lives can be changed. The possibility of peace that God creates in you impacts the people on both sides of reconciliation—beyond yourself and the person you seek to reconcile. When you seek peace and leave seeking justice to God, you bring people—maybe even nations—to Christ.

## **KEYS TO APPLY**

- 1. In what relationships do you feel you need justice? What is your role in seeking peace with those individuals? What boundaries do you need to set up to protect yourself?**
- 2. Where do you need to seek peace in your heart over the pain of a relationship? How can you find peace even if that relationship is not repairable?**
- 3. How might your example of seeking peace in a difficult relationship impact the people in your life? How can the power of the Holy Spirit in your life draw others to faith in Jesus?**



**ADDITIONAL**  
**devotionals**

# PRAYING SCRIPTURE

The Word of God is one of the most valuable tools we have to build a dynamic daily prayer life. It brings power, truth, and encouragement to our prayer time.

Let's begin with King David's Psalm 23. Take a moment to read it, and then use the prayer below as a way to use the psalm to have a conversation with God.

## SCRIPTURE:

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely Your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

PSALM 23

## PRAYER:

"God, You are my Provider, and I know You will take care of me. Thank You for guiding me to places of rest. You

# PRAY FIRST

You are my source of energy and passion. You keep me going and lead me toward a life of purpose and freedom. I know that even when I experience my darkest seasons of difficulty and challenge, I have nothing to be afraid of because You are with me. Your presence and power are a constant comfort to me. I know that You are preparing the way for me and that my enemies cannot touch me because You are taking care of me. I know that You have blessed me, and I thank You for choosing me and anointing me with purpose. Your blessings are so much more than I could ask for. I know that You are good, God, and that You are with me all the days of my life. You have chosen me, and I have chosen You, and that means I will be with You, in Your presence, forever."

In the following section, we will use several Scriptures and claim their promises through prayer. You can make this as personal as you like. You will find the most benefit when you pray the Scriptures that God is showing you in His Word and that are connecting with you personally in your current season of life.

# PRAYING SCRIPTURE

## SCRIPTURE:

Come near to God and He will come near to you.

JAMES 4:8

## PRAYER:

"Heavenly Father, You have promised that if I draw near to You, You will draw near to me. I need more of Your presence today, and I am drawing near to You through prayer, worship, and reading Your Word. I open my heart to You and ask You to be near to me and change me to be more like You."



**SCRIPTURE:**

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.  
PSALM 139:23-24

**PRAYER:**

“Father God, I ask You to search my heart. If You find anything in me that is offensive, please show me and help me remove it from my life. Lead me to live a life that draws people to You. Help me live my life on earth in a way that impacts eternity.”

## PRAY FIRST

**SCRIPTURE:**

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

**PRAYER:**

“Your Word tells me that if I seek first Your Kingdom and Your righteousness, You will lead me to a life of blessing, purpose, and freedom. I am Yours today, God, and I give this day to You. Help me to focus on Your priorities first, sharing Your love and making Your Name known. I know that by focusing on You rather than myself, I will receive joy and peace.”

**SCRIPTURE:**

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up.  
JAMES 4:10

**PRAYER:**

“God, You have promised that if I humble myself before You, You will lift me up. I recognize today that I cannot succeed on my own, and I need You in every moment. I humble myself before You, and I ask You to work in and through me today. My time, efforts, thoughts, and words are Yours today (name specific parts of your day and give them to God). Use me for Your purposes, Lord. I trust that You will be with me and lift me up.”

## PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**SCRIPTURE:**

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.  
2 TIMOTHY 1:7

**PRAYER:**

“Father, I know You have not given me a spirit of fear or timidity, but one of power, love, and self-discipline. When my mind feels out of control, I pray that You will renew my spirit and let power, love, and self-discipline fill me. Help me to look more like You every day. I declare that anything that is not of You has to leave me in Jesus’ mighty Name. I proclaim that I do not have a spirit of fear, but I have a sound and healthy mind.”

**SCRIPTURE:**

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.

ROMANS 8:28

**PRAYER:**

“God, You promise me in Your Word that in all things You work for my good. Right now, there are circumstances in my life that don’t feel good and that I can’t see an ounce of good in (talk to God about the specific situations that are causing you difficulty or pain). Even though this is how I feel, I choose to believe Your truth over my feelings. When you say You will work

## PRAY FIRST

in all things for my good, I believe You. Even in situations that seem hopeless, I know You are working on my behalf and that You want more for me than I could ever want for myself. Thank You for having a purpose for me and for working all my life circumstances for good.”

**SCRIPTURE:**

Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge.

PSALM 62:8

**PRAYER:**

“Father, in Your Word You invite me to pour out my heart to You. You are my refuge, and I know that anything I think, feel, or do is ok to bring to You. Knowing that You are a safe place for me, I come to You and give You everything on my heart (talk to God about the specific things that are on your heart today). From what is worrying me to what is delighting me, what I hope for to what I’m afraid of, I bring it all to You because I know I can trust You. Help me and guide me in every area, in Jesus’ Name.”

## PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**SCRIPTURE:**

The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of His bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands.

DEUTERONOMY 28:12

**PRAYER:**

“Lord, I believe You have everything I need and You want to bless me. You tell me in Your Word that You will open the heavens to bless the work I do. I know that without You, I can do nothing. I ask that You will open the heavens and pour out Your blessings and power over me. I give my work and my efforts to You and I ask You for favor and blessing in anything my hands touch (surrender specific efforts to Him). May it be for Your glory alone so that others may see Your power and goodness at work.”

**SCRIPTURE:**

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 8:38-39

**PRAYER:**

“God, I am in awe of Your love for me. You are so great, and I am so small, yet You love me fully. I remind my

**PRAY FIRST**

“Father I pray that my soul today knows nothing can separate me from Your love—I am so grateful! There is nothing I can do to win or lose Your love; You love me without condition. Because I know nothing on earth, in time or space, or anything in existence can separate me from Your love, I will live confidently and peacefully knowing I have always been and will always be fully loved by You.”

**SCRIPTURE:**

“No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me,” declares the Lord.

ISAIAH 54:17

**PRAYER:**

“Lord, I know that no weapon raised against me will succeed because I am Your child. I feel pressure in my life right now, and sometimes I feel as though life will overcome me (talk to God about the concerns weighing on you). Even though I feel this way, in faith, I claim Your promise that no weapon can overcome me and that any accusations that come against me will be silenced. This truth is verified by Your love and saving power in my life.”

**PRAYING SCRIPTURE****SCRIPTURE:**

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

**PRAYER:**

“Father, my heart feels anxious (tell God what is giving you anxiety). I don’t like this feeling, but I’m thankful I can come to You and receive peace. You invite me to replace my anxiety with prayer, and even though my mind and heart are racing, I’m coming to You knowing that You provide healing and calm for my soul. Thank You for giving me breath and life. I thank You that I am fearfully and wonderfully made in Your image. I lay down all worries, all my physical and mental anxiety, and any attempt at trying to control it all (tell Him the things you are laying down right now). I surrender it all to You. I need You. I need Your peace that transcends my human understanding. Even if things are unstable around me, I pray that Your peace will be evident in my heart and my life. Guard my heart and mind, God. I trust that You are faithful, and I receive Your peace in my life today.”

# PRAY FIRST

## SCRIPTURE:

“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. 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.”

JEREMIAH 29:11-13

## PRAYER:

“My God, I try to make so many plans for my life, but I know Your plans for me are best. You tell me that You have plans for me to prosper and have hope and a future. Thank You for loving me enough to have a plan for my life. You have promised me that when I call on You, You will listen to me. Thank You for listening when I pray. I am confident knowing that I serve a God who cares about my life. I want to find You every day, and You say that if I seek You with all my heart, I will find You. Thank You for showing me the way to You. I lay my plans down at Your feet and receive Your plans for me (mention your plans and lay them down before God). I know that You see the big picture and You know what is better for me than I do. I trust You, and I ask You to guide me toward Your plans.”

# PRAYING SCRIPTURE

## SCRIPTURE:

“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

HEBREWS 13:5

## PRAYER:

“Father, I am so comforted by the fact that You will never leave me. You are always with me, and I am safe with You. As I go through my life and take on each new situation, I’m comforted by knowing I’m not alone because You are by my side. Help me feel Your presence. When I feel uncertain or afraid, I pray You will comfort me through Your Holy Spirit and remind me that I am never alone because You, the Almighty God, have promised to always be with me.”

## SCRIPTURE:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

MATTHEW 11:28-30

## PRAYER:

“Lord Jesus, I am so tired and worn out (tell God the areas that you’re tired and weary). I feel exhausted mentally and physically. Life feels hard, and I feel like I can’t keep up my current pace. You invite me to come to You when I am weary, and I fall at Your feet desperate

# PRAY FIRST

For rest, peace, and perspective. Show me where I am trying to do things on my own. Show me where I need to rest instead of strive. Teach me Your ways. Show me how to walk in gentleness, humility, and rest. I know Your ways are higher than my ways, and I pray that You will transform my heart and mind to be more like You.”

## **SCRIPTURE:**

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” PSALM 91:1-2

## **PRAYER:**

“God, I claim that I dwell in Your shelter, the Most High God, and I rest in Your shadow, the Almighty One. I claim that You alone are my refuge and fortress. You are my God and I trust You. When I face anything that brings me uncertainty or fear (confess these things to Him), I know that I can come to You as my safe place. Thank You for Your strength and protection in my life.”

# PRAYING SCRIPTURE

## **SCRIPTURE:**

The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does. The Lord upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.

PSALM 145:13-14

## **PRAYER:**

“Almighty God, as I claim the promises in Your Word through my prayer time, I praise You for Your character. Trustworthy, faithful—that is Who You are. I thank You that I can trust You to be faithful to me. I know that when I come to You with humility and a surrendered heart that You will lift me up.”



# PERSONAL PRAYER FOCUS

God has put us on the earth at this specific time for a reason. He says in Acts 17:26 that He determined when and where we would live. Knowing this, we can look at those around us at this specific time in history, and take personal responsibility to pray.

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

## 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

Pray for those in authority and those under your authority. Pray for those in your family and your circle of influence (anyone you're connected to). Write down the names of specific people and pray for them.

### MY GOVERNMENT

- PRESIDENT | NATIONAL LEADERS
- STATE LEADERS
- CITY LEADERS

### MY FAMILY

- SPOUSE CHILDREN
- PARENTS SIBLINGS
- PRAY FIRST
- EXTENDED FAMILY

### MY CHURCH

- PASTOR
- SMALL GROUP LEADER SMALL GROUP MEMBERS

### MY LIFE

- PERSONAL PRAYER FOCUS

### MY JOB

- EMPLOYER CO-WORKERS
- EMPLOYEES

TEACHERS/PROFESSORS

CLOSE FRIENDS

THOSE WHO NEED GOD



**21**  
**days**

**prayer &  
fasting**