

21 DAYS OF PRAYER & FASTING

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**DAYS OF PRAYER & FASTING**

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**JANUARY 3RD - 23RD**

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Dear friend,

I am so excited that you have chosen to participate in Believe: 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, by setting aside 21 days to pray, fast and draw near to God. Fasting is not just an exercise for super-spiritual people. It is actually supposed to be a part of every believer's spiritual life. Personally, I have found there is no better way to reset my spiritual compass and bring about change and discipline in every area of my life than through fasting.

As you go through your 21-day fast, I hope you will be encouraged and strengthened by this Devotional. Each daily devotion is intended to enrich your understanding of the purpose of New Testament fasting and to give you a launching point for your own prayer time.

I pray that you will experience the presence and power of God in an extraordinary way as you commit yourself to Him over the next 21 days. May God continue to bless you and enlarge your territory as you seek Him first.

Your Friend,

Pastor Bill McIntosh

Lead Pastor, New Life Church

## **EVERY DAY PRAYER FOCUS**

1. Humble ourselves. Asking for forgiveness for our sins and the sins of our land.
2. Seeking God. Declaring our dependence on God in every area of our lives.
3. His Kingdom Come. Praying for the completion of the Great Commission and for revival in our generation.
4. Hear from Heaven. Inviting the Presence of God in our church and our lives (souls saved, signs, wonders, miracles, and transformed lives.)
5. Next Steps. Praying for all people in their journey of faith to Know God, Find Freedom, Discover Purpose, and Make a Difference
6. Believing God for answered prayer to our specific needs (Connection Cards, Pastoral Care Update Cards, and prayer requests).

# CORPORATE PRAYER TARGETS

Day 1 – Our Leaders – Nation, State, and City (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

Day 2 – Our Pastors, church staff, small group leaders, dream team, board members

Day 3 – Our City – Farmville, Blackstone & surrounding areas

Day 4 – Our Nation – Revival in America, Adult & Teen Challenge, Chi Alpha (Nationwide) Chaplaincy ministries, Intercultural Ministries

Day 5 – Our World – AGWM (leadership training and church planting) See List of Missionaries we support as a church

Day 6 – Worship

Day 7 – (Church service prayer, 9:30AM)

Day 8 – The Lost – services, family members, friends, co-workers

Day 9 – Small Groups – leaders, members, real life change

Day 10 – Growth Track and Dream Team – leadership development, covering over every leader, fresh vision

Day 11 – Children and Students (Kids Min and Thrive)

Day 12 – Chi Alpha Local, (Longwood & Hampden Sydney)

Day 13 – Worship

Day 14 – (Church service prayer, 9:30AM)

Day 15 – Families and marriages

Day 16 – First Responders

Day 17 – Our Church's vision for 2022

Day 18 – My personal vision for 2022 – freedom from habits, debt, relationships, ministry, reaching my full potential

Day 19 – Personal freedom and deliverance – breakthrough in every area!

Day 20 – Our specific needs (finances, health, family members to be saved and other personal needs.) Pray for the sick – anoint with oil.

Day 21 – (Church service prayer, 9:30AM)

# VIRGINIA PRAYER GUIDE

## Leaders of Our Country

- President Joe Biden & Vice President Kamala Harris
- Supreme Court Justices: John Roberts, Jr., Clarence Thomas, Stephen Breyer, Samuel Alito, Jr., Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, Amy Coney Barrett
- U.S. Senators: Tim Kaine, Mark Warner
- U.S. Representatives: Robert J Whitman, Elaine Luria, Robert C. Scott, Ashton Donald McEachin, Bob Good, Benjamin Lee Cline, Abigail Spanberger, Donald Sternoff Beyer Jr., H. Morgan Griffith, Jennifer Wexton, Gerald Edward Connolly

## Leaders of Our State

- Governor: Glen Youngkin, Lt-Governor: Winsome Sears, Attorney General: Jason Miyares
- Mayors: Farmville: David Whitus, Blackstone: Billy Coleburn

## Leaders of Our Church

- Board: Bob McCulley, Steve Rainey, Mike Throckmorton, Dannielle Watson
- Lead Pastors: Bill & Jenny McIntosh
- Church Staff: Mark & Becky Bartow, Alex & Jesslyn Gullet, Jordan & Akeem Howell, Savannah & Cody Huddleston, Dianna Rainey, Frankie Todt

# NEW LIFE CHURCH FAMILY PRAYER GUIDE

## Our Vision

- Know God (Weekend Services): Pray for the lost to be saved
- Find Freedom (Small Groups): Pray for group members to connect relationally and experience freedom
- Discover Purpose (Growth Track): Pray for people to discover their God-given purpose and be motivated to take their next step
- Make a Difference (Dream Team): Pray for all who serve others

## New Life Ministries

- Kids : Dianna Rainey
- Youth : Savannah & Cody Huddleston
- Young Adults (Chi Alpha) : Jenny McIntosh
  - Staff : Amanda Tyler, Ricky Epperly
- Women: Jenny McIntosh
- Men : Akeem Howell
- JOY : Mark Bartow
- Small Groups : Mark Bartow
- Worship : Jordan & Akeem Howell
- Outreach Ministry : Betty Weaver

# MY PRAYER LIST

## THOSE THAT I INFLUENCE

Close Friends (make a personal list)

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## THOSE THAT NEED SALVATION

People that you know in need of Christ (make a personal list)

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**MY CHURCH**

Pastor

Small group leader

Small group members

**MY LIFE**

Employer

Co-workers

Employees

Teachers/Professors

**MY PERSONAL PRAYER NEEDS  
(MAKE A LIST)**

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## **HOW TO BEGIN A FAST**

Start with a clear goal. Be specific. *Why* are you fasting? Do you need direction, healing, restoration of marriage or family issues? Are you facing financial difficulties? Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Pray daily and read the Bible.

## **PREPARING SPIRITUALLY**

Confess your sins to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of weakness. Forgive all who have offended you and ask forgiveness from those you may have offended (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3-4). Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ and reject the worldly desires that try to hinder you (Romans 12:1-2).

## **DECIDING WHAT TO FAST**

The type of fasting you choose is up to you. You could go on a full fast in which you only drink liquids, or you may desire to fast like Daniel, who abstained from sweets and meats and only drank water. Remember to replace that time with prayer and Bible study.

## **DECIDING HOW LONG**

You may fast as long as you like. Most can easily fast from one to three days, but you may feel the grace to go longer, even as much as 21 to 40 days. Use wisdom and pray for guidance. Beginners are advised to start slow.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT**

When you fast your body detoxifies, eliminating toxins from your system. This can cause mild discomfort such as headaches and irritability during withdrawal from caffeine and sugars. And naturally, you will have hunger pains. Limit your activity and exercise moderately. Take time to rest. Fasting brings about miraculous results as you are following Jesus' example when you fast. Spend time listening to praise and worship music. Pray as often as you can throughout the day. Get away from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mind set on seeking God's face.

## **HOW TO END**

Don't overeat when the time comes to end your fast. Begin eating solid food gradually; eat small portions or snacks.

- **FULL FAST**  
Drink only liquids (you establish the number of days).

- **THE DANIEL FAST**  
Eat no meat, no sweets and no bread.  
Drink water and juice.  
Eat fruits and vegetables.

*“Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.” DANIEL 1:12*

*“I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.” DANIEL 10:3 KJV*

*When going on a Daniel fast, or any type of fast, if you have questions outside of what Scripture says, prayerfully seek the Lord, consult your doctor and be led by the Spirit for the specifics for your personal fast.*

- **3-DAY FAST**  
This fast can be a Full Fast, Daniel Fast or give up at least one item of food.
- **PARTIAL FAST**  
A partial fast is from 6:00 am to 3:00 pm or from sun up to sundown. You can select from three types of fasting – a Full Fast, Daniel Fast or give up at least one item of food.
- **JUICE FAST**  
A juice fast is simply consuming vegetable and fruit juices instead of solid food. Many people include protein powder in their liquid plan as well. This is one of the most popular fasts. Even if you choose not to make your entire fast liquids only, substituting one or two meals for liquids is a great alternative.
- **MEDIA FAST**  
Although a media fast is not a traditional “food” fast, it can greatly complement and enhance your food fast by providing more undistracted time to seek God. This also helps accomplish the purpose of the fast by getting closer to God rather than just a diet, by abstaining from certain foods. Some have fasted TV, Social Media, Secular Music, Video Games, etc. The idea is to empty our self of the influences of the world and to fill our self up on God, through time in prayer and reading the Bible.

### Step 1: Be Specific

Daniel was not vague in his objection to the Babylonian diet. He defined the problem immediately.

1. The king's food was against dietary laws.
2. Daniel and his friends had vowed against wine.
3. The king's food had been offered up to idols/demons.

### Step 2: Fast as a Spiritual Commitment

*The Daniel Fast* involves a spiritual commitment to God.

*"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." DANIEL 1:8*

### Step 3: Reflect Inner Desire by Outer Discipline

Many people have an inner desire for better health, but they can't discipline themselves to avoid junk food, and other foods that are not good for their health. The physical health you seek from God may be more than an answer to prayer. Your physical health can be linked to any of the following factors:

1. Your food choices.
2. The level of your spiritual commitment as reflected in constant prayer during the fast.
3. Your time commitment. If you determine to fast for a certain time, keep it. For example, if you determine to fast 10 days, don't stop on Day 9.
4. Your testimony commitment. Your fast is a statement of faith to God that you want Him to heal your body, and faith is foundational to the Daniel Fast.

### Step 4: Pray to Perceive Sin's Role in Poor Health

*"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." JAMES 5:13-16*

- Sin is something related to the cause of sickness.
- Lack of health/healing may be the result of spiritual rebellion.
- Lack of health/healing may be due to sin of wrong intake, i.e. drugs, pornography, bad food
- Repentance is linked to health according to James.
- Elders have a role in healing both spiritual and physical health.

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- Repentance is linked to health according to James.
- Elders have a role in healing both spiritual and physical health.
- Sick people must desire to be well
- The anointing oil could mean:
  1. Medicine for healing,
  2. Symbolic of the Holy Spirit, or
  3. It could be baptism
- Prayer alone may not gain healing, faith is the major factor.
- In Greek there are several words for "sick". James uses "Kanino", which not only includes disease, but also means weak or weary.
- Attitude is important. James said, "are there any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms."

#### Step 5: Fast as a Statement of Faith to Others

Daniel was making a statement of faith when he asked for only vegetables to eat and water to drink, then dared the overseer to compare the appearance of the four sons of Israel with the young men who ate the king's food (Daniel 1).

#### Step 6: Learn the Effects of the Food You Eat

Why are some foods good for us, and other foods not? What does certain food do to your body? If we really knew, there would likely be some things we would never eat again.

#### Step 7: Yield All Results to God

*"Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see."*  
DANIEL 1:13

## DAY 1: WHY CAN'T I HEAR GOD'S VOICE?

From Pastor Zach Zehnder

Dallas Willard once said, "If God doesn't speak today, then the greatest disservice we could ever do to people is to tell them that they could have a personal relationship with God."

The voice of God can be a tricky subject. One of the most often asked questions that I have heard as a pastor is, "Why can't I hear God's voice?" I often wonder why we struggle to hear God's voice because I am confident that we have a God who speaks.

All throughout the Old Testament, we see God speaking. God speaks to Adam and Eve in the garden, calls Abraham to a new land in Genesis, meets Moses on the mountain, and comforts Elijah in the cave. He spoke to the prophets in numerous ways. God is so passionate about speaking to His children that He sent Jesus, literally called "The Word of God," to dwell in our midst. Even after Jesus ascended, He meets Paul on the Damascus Road and speaks to John in Revelation. God is a speaking God.

However, as crucial as hearing God's voice is, what is more important is being in a real relationship with Him. Brother Lawrence, who wrote the book, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, says, "There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God." Amazingly, God wants a relationship and to speak with us. God can use people, His Bible, and even His creation to speak to us.

The problem is not that God isn't speaking; the problem is that we aren't hearing.

Why, then, do we struggle to hear God's voice?

We have a connection problem.

First, we are disconnected from God. Many of us talk about being in a relationship with God, but are you consistently and habitually putting yourself in a place to hear God? Do you want to know the surefire way in which God will speak to you? The Bible is God's Word to you and to me.

Second, we are too connected to the world. We only have so much capacity for what we can let in, and too many of us prioritize the created things of this world more than we do the Creator. To hear God's voice, you have to turn down the world's volume.

God can speak to anyone at any time. Still, generally speaking, Dallas Willard says, "God will not compete for our attention. Occasionally a Saul gets knocked to the ground and so on, but we should expect that in most cases God will not run over us."

Instead, God comes to us kind, gently, and frequently, through a still, small whisper. He still speaks to us today. Can you hear Him?

### Day 1 Challenge

Sit quietly and alone in a room for five minutes. Ask God to speak to you during these 21 days. Use the prayer prompt below if needed. In addition, invite your friends to walk alongside you during the 21 Days of Prayer Challenge.

### Prayer Prompt

For spiritual growth in the year ahead and for clarity on who to invite to do this Bible Reading Plan with you.

### Psalms 19:1-4 AMP

1 The heavens are telling of the glory of God;  
And the expanse [of heaven] is declaring the work of His hands.  
2 Day after day pours forth speech,  
And night after night reveals knowledge.  
3 There is no speech, nor are there [spoken] words [from the stars];  
Their voice is not heard.  
4 Yet their voice [in quiet evidence] has gone out through all the earth,  
Their words to the end of the world.  
In them and in the heavens He has made a tent for the sun,

### Isaiah 55:11

11 So will My word be which goes out of My mouth;  
It will not return to Me void (useless, without result),  
Without accomplishing what I desire,  
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

Jeremiah 33:3

3'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'

John 1:1-3

1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
2He was with God in the beginning. 3Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

John 1:14

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 10:27

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

## DAY 2: WHY SHOULD I PRAY?

From Pastor Zach Zehnder

We exist to be in a relationship with God. Jesus's life, death, and resurrection make this relationship possible. The greatest followers of Jesus are those in great relationship with Him. And any great relationship starts with great communication. Prayer, ultimately, is how we communicate with God.

Okay, that's a lot to digest. So let's back up a bit.

GPS is an incredible invention. I don't understand how it all works, but I often utilize it to guide me to where I want to go. For example, I once read a story about a woman in Belgium who got into her car to pick up a friend at the train station. She activated her GPS to give her directions. The trip should have only taken about 90 minutes, but somehow, the GPS took her in the wrong direction, and sadly, she just blindly followed where the GPS led her. So rather than ending at the train station, she ended up more than 900 miles away from where she was supposed to be!

This silly little example shows me that even when we follow the best of the world's directions, it can still take us to the wrong destination.

I believe the world has always been broken and messy, but you could argue that the world has never been as confusing as it is right now.

My wife asked me to pick up some milk from the grocery store the other day. But, when I got to the grocery store, I wasn't sure what type of milk she wanted me to grab. Have you noticed how many types there are these days? Did she want me to buy 1%, 2%, Fat-Free, Whole, or how about Soy, Almond, Coconut, Organic, etc.? I didn't know, and she wasn't answering my text at the moment, so I was intrigued by a brand called "8th Continent" and threw it in the cart.

Many of us deal with much more significant issues than what milk to bring home. We live in a world where racial oppression, gender confusion, political tension, and pandemic opinions are real issues. As parents, we are the first generation trying to navigate how to raise kids in a social media, smartphone-crazed world. It's a confusing world we live in. But in the middle of it, we can cut through all of the confusion and chaos and communicate with the God who created us. Prayer gives us direction in a confusing world. And God's guidance will never steer any of us in the wrong direction.

Why pray? Because you need God's direction.

Day 2 Challenge: What are three confusing areas in your life right now? List them out and pray about each one of them today, asking for God's guidance and wisdom.

Prayer Prompt: For your national, state, and city leaders

James 1:5

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

Philippians 4:6-7

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 John 5:13-15

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

## DAY 3: WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PRAYER AND FASTING?

From Pastor Zach Zehnder

On Day 1, we stated that we struggle to hear God's voice because we have a connection problem. So if the two issues are we are disconnected from God, and we are too connected to the world, what's the answer? I believe Jesus gives us the solution: prayer and fasting.

Prayer connects us to God.

At any time, at any place, in any situation, we can connect to God. With that being said, I often can't understand why I choose to pray not as a first response but instead as a last resort. When life's demands come my way, I sometimes forget to pray. Honestly, it's easier for me at times to talk about the power of praying than to actually pray. However, I don't want that to be true for me, and I want to grow in the practice of prayer.

This means that when I'm going into a tough meeting at work, I can pray for His Spirit to direct me. Before I go into a doctor's office to receive test results, I can pray for God's peace. Before I send an email, I can pray and discern if it's appropriate. Before I post something on social media, I can ask for God's direction. We can connect with God in real-time, and He promises to act on behalf of His children.

If prayer connects us to God, fasting disconnects us from this world.

One of the least known disciplines in the church is fasting. Very few people have a regular practice of fasting.

The real simple definition of fasting is letting go of some things for a period of time. When you fast from things, you begin to see things more clearly. However, no matter what you have heard or been taught, fasting is not primarily about giving something up. More so, it's about replacing that something with God's presence.

When you fast, I promise you your flesh will not like it. Your Spirit will love it, but your body will be weak. The enemy will come during times of fasting and try to replace that thing you have given up with something other than God. That's why when so many fast, they also choose to pray. It's about connecting to God as we disconnect from the world. Most people choose to fast from food or drink. Other fasts that could be important are social media, television, etc. Remember, that part of fasting is to disconnect from this world.

Day 3 Challenge: Choose some type of fast that you will participate in for the remainder of this challenge and tell at least one other person.

Prayer Prompt: For your city and its prosperity

## Psalms 86:1-7

1Hear me, Lord, and answer me,  
for I am poor and needy.

2Guard my life, for I am faithful to you;  
save your servant who trusts in you.

You are my God; 3have mercy on me, Lord,  
for I call to you all day long.

4Bring joy to your servant, Lord,  
for I put my trust in you.

5You, Lord, are forgiving and good,  
abounding in love to all who call to you.

6Hear my prayer, Lord;  
listen to my cry for mercy.

7When I am in distress, I call to you,  
because you answer me.

## Daniel 10:3

3 I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.

## Matthew 6:16-18

16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

## Luke 4:1-4

1Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2where for forty days he was tempted4:2 The Greek for tempted can also mean tested. by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

3The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

4Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’4:4 Deut. 8:3”

## DAY 4: HOW CAN I GROW IN PRAYER?

From Pastor Zach Zehnder

Not long ago, I went to a prayer service. Rather than feeling stimulated and refreshed, I walked away feeling guilty and frustrated. That night, when we were encouraged to pray silently for 15 minutes, I had difficulty fighting off distractions and focusing on praying. I felt guilty because if anyone should be praying well at this point, it should be me. I'm a lifelong follower of Jesus and have been a pastor for more than a decade. I shouldn't be struggling this much to pray. I felt frustrated because I was genuinely committing and taking the time to instill this habit in a deep, meaningful fashion. Yet, it didn't inspire me or make me feel closer to God.

It didn't take me long to realize that both the guilt and the frustration were actually just lies from the enemy. I don't need to feel guilty because the truth is that I'm making strides in my walk with God and in my prayer life, even when I don't sense it. And I don't need to be frustrated because when we begin to develop a habit, it often feels awkward, and we don't see much change. That's the thing about habits: you don't always see growth while you're in the moment. The realization of progress usually comes much later.

If you aren't sure how to start praying, or you've come to a plateau in your prayer life, I want to encourage you today that the best way to learn to pray is to keep praying. I've set goals with my workout partners to hit specific benchmarks in the gym. Truthfully, it feels like I experience short seasons of growth and long seasons of being stuck. I love the seasons of growth, and I hate the seasons where I feel stuck. But even when I'm stuck and don't feel like I'm getting stronger, I can look back and see that I've made progress. I need to just keep putting in the reps. As I keep putting in the reps, I'm trusting that the repeated effort will one day help me get stronger.

If you want to become more effective in prayer, simply pray. Put in the reps. You may not notice your growth on a day-to-day basis, but you'll see it eventually. In the course of this challenge, we'll show you how Jesus prayed (who better to learn from?) and teach you a few handles that can help you.

When you pray, you may not see the immediate change in yourself or those you pray for. You may be discouraged because you don't feel like your prayer life is getting any better. You may not sense God's presence as you pray, but God assures us that He's at work. While feelings are real, they aren't always true. Dallas Willard says, "Feelings are good servants, but they are disastrous masters." Trust in God's promises and not your feelings.

Keep praying. Put in the reps. God doesn't care about how we come, just that we come.

Day 4 Challenge: What is one small thing you can do daily that will help you make prayer more of a habit in your life? Identify that one thing and tell at least one other person.

Prayer Prompt: For your church and the local churches in your area.

Hebrews 4:16

16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Romans 8:26-27

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

John 15:4-7

4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. 27 No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

## DAY 5: HOW DID JESUS PRAY?

From Pastor Zach Zehnder

Think about this. If there was ever someone who didn't need God's direction, you'd think it would be Jesus. It is a great paradox, but we believe that Jesus was fully human and also fully God at the same time. And yet, still, we see Jesus praying early and praying often.

As we continue to learn about prayer, we ought to examine how Jesus prayed. Remember, He was the only person to exist in a perfect relationship with God, so we should learn from Him.

When you read through the 4 Gospels, you would find nearly 50 times that Jesus either practiced prayer or taught about the importance of prayer. For example, Jesus is shown praying alone, praying in public, praying early in the morning, praying in the evening, praying before meals, praying before essential decisions, and praying before and after healings.

You get the sense that He communicated with God the Father and the Holy Spirit everywhere He went. By looking at His example, we see that Jesus made prayer a priority at all times and in all circumstances.

The word "priority" has a surprising history in our English language. According to Greg McKeown in his book *Essentialism*, "The word priority came into the English language in the 1400s. It was singular. It meant the very first or prior thing."

We pluralized this term somewhere along the line and thought we could have multiple priorities simultaneously. But, really, having many things as a top priority actually means that nothing is.

Prayer was a priority for Jesus. Is it for you?

Let me ask a challenging question: Take a look back at the last week of your life before you started the 21 Day Prayer Challenge. If God answered every one of your prayer requests, what would be different in the world today?

Sadly, if I answered the question for myself, there would be some weeks when the world wouldn't look all that different. If my prayers were answered in the way that I asked them to be, here's how the world would be different: my sermon would be creative and powerful, new people would have come to church, the Cleveland Browns would have won their game, my kids would have done well at school, my wife would have had a great week, a couple of people would have gotten new jobs, and a few healings would have happened. Still, nothing crazy in the world would have happened most weeks if all my prayers had been answered. That's sad.

How about you?

If you genuinely believe in the power of prayer, you, too, would prioritize it, just like Jesus. But, the great news is that no matter how failed your prayer habits have been in the past, you and I have an excellent opportunity to start anew today. In fact, we can pray to God right here, right now, and not only thank Him for His grace but ask God for wisdom to help us in this area in the future.

Day 5 Challenge: Look back to the 10 days before starting the 21 Days of Prayer Challenge. Ask yourself what would be different in the world if God answered "Yes" to all of your prayer requests.

Prayer Prompt: For your pastors and those leading your church

Mark 1:35

35 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.

Luke 5:16

16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Luke 6:12

12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

John 17:20-26

20 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,<sup>21</sup>that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.<sup>22</sup>I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—<sup>23</sup>I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

24 “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

25 “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.<sup>26</sup>I have made you<sup>17:26</sup> Greek *your name* known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

## DAY 6: DOES PRAYER CHANGE GOD'S MIND?

From Pastor Zach Zehnder

One of the questions I'm asked most often is this: "Does prayer change me, or does it change God?" The answer is YES!

You benefit from praying. When you pray, you're connecting with God. Being more connected to God has many upsides. You live with more purpose and direction. You gain a peace that passes human understanding. You possess an unspeakable joy and even confidence in the midst of what can feel like chaos. That's a robust list of how prayer helps you and changes you.

But I would also argue that prayer changes God.

When I read the Bible, one thing is very apparent: every time it mentions that God changes His mind or "relents," it's always for our benefit, not our harm. That's why He appears to change His mind with Moses and the grumbling Israelites, grants King Hezekiah more years of life, and gives the Ninevites another opportunity to repent in the story of Jonah. These examples give us great comfort because they tell us that when we return to Him, He's always willing to accept us back.

What does this mean for us in today's study? It means that our prayers matter! They actually make a difference. It means that when we're in conversation with God, we can affect Him and bring His mercy to people in a lost and broken world.

James 5:16 reminds us, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." Righteous people's prayers can change the course of human history.

When we believe that our prayers can change the course of history, it means that we can pray with the same desperation that Moses prayed, pleading for the future of the Israelites. We can pray with the same expectation that Elijah prayed when he asked God to send fire down so that others might know that He is the true God. We can pray with the same trust that Daniel prayed when thrown into a lion's den. We can pray with the same faith that Jesus prayed with when He healed the sick, calmed the storm, and even raised the dead. We can pray with the same passion that the disciples prayed when they healed the sick, raised the dead, and began the church. And we can pray with the same excitement and hope that our church fathers prayed when they asked God to move powerfully as they advanced the Good News of Jesus Christ throughout the world. Many people talk about wanting to make an impact in this world. But, did you ever think that the most significant impact you could make in this world would be through your prayers?

Day 6 Challenge: What is one thing you hope God changes His mind about? Pray boldly for this to happen today.

Prayer Prompt: For the poor and needy

Exodus 33:12-17

12Moses said to the Lord, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me.' 13If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."

14The Lordreplied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

15Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. 16How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?"

17And the Lordsaid to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."

James 5:16-18

16Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

17Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

## DAY 7: HOW CAN I TELL IF GOD IS SPEAKING TO ME?

From Pastor Zach Zehnder

I remember buying our first home and enjoying the air conditioning in the house when the air conditioner stopped working out of nowhere. Being a new homeowner, I had no idea what to do, so I called a local air conditioning company. It was a minimum charge of \$200 to come, but it was in the heat of summer, so we agreed. One minute after he arrived, he ensured us that the problem was fixed. He held an utterly black air filter in his hand and said that the air filter had never been changed. When I grew up, I'll be honest, I never even knew there was such a thing called an air filter. Nobody ever told me. So, of course, I had no idea they needed to be changed. I learned from this costly mistake how essential filters are.

I've found that to be true not just for air conditioning but also for the voice of God. As a pastor, I can't tell you how many conversations I've gotten in where someone says, "God told me...." But, sadly, that statement "God told me" has often been followed up with something that I know is simply not the voice of God.

So how do you know if it's God's voice? How do you know if it's God speaking to you, or is it the enemy speaking to you, or the Bean Burrito you ate for dinner last night?

I learned three questions from *Church of the Highlands* to help form your "Voice of God" filter. The voice of God will always pass through these three tests. Let me repeat. It will always pass all three of these tests.

Does the Bible agree?

God's voice will never contradict His Word.

Does godly counsel agree?

Every one of those words is important. Ensure that it is godly counsel. If you are discerning whether it's God's voice, don't ask someone who is not a follower of Jesus. It's shocking to me who some people ask for counsel. Finally, make sure the council agrees. Many people would call themselves "godly" that have pretty wacky beliefs that are incongruent with God's Word.

Do I have peace?

The Holy Spirit brings peace. The devil brings anxiety. Now, God's voice may not always lead you to comfortable places, but He will bring His peace with you wherever you go. If it passes all three, it very well could be from God. Still not sure? Here are some other good follow-up questions to ask:

- Will this make me more like Jesus?
- Is it consistent with how God made me?
- Does it concern my responsibility?
- Is it convicting or condemning? Hint: God's voice is never meant to condemn.
- Is it wise? That three-word question would save so many headaches and so much stress.

Day 7 Challenge: Take a question or two you have been wondering about recently and take it through the "Voice of God" filter.

Prayer Prompt: For local missions, non-profits, and organizations seeking to make a difference in your area.

John 10:4-5

4When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.5But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

Romans 10:17

17Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

1 John 4:1

1Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Proverbs 12:15

15The way of fools seems right to them,  
but the wise listen to advice.

1 Corinthians 14:33

33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people.

## DAY 8: IS THERE A PROPER WAY TO PRAY?

From Pastor Mark Zehnder

I love what Richard Foster says: "In the same way that a small child cannot draw a bad picture, so a child of God cannot offer a bad prayer."

Perhaps that offers a simple answer to this question.

Still, what are we talking about here? The posture of prayer? If that is where the question comes from, there are all kinds of possibilities. The Bible talks about praying when we are walking and moving. It speaks of standing, sitting, kneeling, and lying prostrate on the ground.

Or are we talking about the actual "words" of our prayers? Do we have to have "good manners" when we pray and be sure that we use all the right words and say them correctly?

My hunch is that while posture and the words we choose are significant, we are really talking about something much more vital here. What's implied in this question is the ATTITUDE of the person praying, and on that, we can do no better than to look at a couple of times when this topic came up with Jesus.

First, Jesus says this in Matthew 6:5-8. "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the streets to be seen by men...and when you pray, do not keep babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words."

Second, Jesus tells a similar-sounding story in Luke 18:9-14. "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The proper way to pray is with a humble attitude. God cares more about the thoughts in our hearts than the words on our lips. He'd rather have your big worries than your big words, your expression of need, than your eloquence of language. So what are you waiting for? Talk to Him now!

Day 8 Challenge: Commit to memory 2 Chronicles 7:14-15. Start by writing it down 5 times.

Prayer Prompt: For national and international missions, organizations, individuals, and groups seeking to make a difference in the world

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Matthew 6:5-8

5 “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Luke 18:9-14

9To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: 10“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.11The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector.12I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

13 “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

14 “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

2 Chronicles 7:14-15

14if 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 I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 15Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.

## DAY 9: WILL GOD ALWAYS ANSWER MY PRAYERS?

From Pastor Mark Zehnder

This one almost seems like a trick question! My first, knee-jerk reaction to this question is, "of course, God always answers my prayers. It's just that there are times when he might not answer them the WAY I WANT him to!"

Or maybe you have heard in the past that God answers your prayer in three possible ways—yes, no, and wait. Perhaps.

I'd like to suggest a more helpful way to look at this question, and so that you might remember these, let's let them all rhyme. Ready?

Here we go!

**NO**—there are times that God just simply says "no" to your prayer. This is crystal clear with the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:8-9.

He says "no" when the IDEA is not correct.

After my first year of college, I remember thinking that I had possibly found the girl that would become my wife. But that summer, I realized this wasn't meant to be. I could have been upset with God, who I heard shouting, "no." But He knew what I did not know. He knew that I would meet this marvelous young lady by the name of Sharon only a few months later. The idea of my prayer was not right, and God said "No!" (Thank you, Jesus! I have now been happily married to Sharon for almost 45 years!)

**SLOW**—when the timing isn't right, God says, "slow." It's not that you don't have the right idea in your prayer; it's just not the right timing yet. Perhaps it's like fruit. If you pick a green banana off the tree and eat it, you won't love it. But, sometimes, God knows that we just have a little more time to wait.

**GROW**—this is how God answers when YOU aren't right. The idea and timing may be okay, but you are not. Sometimes I think I know exactly what I need and when I need it. God can see that I'm being selfish, and if I received it now, it would NOT be in my best interest. There are times when I am praying for something that doesn't seem to be happening, and I can sense God wants me to ask, "Lord, is there something IN me that needs to change?" Is there someplace I need to grow? See Romans 5:3-4

**GO!!**—I love this one. When everything is right, God says GO! The idea is right, the timing is right, and you are right! These are the fun answers, and God loves to say yes!

So, what are you praying about right now, and what is God saying?

Day 9 Challenge: Look back at the last year of praying and locate one instance each where God said "No," "Slow," and "Grow." What did you learn about God from each of those?

Prayer Prompt: For God's justice to prevail in the world's injustices

Isaiah 55:8-9

8“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways,”  
declares the Lord.

9“As the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

2 Corinthians 12:8-9

8Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

1There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity under the heavens:  
2a time to be born and a time to die,  
a time to plant and a time to uproot,  
3a time to kill and a time to heal,  
a time to tear down and a time to build,  
4a time to weep and a time to laugh,  
a time to mourn and a time to dance,  
5a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,  
6a time to search and a time to give up,  
a time to keep and a time to throw away,  
7a time to tear and a time to mend,  
a time to be silent and a time to speak,  
8a time to love and a time to hate,  
a time for war and a time for peace.

Romans 5:3-4

3Not only so, but we5:3 Or let us also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4perseverance, character; and character, hope.

## **DAY 10: DOES THE OUTCOME OF PRAYER DEPEND ON MY FAITH?**

From Pastor Mark Zehnder

Oh good. Another question with several possible answers! Okay, let's start with this word from James 1:5-7: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord." Based on this passage, it sure seems like praying without faith is NOT a good idea! Still, how many times do we see in the New Testament where Jesus healed someone who not only had no faith but didn't even know who Jesus was? Or how about this... Jesus raised a dead boy in a funeral procession (Luke 7:11-17) and a little girl in her house (Luke 8:49-56). It's 100% impossible to have faith when you are dead! There were other times when Jesus healed people not because of their own faith but because of their friends. For example, in Mark 2:1-12, four friends carry a paralyzed man to Jesus, and Jesus healed the man on behalf of the friend's faith. On the other hand, Jesus healed many people, and after doing so, made a comment: "Go, your faith has made you well." You even read about these today in Matthew 9:29 and Mark 5:34.

So, what can we conclude?

When we pray, we should do so with faith, remembering that it is our job to ask and God's job to act! Therefore, we should always pray with faith, trusting that God loves us and knows what we need best.

It helps me to remind myself that I am not praying with faith in my faith. No, I am praying with faith in Jesus because I know this: Ultimately, the fact that a person is healed is based NOT on the quality or even quantity of faith in the person praying, but in the HEALER himself, Jesus.

Day 10 Challenge: Share the Bible verse Jeremiah 32:27 on social media and declare your trust in God: "I am the Lord, God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?" You can use the verse image in this app to help you share this well.

Prayer Prompt: For the children in our life

Jeremiah 32:27

27 "I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?"

James 1:5-7

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

Matthew 9:22

22 Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed at that moment.

Matthew 9:29

29 Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you";

Mark 5:34

34 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

## DAY 11: WHAT IS INTERCESSORY PRAYER?

From Pastor Mark Zehnder

Simply put, intercessory prayer is when you pray for someone else. When I think of intercessory prayers, my heart gets thankful very fast. For all the years of my life, I have had people praying for me. My mom and my dad in the early years. My wife for the last 45 years. And some genuinely faithful people at all the congregations I have served have interceded on my behalf.

You might find it interesting to see who else shows up on the list of those who were intercessory prayers. Take Jesus, for example! Paul tells us in Romans 8:34, "Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."

Wow! And not just Jesus, but the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Just a few verses before this, Paul tells us this: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words." Romans 8:26-27

Paul referenced how he interceded for his fellow believers in many of his Epistles. For example, in Romans 1:9: "God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching this gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times."

Many churches have begun a ministry of intercession called GAP. These are people who know that God Answers Prayer. This GAP ministry flows from a heart that knows there are times when you just can't handle everything on your own. You need someone to stand where you can't.

Ezekiel 22:30 says, "I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none."

How sad that no one was found at that time and place. How thankful I am that so many of God's people are willing to step up and stand in the gap for me! Will you stand in the gap for others today?

Day 11 Challenge: Make a list of 10 people you can commit to interceding for. Pray today for each of those people by name.

Prayer Prompt: For the teenagers/youth in our life

Ezekiel 22:30

30 “I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one.

Romans 8:34

34 Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Romans 8:26-27

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.

Romans 1:9-10

9 God, whom I serve in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you 10 in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God’s will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

Ephesians 6:18-20

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

## DAY 12: IS THERE MORE POWER WHEN WE PRAY TOGETHER?

From Pastor Mark Zehnder

Prayer is a beautiful gift God gives to each of us as his individual children. This is such a comfort...that we always have access to God in prayer no matter where we are and even when we are all alone. There is something very special about having a regular, quiet, solitary time just with God.

But it gets even better.

In addition to having this gift of prayer individually, we also have it together in community. Which brings us to this interesting question, "Is there more power when we pray together?" Let's look at some Scriptures that discuss praying together and see if we can answer this question.

Interestingly, when Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, He gave them a prayer that started with the word, "Our." He said, pray, "Our" Father. Not "my" Father, but "our." That says something of the fact that Jesus intended for us to pray together. In Matthew 18:19-20, Jesus says this: "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them." Wow! What a promise! This sure seems to make the case that praying together is very powerful and that Jesus is with us when we pray together.

In addition to these blessings, praying together and seeing how God answers our prayers increases our faith and causes us to be even bolder when we pray. Finally, praying together increases our unity in the Body of Christ.

We see this in powerful times of prayer in the early church. Read Acts 4:31 and Acts 12:1-16.

Recently we were together in worship on a Sunday morning. Many of us had individually been praying specifically for a family in our church. It had been 20 days that we were praying, and not much progress seemed to be happening.

That morning I asked the whole church in the middle of our prayer time to lift this family up, and we boldly asked for a breakthrough. Thirty minutes later, I received a text that the prayer had been powerfully answered, and this breakthrough took place. Of course, this wouldn't mean that all those individual prayers didn't matter, but it would be hard to argue that there wasn't greater power when the whole church prayed together.

Day 12 Challenge: Pray together with at least one other person today. Before praying, let everyone share any prayer request(s) they may have.

Prayer Prompt: For healthy marriages

## Matthew 18:19-20

19 “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

## Acts 4:31

31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

## Acts 12:1-16

1 It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. 2 He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. 3 When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. 4 After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

6 The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. 7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. “Quick, get up!” he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists.

8 Then the angel said to him, “Put on your clothes and sandals.” And Peter did so. “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,” the angel told him. 9 Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. 10 They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

11 Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod’s clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen.”

12 When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. 13 Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. 14 When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, “Peter is at the door!”

15 “You’re out of your mind,” they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, “It must be his angel.”

16 But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

## DAY 13: DO MY PRAYERS REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

From Pastor Mark Zehnder

I am the product of the persistent prayers of my mom and dad when they were initially unable to have children. Despite the medical world's dire predictions and strong doubts, they pressed on in prayer, and well, along came me! And then Carole, Steve, Tim, Lisa, and Michael! My dad always said the moral of that story is, "When you pray, duck!" And now it is a stupendous blessing that God has blessed me with a hard-to-explain gift of praying for couples who have had difficulty conceiving. I am sure that it has been near one hundred couples I have prayed for over the years, some who were told they would never have children, that now have kids!

So based on my personal story and personal experience, my answer to this question is a HUGE "absolutely, yes, prayer makes a difference!" But it's not my personal story or personal experience that gives me the most confidence to answer this way. The biggest reason to believe that prayers make a difference is because the Bible says they do! Read through the Scriptures for the day today, and you will be reminded of this truth. I think of times when people's prayers in the Bible made such a huge difference. Remember when the prophet Isaiah went to King Hezekiah with the message God had given him to deliver that Hezekiah was going to die.

Hezekiah heard that and prayed that God would spare his life. God sent Isaiah back with the answer that He had heard his prayer and would add 15 more years to his life. On top of that, he then gave him a miraculous meteorological sign that reminded him that God could do anything, even override the laws of nature.

Or how about all the times the Lord's holy anger would threaten to wipe out his people? Time and time again, Moses would plead with the Lord, and God would hear Moses' prayer and change the course of his action.

All that said, the very implication of this question is that it does seem, at times, that our prayers might NOT be making a difference. Part of this answer is found by looking back at Day 9. Another aspect of this is God calling us to persevere. I love the story of the woman who would not give up before the judge that we are reading today in Luke 18:1-8. In this parable, Jesus teaches us that we should always persevere in prayer, even when the answer can be slow in coming.

So, my encouragement to you...if you wonder if your prayers make a difference? Keep on praying! Don't give up! Keep on asking, seeking, and knocking, and God will do his thing!

Day 13 Challenge: What is the one thing you will persistently continue to pray for? Set reminders and pray for this one thing at least 7 times today.

Prayer Prompt: For your family

## 2 Kings 20:1-6

1In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, “This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.”

2Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, 3“Remember, Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

4Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him: 5“Go back and tell Hezekiah, the ruler of my people, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord. 6I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.’”

## Matthew 7:7-11

7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.8For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

9 “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone?10Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?11If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

## Luke 18:1-8

1Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought.3And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

4 “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think,5yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

6And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says.7And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?8I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

## DAY 14: AM I PRAYING TO THE FATHER, THE SON, OR THE HOLY SPIRIT?

From Pastor Mark Zehnder

So let me set up my answer to this question with a real-life experiment that I have conducted several times over the years. I have begun a message or a workshop or a sermon inviting everyone to speak a silent one-minute prayer in various settings. After a minute, I'll simply ask: "How many of you began by saying, 'Dear Heavenly Father, or dear Lord, or dear God?'" A good number of hands go up for each. When I get to the question, "How many said, 'dear Holy Spirit,'" hardly ever a hand goes up.

I find that interesting, intriguing, and, honestly, a little disappointing. Why should the third person of the Trinity, the one who is our Comforter, Counselor, Teacher, be left off the list of who we address our prayers to?

Now, admittedly, understanding the Trinity, how God can be one and three simultaneously, etc., is challenging and a topic for another discussion!! But be assured that when you are praying to any of the three persons of the Trinity, you are praying to the one true God.

But for our purposes today and to answer the question for the day, I would offer these encouragements.

First, it is MOST CERTAINLY a wonderful thing to pray to the Father. Of all the ways that Jesus could have begun the prayer he taught to his disciples (and us, of course), he chose to say, "When you pray, say our FATHER."

When I pray to my heavenly Father, I thank Him for creating me, making me, being a kind and compassionate Father, and sending His Son to be my Savior. You can never go wrong praying to the Father, in the name of the Son, through the Holy Spirit. When I pray to Jesus, I thank Him for dying on the cross for me, for rising from the dead, and for making my salvation possible. I thank Jesus for being my brother and my friend. I ask him to take up his rightful place on the throne of my heart—to be my Lord and Master. When I pray to Jesus, I ask him to live in me and through me so that when others see me, they see him.

When I need comfort, I direct my prayers to the Holy Spirit. When I need wisdom, counseling, teaching, I pray to the Holy Spirit. I ask the Holy Spirit to fill me with boldness that I can proclaim Jesus to the world. I thank the Holy Spirit for interceding with Jesus for me to the Father.

Day 14 Challenge: Spend three minutes each addressing your prayers to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Prayer Prompt: For your friends

## Matthew 3:13-17

13Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

15Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

16As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.

17And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

## John 14:26

26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

## 2 Corinthians 13:14

14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

## Ephesians 3:14-21

14For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15from whom every family<sup>3:15</sup> The Greek for family (patria) is derived from the Greek for father (pater). in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

20Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

## DAY 15: HOW DOES JESUS TEACH US TO PRAY?

From Pastor Roger Theimer

In church, I remember we all prayed the Lord's Prayer together one time. When we said "Amen," I was startled. We had finished, and I had not thought about a single word I was saying. Instead, I was designing in my mind the workbench I was going to build that afternoon. Ever happened to you?

The Lord's Prayer is beautiful. It's a blessing that we all can recite it together. No doubt Jesus made it that simple so we could repeat it. But there is so much more to it! Jesus' disciples noticed Jesus' deep prayer life, so they asked him, "Lord, teach us how to pray!" His response was the Lord's Prayer!

Jesus gives the Lord's Prayer as one to be recited, but also it is so much more! It is a pattern for praying. It can be divided into five focused areas of prayer. It is like a pathway with five pauses along the path. When we pause to pray at each of these focus areas, the depth and breadth of our prayers increase tremendously. Each of these five focus areas will be a topic in this week's devotions. But, for now, let's simply highlight them.

1. We begin with Praying with Praise, or "Our Father who is in heaven." We praise God for who He is.
2. The next stop is Praying for Priorities, or "Your kingdom come, your will be done." We pray for kingdom priorities.
3. The third focus is Praying for Provision, or "Give us this day our daily bread." We pray for physical needs.
4. The fourth pause is Praying for Pardon, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive the sins of others." We pray for forgiveness.
5. The final stop is Praying for Protection, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil." We pray for spiritual protection.

Jesus told His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Could you not keep watch with me for one hour?" I think Jesus was saying, "Couldn't you pray for one hour?" If Jesus asked you today, how would you answer? "What would I say for an hour?"

This pattern of prayer will help. If you spent 12 minutes at each of these prayer pauses on the pathway of the Lord's prayer, you would have prayed for a full hour! Time will fly. Also, your recitation of the Lord's Prayer will be filled with new meaning. So get ready for your prayer life to deepen!

Day 15 Challenge: Find a small notebook or journal and make it a prayer journal. Put the five focus areas of prayers on separate pages. As you pray through items this week, write some prayer thoughts or scriptures that help you pray in that area. Use the prayer journal for ongoing focused prayer.

Prayer Prompt: For anyone who does not have a relationship with Jesus

Luke 11:1-13

1 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

2 He said to them, "When you pray, say:

" 'Father, 11:2 Some manuscripts Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come. 11:2 Some manuscripts come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

3 Give us each day our daily bread.

4 Forgive us our sins,

for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. 11:4 Greek everyone who is indebted to us

And lead us not into temptation. 11:4 Some manuscripts temptation, but deliver us from the evil one ' "

5 Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; 6 a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' 7 And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' 8 I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity 11:8 Or yet to preserve his good name he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for 11:11 Some manuscripts for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Luke 5:16

16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

## DAY 16: HOW DO I PRAY WITH PRAISE?

From Pastor Roger Theimer

We live in a culture that loves praise. Why is social media so popular? We want something or someone to praise! What about popular or gifted people at school? Let's praise them with crowns or awards. How about sports? Entire stadiums stand and cheer. If giving praise is part of our culture, then shouldn't it be easy to give praise to God? Shouldn't it be like cheering Him on more than the local high school football team? Not at all.

Praising God is an entirely different matter than affirming other people or things. Why do you think that God invites us to worship Him? Is it because He is insecure and needs the attention? Of course not! When we worship Him, our hearts open to Him. We see Him for who He is and what He has done. We see how much He values us and loves us. We know the gift of His Son Jesus, who reconciled us to the Father. We experience the Holy Spirit making God's actions for us known on a most personal level!

God refuses to be known as an object, but He does invite us to love Him. Jesus taught us, Pray with Praise. We begin our pathway of prayer with "Our Father, who dwells in Heaven." He is teaching that His model of prayer begins with praise and an invitation to love Him.

Worship Him for His character and qualities:

- His might and His mercy
- His vastness beyond eternity and His closeness within you
- His commitment to your best interest

Worship Him for Who He is:

- God the Father, His creating power and sustaining life
- God the Son, His one-time sacrifice for our sin and all-time intercession
- God the Spirit, His bringing us into the kingdom and equipping us for that kingdom

From eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have existed in perfect unity AND perfect love for each other. Their joy for each other has been described as a divine dance. It is this love that God wants to pour out on us that we would experience His joy and find our lives filled with His love. As you worship and give Him your love, you are reminded of His great love for you. It is the love exchange, and it is the way we get to better know who God is!

Day 16 Challenge: Enjoy some time in your prayers today worshipping. Tell God your praise and your thanks. There are so many options. Speak it in your hearts. Sing it. Listen to praise music. Read it in the Bible! Write it in your prayer journal. Meditate on it five minutes in the morning and five minutes before bed!

Prayer Prompt: For all the blessings God has given

## Psalms 103:1-13

1Praise the Lord, my soul;  
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.  
2Praise the Lord, my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits—  
3who forgives all your sins  
and heals all your diseases,  
4who redeems your life from the pit  
and crowns you with love and compassion,  
5who satisfies your desires with good things  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

6The Lordworks righteousness  
and justice for all the oppressed.

7He made known his ways to Moses,  
his deeds to the people of Israel:  
8The Lordis compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.  
9He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbor his anger forever;  
10he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities.  
11For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;  
12as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

13As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the Lordhas compassion on those who fear him;

## John 17:25-26

25 "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.<sup>26</sup>I have made you<sup>17:26</sup> Greek *your name* known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

## DAY 17: HOW DO I PRAY FOR PRIORITIES?

From Pastor Roger Theimer

Let me put some words in God's mouth and ask that you would hear them as a direct question from God to you. How would you answer if God were to say to you the following?

"Go ahead. Ask me. What do you want me to do for you?"

In this scenario, let's say you can't answer what you would want God to do for others, only yourself.

Is the question more complicated than you thought? Would you ask for stuff? Money? Health? Achievement? There's nothing wrong with asking for these things but placing them in a position of utmost importance will always disappoint. They are never enough to build a fulfilling identity or fashion your purpose. Wrong priorities. What priorities would you ask for?

Jesus taught us to Pray for Priorities, that is, kingdom priorities. So we pause on the pathway to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." How would you pray that His kingdom would come into your life? What would your life look like if it were filled with Christ ruling your desires and thoughts?

Pray for spiritual priorities. For example, pray to become more Christ-like. Pray to live out confidently and joyfully the grace given you through Jesus. Pray to better grasp the depth of His love displayed on the cross. Pray to become more like Jesus not by merely focusing on what you need to improve about yourself but by loving him more! Clare of Assisi said, "We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become. If we love things, we become a thing. If we love nothing, we become nothing." As we love Christ, we are shaped by that love. That's a priority worth praying for!

As you daily read the Bible, be watching for different spiritual priorities. Write them on your journal page to remember to pray for them. Remember to pray that His kingdom would come to others through you. You are making yourself available to Him for His purposes.

Return to the opening question. Instead of hearing God say, "Go ahead. Ask me. What do you want me to do for you?" Now you say it. "God, go ahead. Ask me. What do you want me to do for You?!" This will shape you more into the likeness of Christ!

Day 17 Challenge: Use your journal. Pray for spiritual priorities that shape you more in the likeness of Christ. Is there a characteristic the Holy Spirit is developing in you today? What are your Bible readings saying to you? Are there kingdom priorities that you can intercede for in others?

Prayer Prompt: For clarity on your purpose in this world

## DAY 18: HOW DO I PRAY FOR PROVISION?

From Pastor Roger Theimer

It was a Sunday afternoon, and my roommate and I were hungry. More like starving. We worked a summer job during our college years, far from home and living on meager means. We had just returned from driving to another town to purchase a new car the night before. Actually, it was an old van. At any rate, we spent all our cash. We weren't worried. We had grocery money in the sock drawer and food in the fridge. But when we returned, we discovered someone had broken into our tiny apartment. The cash was gone from the sock drawer, and even the food was taken from the fridge. After church, we came home and sat down at the empty table. No food. No money. What were we to do?

When you don't know what to do, the best thing to do is pray. So we prayed, "Thank you, Lord, for providing for us, for the food we will receive, even if we don't know where it will come from. But please, Lord. Provide."

An hour later, the prayer was answered in a way we never would have guessed. Another college friend and his family passed through this Wyoming town on a cross-country trip and stopped for a surprise visit. It was only one block out of their way. After our joyous greetings, we heard, "Hungry? Buffet at the truck stop sound good? It's all you can eat!" One of the best meals ever! After a two-hour lunch, we parted ways again. Back at the apartment, we found a \$20 bill left on the kitchen table.

"Give us this day our daily bread," Jesus taught us to pray. Our physical needs are essential, and we should pray for them. But what else are we doing when we pray? We are trusting. We are learning that our provision is not something that just comes from our own effort. Food doesn't just come from the grocery store. Money is not just from our earnings. Health is not only in the hands of our medical professionals. God provides. Jesus teaches us to daily Pray for Provision.

Make a list of physical needs and practice trusting God. Pray for:

- Your needs and others in need
- Items easily taken for granted
- Larger financial goals
- Medical or physical needs
- Daily dependence. "Give us today our daily bread."
- Tithe and offerings as an expression of trust

Ask boldly and with a thankful heart!

Day 18 Challenge: Before moving to prayer, look back at the last year of your life and thank God for three ways He has provided for you. Now, think of the three ways in which you would ask God to provide for your next year.

Prayer Prompt: Pray for your provision this year (financial, medical, physical, etc.). Pray and intercede over family, friends, and acquaintances who are facing illness and physical challenges.

2 Corinthians 9:6-12

6Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9As it is written:

“They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor;  
their righteousness endures forever.”9:9 Psalm 112:9

10Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

12This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

Philippians 4:19

19And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:31-32

31What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

## DAY 19: HOW DO I PRAY FOR PARDON?

From Pastor Roger Theimer

Jesus was tried by Pilate and convicted with the shouts of people, "Crucify him!" He had done no wrong. At the same time, Barabbas, one guilty of crimes deserving death, received a pardon. Barabbas was set free because Jesus paid with His life. It is what Jesus has done for us as well.

Pastor Timothy Keller writes, "Jesus' salvation is not only like receiving a pardon and release from death row and prison. Then we'd be free, but on our own, left to make our own way in the world, thrown back on our own efforts if we're to make anything of ourselves. But in the Gospel, we discover that Jesus has taken us off death row and then has hung around our neck the Congressional Medal of Honor. We are received and welcomed as heroes as if we had accomplished extraordinary deeds."

How do I Pray for Pardon? In Jesus' prayer model, He teaches us to pray: "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us." (Luke 11:4) We are praying for our pardon and that we also would pardon those who have wronged us! Here's how:

First, I repent. I turn from actions and motives that are not honoring God or loving others. I turn toward God to confess these sins.

- I admit I sinned against God and do not make excuses or dismiss lightly.
- I embrace Godly sorrow, not selfish regret because I am sorry for the consequences.
- I check my heart and see what motives need to be confessed.

Next, I believe in the Gospel.

- I receive Jesus as my Savior and His payment on the cross that pardons me.
- I lay my sin at the foot of the cross in humble repentance.
- I accept his pardon and rely on God's power to share it with others.

Then, I work on forgiving others.

- I identify those injuries others have done to me and any bitterness I hold.
- I admit that I cannot by my power pardon their debt, but God can help me do it.
- I release their debt and lay it at the foot of the cross next to my own sin.

We live in a condition of pardon with God. We rehearse that relationship as we daily confess our sins. So likewise, we pardon others for their offenses and remind ourselves not to hold a grudge daily.

Day 19 Challenge: Write down one major area that the Lord is leading you to confess. Who is one person that is hardest for you to forgive? Practice releasing their debt.

Prayer Prompt: For my freedom from sin.

## Matthew 18:21-35

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

22 Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. 18:22 Or *seventy times seven*

23 “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold 18:24 Greek *ten thousand talents*; a talent was worth about 20 years of a day laborer’s wages. was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

26 “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ 27 The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

28 “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. 18:28 Greek *a hundred denarii* ; a denarius was the usual daily wage of a day laborer (see 20:2). He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

29 “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’

30 “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32 “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ 34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35 “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

## Ephesians 4:29-32

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

## 2 Corinthians 7:10

10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

## DAY 20: HOW DO I PRAY FOR PROTECTION?

From Pastor Roger Theimer

I am amazed at how big Halloween celebrations are becoming in America. I am curious about people's different beliefs behind ghosts, devils, and spiritual things. Statistics tell us that less than half of Americans believe that there is such a thing as a real devil. The costume depictions either make him out to be super scary or comically amusing. I think it is safe to say that most dismiss the importance of taking the spiritually dark forces as a real threat.

Not so with Jesus. He understood the threat and power of Satan and His forces of evil. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." There is perhaps a better translation. Matthew 6:13 can read, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Catch the difference? Not generic "evil," but "the Evil One." "Evil" has a personal name: "Evil One." Elsewhere it is Satan, or the Enemy, or the Devil. He is joined by an entire evil kingdom of demons who would try to entice us away from the life we have in Christ.

This threat is more significant than you or me to answer independently. We must be alert and call on God's help. It is vital enough to be included in our regular rhythm of prayer.

How do I Pray for Protection?

First, be alert of the enemy's schemes.

- Satan's goal is to pull you away from God.
- Much of the battle happens in your thought life and in the desires of your heart.
- Satan suggests you would best find your ultimate fulfillment not from God but from your old nature.

Second, pray according to the victory Jesus has won.

- Ephesians 6 tells us to stand firm. We stand on the victory of Christ.
- We pray and put on His full armor.
- Put on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet fitted with the Gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit.

We are again praying for God's kingdom to come into our world. This time it is for protection so that we might remain faithful. It will be a battle, but as we call on the name of Jesus, we are reminded that He has already won the war through the cross! That will be revealed on the last day. Let's pray!

Day 20 Challenge: Reread Ephesians 6:10-18 and spend some time going through these verses. As it mentions arming yourself with spiritual armor, go through the motions like you are physically putting this armor on.

Prayer Prompt: For my trust in Jesus to grow

Ephesians 6:10-18

10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

1 Peter 5:8-11

8Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

10And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 11To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 2:14

14Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—

## DAY 21: HOW CAN I CONTINUE A LIFESTYLE OF PRAYER?

From Pastor Roger Theimer

If you have walked through this journey of prayer for the last 21 days, congratulations! Most people do not get through a full 21 days with a regular pattern of prayer and devotions. Don't give up. You made it to the end. Give yourself grace if you skipped any days. God's mercies are new every morning. What's your next step in developing a consistent prayer habit?

Begin by recognizing where your power will come from. A vitalized prayer life is more extensive than our own abilities. Ask God and trust Him to give you the best gift. This gift opens your heart to delight in Him. "How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Invite the Holy Spirit. Let the Holy Spirit guide your prayer times.

A vitalized prayer life will have its ups and downs. Stay with it. Sometimes it feels like work, and other times it is the most joyful activity of the day. Richard Foster says: "We today yearn for prayer and hide from prayer. We are attracted to it and repelled by it." He goes on to say, "Real prayer comes not from gritting our teeth but from falling in love."

One thing that helps me is that every night before bed, I remind myself: "The most important thing I will do tomorrow is to spend time alone with God. Why? Because He is glad to be with me, and I am glad to be with Him! And we have things to say to each other." This helps me look forward to our time together.

In the middle of this experience is JOY. Like Philippians 4 reads: "Rejoice in the Lord. I will say it again, Rejoice! ...by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests to God." That is the joy of being together. It's the joy that comes from sharing our love with each other. I plan for an enjoyable setting for our time together. There's a comfortable chair and lamp, soft worship music, coffee, and a regular Bible reading. My prayer journal helps me answer the question, "What are you saying to me today, Lord?" My response? "Lord, here's what I need to tell you...."

There is no one-size-all when it comes to prayer. But keep praying. And you will experience a joy that you never thought possible in this world. God bless you!

Day 21 Challenge: Identify and instill one habit you can place in your life to help you maintain a consistent and joy-filled prayer life?

Prayer Prompt: For your personal vision for the year

## Matthew 11:11-13

11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, 11:12 Or been forcefully advancing and violent people have been raiding it. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

## Philippians 4:4-7

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

## Luke 18:1

1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.