

# **TWENTY ONE DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING**



# DEAR FRIEND

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Each year, we intentionally set apart the month of January to minister and prepare believers for the new year. While all of us celebrate the start of a new year in January by creating some positive habits.

In this Devotional Guide, you will find levels of challenge.

Maybe you are new to walking in your Christian faith and are seeking to define the parameters of "what does it mean to be a Christ follower?" Each topic is an element of discipleship.

Maybe you are stuck in an area of life or you realize that your relationship with God has become stale, and you want to know "how do I get back to the love and excitement I once had?"

Maybe you have been around for a while and want to know "why do we believe that is important to our faith?" You are encouraged to spend time in the Bible looking up the references and making notes.

Maybe you have heard it all before and need to be reminded "so you can give an answer for what you believe."

Wherever you are on your journey and whatever you are facing, we want to invite you to begin again. Set the reset button and refresh your heart and life with Jesus. Perhaps some days you have more time to spend than others. Whatever level, for the next 21 days, you are encouraged to make it a priority to set aside some time every day to devote to your spiritual life.

We will be on the journey with you! If you have any questions along the way or need support, please email us at [info@oneoakchurch.com](mailto:info@oneoakchurch.com)

**Pastor Robby Emery**

# HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL GUIDE:

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In this guide, we will walk beside you as a friend or mentor, asking the hard questions in love, explaining the meaning of scripture, demonstrating how to pray, and jumpstarting your conversations with the Holy Spirit. It is our goal, our prayer, that at the end of this 21 days you will know His Word and know His Voice and love them both so much that you will embrace these disciplines for the rest of your life.

## **Section 1: Scripture Focus**

The Scripture reading are passages of Scripture that we want you to study. You will notice that we only reference the passage and do not include it. That is because we encourage you to open a physical Bible, preferably not an electronic form, and read the text. Once you have read the passage, reread it a second time and use a high- lighter or pen to underline key words that stand out to you in the text. You may even want to copy the passages that stand out to you in a notebook or journal and reflect on the meaning in your own words.

(Recommended Time: 5-10 minutes)

## **Section 2: Devotional Thought**

The devotional thought is our brief explanation of the concept being presented for spiritual growth. If you have questions, do not hesitate to email at [info@oneoakchurch.com](mailto:info@oneoakchurch.com). The Reset Challenge will include practical applications to the devotional thought. We encourage you to thoughtfully consider the action steps assist your reset process.

We will conclude with a word of prayer from scripture for you. Be assured we are praying for you as we take this journey with you.

(Recommended Time: 3-5 minutes)

## **Section 3: Prayer Starter**

The third section is time for connection with your true Teacher and Counselor, the Holy Spirit. We have included conversation starters for you that connect to the material and start your prayer dialogue. So often prayer is us doing all the talking when He has so much that He wants to tell us.

(Recommended Time: 2 -5 minutes)

#### **Section 4: Prayer Notes**

The final section is the place for you to take notes from your conversation. When you ask questions, you will hear thoughts that you will think, oh, that is just me. No, that is Him speaking words of wisdom. You may use the space provided or your own journal or on your phone apps. Show Him how much you value His words by writing them down.

(Recommended Time: 5-10 minutes)

When using this devotional, it can take as little as 15 minutes and as long as 30-40 minutes. We encourage you to do what you can. Create disciplines that grow your spirit. Start the conversation in the morning and continue throughout the day and make notes before you go to sleep. Everyone has a unique relationship with God and He cherishes the time He spends with each of us. Make this devotional experience an experience for you and Him to grow in rapport and make memories.

**"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

**To him be glory both now and forever!" II Peter 3:18**

# RESET

Day 1

Sunday, January 10

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## Scripture Focus:

2 Corinthians 5:17

## Devotional Thought:

I've been playing golf for a long time and I must tell you that it's an incredibly frustrating game. Never in my wildest dreams would I have ever imagined how difficult it would be to get a tiny white golf ball down a giant fairway and into a hole. But one of my favorite things about golf is how the game is divided into two nine-hole stretches. There is something therapeutic about the fact that I can play terribly on the first nine holes and then turn the page. I can't tell you how many times I've said to myself this statement, "It's time to turn it around. It is a new nine!"

The truth is that each of us have been through slumps, phases and hard times in our relationship with God. We never arrive there intentionally or on purpose, but often God is in the middle of it, using it to bring us back to Him. It's possible that you're in a season like that right now. That's why we want to invite you on a journey to "reset" in your intimacy with the Father. Today, you have the opportunity to start a "new nine" in your relationship with Jesus. It's time for a reset.

What is a reset? A reset is defined as:

- to set back to the initial state
- to set anew
- to adjust again after an initial failure

How different would your life be if you asked God to set things anew in your life and really mean it? Would your daily routines look the same? Would your attitudes remain? Are you sensing that you need a real and lasting change in heart and mind? He is inviting you to a spiritual awakening.

A spiritual reset is a powerful idea and by pressing that button over the next 21 Days, I want to encourage you to remember the following:

Listen to God speak through His word. He has already revealed much of His plan for us through the Scriptures. Spending time reading His word is one of the best ways!

Listen to God speak through Whispers. He will speak softly to our spirits, give us dreams, vision or instruct us through circumstances. He also will direct our thoughts to His plans.

Listen to God speak through His people. At times, God will speak His heart for us through other Christians through the form of encouragement, correction or guidance using books, blogs, or inspired conversations.

Consider this our invitation to press the reset button and begin again over the next 21 days. We encourage you to set aside unhurried time in a quiet place, where you can meet with God. Holy Spirit was sent to be our Counselor and Teacher (John 14:16). Ask Him to reveal areas of your life that need a reset. Take the time to record the conversations in this guide or in a separate journal. Remember, "Note takers are history makers." We are praying for you to be "strengthened through his Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith ...and that you will be established in love" (Eph. 3:16-17).

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, I long for those times of closeness when I felt Your presence. I confess I have allowed life to separate me from You. Highlight where my eyes, my mind, my time, my heart has turned from You?"

# REFOCUS

Day 2

Monday, January 11

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## **Scripture Focus:**

Hebrews 12:1-2; Luke 10:40-42; Ephesians 1:17-19

## **Devotional Thought:**

Have you ever considered "Refocus can happen in a second?" Our eyes do it all the time. In order to refocus, all we have to do is close our eyes and then look somewhere else.

One of the greatest dangers in life is a distraction. Let's be intentional in this season of Spiritual Reset to Refocus on what is important in the scope of eternity.

In Luke 10, Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made, but Jesus said of Mary she has chosen the One Thing that cannot be taken away from her.

In Hebrews 12:1-2, the author gives us some clear steps to refocus to get back to the One Thing.

## **Keys to Refocusing on Jesus:**

Zoom in out to the Big Picture.

It is so easy to be consumed with our day-to-day challenges, our frustrations, our unanswered prayers, and the weariness of the people around us that we may want to give up on our spiritual goals. Scripture encourages us to look at the "huge crowd of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1, NLT), the people of faith that have gone before us. If they have been successful in their faith journey, so can we. If they witnessed a miracle, so can we. If they had a relationship with a living God, so can we. We must keep our eyes on the eternal prize.

Throw off the weights and distractions.

I like how The NIV says it, "Let us throw off everything that hinders us" (Heb. 12:1). How often are the things that hinder us unresolved pain from past seasons? We get adept at stuffing the pain and thinking it doesn't matter. Our attention keeps jumping from this

to that as we ignore the throb in our soul that needs attention. We may even compromise our Biblical values and belief systems with disobedience trying to avoid dealing with the issue.

Refocus back at Jesus.

When we move our eyes away from the natural realm and fasten our gaze back on Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith," (Heb. 1:2), we can see the path that has been marked for our marathon in life. When Jesus, "one and only" (John 1:14), is our reason for living, we can live our life with passion and determination.

We want to encourage you to take some time and refocus today. As summer is drawing to an end, our prayer for you, is that "the eyes of your heart will be opened to know the hope... and the power that is yours because you believe in Jesus" (Eph. 1:17-19).

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, would You open my eyes to see the "great cloud of witnesses" to increase my faith? Is there anyone in my family who is part of the great cloud of witnesses?
- Holy Spirit, is there a wound in my soul that You are highlighting in this season that is causing a distraction?
- Holy Spirit, open the eyes of my heart to see Jesus as my One and Only."



## **Scripture Focus:**

I Corinthians 15:1-4, 54-55; Romans 3:23; John 1:12

## **Devotional Thought:**

To experience a RESET in our spiritual lives, we must start with the Gospel. After all, it is what our faith is built on. But what is "the gospel?" In the church world it can be a Christianese word that has lost meaning.

The word gospel means "good news." Before Jesus, the only way man could have relationship with a Holy God was through the sacrifice of animals. But the good news is now, since Jesus died on the cross as the ultimate sacrifice, God's plan for redemption is available for all who will trust in His divine Son.

The basis of the Gospel is simple: We sinned. He came and died. He is alive. We are saved when we believe.

In I Corinthians 15:1-4, we see the content of the gospel message. We see essential elements of the gospel message.

## **The Basis of the Gospel:**

The gospel is about sin. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" and Romans 6:23 says, "the wages of sin is death." It is very important for us to acknowledge that we have sinned, and the consequences of our sins is death. This is a foundational truth of the gospel.

The gospel is about Christ. The person and work of Christ Jesus are essential parts of the gospel. Jesus is both God (Col. 2:9) and man (John 1:14). Jesus lived a sinless life that we could never live (I Peter 2:22), and because of that, He is the only one who could die as a substitute for sinners. Jesus went to the cross to pay the debt we owe to God so our sins could be forgiven.

The gospel is about the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection is the proof of the power of God. It is what makes our God different

from other gods. Only He who created life can resurrect it after death, only He can reverse the hideousness that is death itself, and only He can remove the sting that is death and the victory that is the grave's (I Cor. 15:54-55). He promises that His followers can do the same. All other religious founders' lives ended in the grave.

The gospel is free to those who believe. Salvation can only be received by faith, apart from works or merit on our part (Rom. 5:15, 6:23, Eph. 2:8-9). So how do you receive this great gift of salvation? "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). Those who are covered by Jesus's sacrifice will inherit the kingdom of God as sons of the king (John 1:12).

In this time of this reset, we are praying that we all reencounter the "good news" of what Jesus did for us. We believe that by doing so, it will lead to greater intimacy and friendship with a Holy God who is good, who cares about us, and who wants to empower us to live in victory in this life and spend eternity with Him. May we be filled with "love that surpasses knowledge" (Eph. 3:19).

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, I confess my mind is overwhelmed that Jesus would do that for me. A part of me believes that salvation can't be that easy. I repent, I turn away from wrong thinking, that I must work for my salvation.
- May wisdom and revelation open the eyes of my heart (Eph. 1:17) to truly understand Jesus's love for me and fully accept the good news of the gospel.
- Jesus, as I think about your love and sacrifice for me, I would like to take this time to express my gratitude."

# REPENT

Day 4

Wednesday, January 13

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## Scripture Focus:

Matthew 4:17; Psalm 139:24; Psalm 51

## Devotional Thought:

What is repentance? Do Christians need to repent? What does repentance have to do with Spiritual Reset?

As believers, we know the Holy Spirit calls and beckons people who have yet to believe in Jesus (Mat. 4:17). In addition, He speaks to Christians to repent when they have fallen away from Him (Rev. 2:5; 2:16; 2:21; 3:3; 3:19).

While, repentance seems unpleasant and that we are being punished, it is an extremely important ethic in Christian life. Repentance lets God restore, forgive, and purify us (1 John 1:9, Zec. 1:3, Mal. 3:7, Jer. 15:19). Repentance helps us to be humble. As we submit our heart to God's righteousness, our pride dissolves (2 Tim. 2:25-26). Repentance drives the devil from us (James 4:8, John 8:44). Repentance frees us from the torment of sin (Acts 3:19). Repentance leads us to spiritual fullness in Jesus (Acts 11:18, 2 Cor. 7:10, Rev. 3:19-20, John 10:10).

Repent means simply "to change the way that you think." When you change the way you think, it will change the way you live. God longs for relationship with us as a loving Father. He brings correction to our lives, highlighting the "sin that separates us from Him" (Rom. 3:23). When we "confess, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Because of the gospel, because of what Jesus did for us, we can be right with God. That means we can have an intimate relationship with the One who loves us more than we can ever imagine and wants us to have a glorious life on this side of eternity.

Remember Correction is not Criticism. Change the way you think about repentance. God loves us too much to allow sin to hold us captive and hinder our relationship with Him. He will use tests, trials,

and various predicaments to bring us back to Himself in repentance. The correction of God in our life is not criticism. It is the evidence of His love. "...the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in" (Pro. 3:11-12, Heb. 12:5-11). When we repent, the blood of Jesus takes our guilt and redeems us before God and we have no condemnation (Rom. 8:1).

Be aware. When confronted with sin, the human heart will respond in one of three ways. Know yourself and your tendency:

"Yeah, but..." Some have a hard time receiving correction and are quick to blame someone else or circumstances. Think of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:12).

"Yeah, whatever..." Some do not care and feel superior as they could not be wrong (Pro. 12:1).

"Thank you for correcting me" Some are teachable and allow correction to make them better instead of bitter. Be willing to accept responsibility quickly (Psalm 51, Mark 11:23-25).

Repent Daily. It is a good spiritual habit to incorporate daily repentance not out of fear but from a place of loving desire for uninterrupted friendship with God. A daily repentance prayer could be:

*"Heavenly Father, thank you for Your forgiveness and for the blood of Jesus that pays for my sins. Thank you for not abandoning me to my mistakes, my failures, my weaknesses. Thank you for reaching out to me to draw me close to You. I accept that my sins are ungodly, wicked and cause you pain. I ask for forgiveness and for You to cleanse me of my sins. I ask for mercy and grace to walk away from the habits and thoughts that produced this sin in my life. I want relationship with You more than I want this sin. I want a pure heart that I might see You (Mat. 5:8). I thank You, Father, that I am forgiven according to Your word and the blood of Jesus. AMEN!"*

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, I ask, "Search me and know my heart. Examine me and know my anxious thoughts. Show me the offensive ways in me that I may quickly turn from them" (Psa. 139:24). (If He shows you something?)

# RECOMMIT TO GOD

Day 5

Thursday, January 14

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## Scripture Focus:

I Kings 8:61; Psalm 37:5; I Timothy 4:7-8

## Devotional Thought:

"Knowing God is about relationship, not religion."

"Prayer is our first response, not our last resort."

"Walk by faith, not by sight."

Some phrases flow easier off our lips than out of our hearts. If we're honest, while we're saying these things, we're going through the motions without much connection to God or others. Dryness and maybe even a bit of boredom creeps into our spiritual walk.

Don't feel condemned or angry at yourself. We all go through those times. However, we don't have to stay there. Decide to Recommit to God.

Decisions are powerful as decisions start the process that create good or bad consequences in our lives. Deciding to recommit to God will have good consequences.

Deciding to keep yourself spiritually healthy needs to be a top priority in your life. If spiritual health begins to deteriorate, so will the productivity of your life. No matter the demands on your life with ministry, family, work and whatever pressures are present, make the time necessary to keep your relationship with God thriving and growing. The Message Bible says in I Timothy 4:7: "Exercise daily in God – no spiritual flabbiness, please! Workouts in the gymnasium are useful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so, making you fit both today and forever."

## How to Recommit to God:

Decide today. Discipline starts with a decision. Consistent spiritual activities are the little investments we make today into a greater tomorrow. Think of going to the gym and strength training and how over time you gain muscle and endurance.

Avoid Legalism. If you have been around church very long you will have heard legalism kills. Legalism is doing spiritual activities for the purpose of earning God's favor. However, spiritual activities look the same on the outside whether your motive is a "should" or "I get to do because I love Him." Position your heart to do the disciplines because you He said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Give Space for Grace. Bible study and prayer is a given for a thriving relationship with God. If you ignore the basic disciplines, you won't stay spiritually healthy. God is not mad at us if we miss a day. He loves us and truly understands. Just be aware, when our habits drop off, our relationship with God (and our spiritual health) will be affected. You and your relationship with God is worth making your spiritual health a priority in your life.

Over the next few days we will be looking at spiritual disciplines for having a thriving relationship with a living God. We encourage you to face the discrepancies, decide to do the hard, and give yourself permission to make this commitment to be a healthier spiritual person. This season of Spiritual Reset is about finishing the year strong well after our 21 days is over. We are praying for you that you may have "an undivided heart to praise God ...knowing he is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness and mercy" (Psa. 86:11-16) and ready to strengthen you when you ask.

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, with You as my accountability partner, I am ready to commit. I want a thriving relationship with You.
- What are the areas of my life that I need to recommit?

# RESTRUCTURE TIME

Day 6

Friday, January 15

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## **Scripture Focus:**

Proverbs 6:6-11; Ephesians 5:15-16 ; I Corinthians 10:23; James 1:5

## **Devotional Thought:**

Before we look at the disciplines to help you flourish spiritually, we must take a realistic look at how we spend our time. We are a culture that is addicted to being "busy." We are too busy for devotions, too busy for prayer meetings, too busy for connecting with people that we care about, too busy filling every moment of our day with our "to-do" list until we drop exhausted at the end of the day.

It is time to push reset and get off the hamster wheel and restructure our time to have space for God.

## **Restructuring How We Spend Our Time:**

**Assume Responsibility.** The Bible challenges us to redeem the time and make the most of what God has given us (Eph. 5:15-16). It is really our responsibility for how we use our time.

**Ask God's Direction.** The Bible says we were created in Christ to do good works for Him (Eph. 2:10). Ask God every morning which "good works" He has planned for that day and don't limit it to ministry. He enjoys being part of our recreational time, friendships, family time, creativity, and will give us opportunities to be a witness for Him if we include Him.

**Schedule Your Time with God.** Months can go by without making any progress toward fulfillment of your God-given goals if you don't plan your schedule and set your goals and dreams in the context of deadlines. Make appointments on your calendar with Jesus and don't let anything cause you to reschedule your prayer hour. He will know you value the relationship and I promise your friendship will flourish.

**Remove the Clutter.** In the terms of eternity, if something is "permissible but not profitable" (I Cor. 10:23) let it go. If something

is a time drain and detracts you from God given purpose and goals with unimportant activities and obligations, ask the Lord to help you to release it.

Rely on God's Wisdom. The Bible promises if we need wisdom we just need to ask (James 1:5). There is no requirement except to ask. In facing the balance of the many pressures of life—work, family, health, projects, marriage, ministry—how do we get it all done? What is important? How much time is appropriate for each? It is great freedom to allow Holy Spirit wisdom to restructure our schedule.

Recognize the Tyranny of the Urgent. In the overall pattern of your life, doing a good job at the tasks put before you, taking care of the relationships in your life, and maintaining your spiritual vitality is an important part of God's plan for your life. For too often, the urgent shows up and demands attention though it is less important. Be intentional with your time, release the guilt about protecting your time, and make the important a priority.

We encourage you to be honest with yourself and God during this time of reset and restructure your time to allow God to be first in your life. We pray for you to have grace to "number your days so that you will have a heart of wisdom" (Psa. 90:12).

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, where in my life am I wasting time?"
- What good works have you created for me to do today?
- Holy Spirit, are there "permissible but not profitable" things in my life?
- How can I balance my schedule to make an appointment time with you?



# RETURN WITH FASTING

Day 7

Saturday, January 16

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## Scripture Focus:

Isaiah 58; Matthew 6:16; I Corinthians 12:9

## Devotional Thought:

The discipline of fasting is mentioned all throughout the Bible. As we read we discover how fasting brings about breakthrough in arenas like personal problems, financial turmoil, health issues, and other obstacles (Is. 58:6-8).

What is Biblical fasting? Biblical fasting is abstaining from food, drink, sleep, or other pleasure to focus on a period of spiritual growth. It is interesting that Jesus didn't say, "if you fast" but "when you fast" (Mat. 6:16). He doesn't say his followers might fast, but "they will" (Mat. 9:15).

Even though fasting isn't a Christian discipline that is commanded by Christ or required by Scripture it doesn't mean that fasting isn't recommended as part of our spiritual growth. We see in the Book of Acts believers fasting before they made important decisions (Acts 13:4; 14:23). Fasting and prayer are often linked together (Luke 2:37; 5:33). Too often, the focus of fasting is on lack of food. However, the purpose of fasting is to take our eyes off the things of this world and instead focus on God. Fasting is a way to demonstrate to God and to ourselves that we are serious about our relationship with Him. It proves to us that when we can control our food, we can control our thoughts and words, and actions.

Although fasting in Scripture is almost always a fasting from food, there are other ways to fast. Anything you can temporarily give up in order to better focus on God can be considered a fast (1 Cor. 7:1-5). Fasting should be limited to a set time, especially when the fasting is from food. Extended periods of time without eating are harmful to the body (but science has shown short periods of time without food is actually healthy). Fasting is intended as a time to focus on God, not punish our flesh. The primary reason to fast is to develop a closer walk with God.

## Keysto Fasting:

1. Start Small. Don't go from no fasting to a weeklong only water fast. Start with one meal once a week for a month. Then the next month try two meals. Work yourself up to a daylong fast. It is not recommended to abstain from water during a fast. (Use wisdom with medical conditions.)

2. Plan What You Will Do Instead of Eating. Fasting isn't merely not eating, but to be a spiritual discipline you must seek more of God's fullness. Have a plan for what positive pursuit to undertake in the time you would normally be eating. Perhaps set aside that time to study and pray or worship.

3. Connect a Purpose to the Fast. Each fast should have a specific spiritual purpose. Without a purpose and plan, it's not a Biblical fast, it is just going hungry. Maybe your weekly fast is to see breakthrough in a circumstance in your life, or the salvation of a loved one, or to experience a closer walk with Jesus. Maybe your fast can be an intercessory fast for the nation or the culture. Maybe fast because you want to minister to the heart of the Lord (Mat. 9:15).

We encourage you to embrace the weekly discipline of fasting with us that we may see spiritual breakthrough in our lives. As we fast, "may light break forth like the dawn and healing appear quickly. Let righteousness go before us and let the glory of the Lord be our rear guard. Let our voice be heard by our Lord as night becomes like the noonday...Let us find joy in the Lord" (Isa. 58:8-9, 10, 14).

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, I see that Jesus encouraged me to fast to grow stronger spiritually. I ask for You to show me what day and what meal to fast?
- What is my long-term plan? What should I do while I am missing my meal?
- What should be the purpose of my fast for this season?

# RELATE WITH PRAYER

Day 8

Sunday, January 17

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## Scripture Focus:

James 5:16; Song of Songs 2:14

## Devotional Thought:

One of the most important spiritual disciplines as Believers is prayer. We hear the word "prayer" a lot, but what is it? Prayer is simply having conversations with God. Like so many things in life, prayer has been over complicated. But in its simplest form, prayer is "you talking to God and Him talking to you." Remember, it is all about relationship. It is all about friendship.

Prayer is a commandment in scripture because it is necessary to have a relationship with God (Mat. 5:44, 6:5, 6:9, Rom. 12:12, Eph. 6:18, Phi. 4:6, Col. 4:2, 1 Th. 5:17, 1 Ti. 2:1) But prayer should never be a "have to" but a "get to." Would you ever dread having to talk or spend time with your best friend?

Drudgery in prayer is usually lack of conversation topics. If it is a monologue of your needs and wishes, He may be interested as a kind and loving Father (Luke 11:2), but that can be a bit monotonous. As our Father, He wants to take care of our needs, but, as the "lover of our soul" He longs for friendship (Song 5:16). While He enjoys listening to what we have to say, He has so many things to tell us when we ask. He desires a dialogue.

## Resetting your Relationship to God with Prayer

There is no right or wrong answer on how to pray. James 5:16 says, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" but in reality, our prayers are effective even if they are short, weak or poorly. Here are a few practical steps on prayer:

Be confident your prayers matter to God. No one else can pray your prayer or have your conversations with God. He longs to hear your voice (Song 2:14). Your prayers matter to God.

Be intentional. Set up an appointment and make it a priority to

spend an hour with the King a day. You know your schedule. What works best for you? If an hour seems daunting at first, start with 15 minutes and gradually work up to an hour. The important part is the discipline.

Set the atmosphere. Find your prayer spot. If you can find a private place to be with Him that is even better. Bring your Bible and a journal. You may want worship music. It is your date with God. Make it yours.

Read/Pray-the-Word. There is nothing more honoring to God than for us to discuss the concepts of His word with Him. The scriptures are His loves letters to us. Each phase has buried treasure waiting to be revealed of His love for us. For example, Psalm 23:1, "Jesus, I am so thankful You are my Shepherd and fill my life with contentment. I am really content with ...."

We encourage you to embrace the daily discipline of prayer with us. In your intimate times of fellowship with God, we pray that you will "Call to him and he will answer and tell you great and hidden things that you have not known" (Jer. 33:3). We pray that our daily prayer time will create a bond of fellowship that our thoughts of Him are never far from us.

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, I come to spend time with You. I purposefully clear my mind of everything but You. I quieten my soul like David in Psalm 131:1-2. I want to hear from You. I present the eyes and ears of my heart to you. I open my ears to hear Your voice. I open my eyes to see Your face. I open my heart to receive Your love. What would You like to say to me about (present the topic, question, scripture)?
- How can I pray for the will of Heaven to come to earth today?"

# REFRESH WITH THE WORD

Day 9

Monday, January 18

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## Scripture Focus:

I Chronicles 22:19; Proverbs 3:3-6; Psalm 119

## Devotional Thought:

For a believer, devotional Bible study is not an optional discipline. As a believer, we find stories in the Bible that teach principles of wisdom for personal edification on an intellectual, emotional, and spiritual level (2 Tim. 3:16-17). If we are going to be able to give an answer for what we believe, we have to know what the Bible has to say about issues in our culture, in our lives, in our hearts (1 Pet. 3:15).

An in-depth Bible study usually involves dissecting the Word with commentaries and differing translations or even corporate Bible studies where groups engage in fellowship around the Bible, however, a Devotional Bible study is a personal way to better experience the Word at a heart level.

Devotional Bible study is more than reading. It is taking the time to get to know God better through experiencing His Word. The focus is to connect your heart with two or three verses of life-giving truth and fresh revelation about God rather than trying to work through entire chapters to check off your to-do list.

## Resetting Devotional Bible Study

**Be Consistent.** An important aspect of devotional Bible study is consistency. Make it a habit to set aside a regular time and place for your devotional reading that will work best for your schedule.

**Read Prayerfully.** Praying about what you are reading is a great way to increase understanding and apply meaning to your life. Pray before you start your devotional study. Ask Holy Spirit to bring fresh revelation.

**Plan.** Pick a book, maybe one of the gospels (Book of John) or epistles (Book of Ephesians), and work through it slowly and

deliberately.

**Make Notes.** Create a God history either in a journal or in the margins of your Bible by making notes of your devotional Bible study times.

**Choose a Technique.** There are a lot of great Bible study techniques. It is not about a technique. You may try one and if it doesn't work for you, try another. Keep Jesus and knowing Him as your focus, not the technique. Remember it is about relationship and should be enjoyable. An example of a technique is:

- I See – What are the words or phrases that are standing out to me?
- I Think – What do they mean to me right now?
- God is/God wants– All scripture is either a display of God's love for us or how we can love Him.
- I Pray– We express devotion about what we studied in this intimate time of connection.
- I Thank – Contemplate three things in my life that I am grateful to God for after this intimate time with Him.

**Memorize Key Verses.** Writing the truths of God's word on the "tablet of your heart" (Pro. 3:3) is a lost art in today's culture but when it comes to devotional Bible study, memorizing key verses will connect with the meaning and the context.

We encourage you to embrace the daily discipline of Devotional Bible study with us. May the word of God become our delight, our teacher, our counselor, "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path" (Psa. 119:105). May we never "neglect the Lord's word" (Psa. 119:16) and always see the riches of God's love in every passage.

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, let the Word of God speak, as I read/pray Proverbs 3:3-6, what fresh revelation would you like me to see?
- How am I to respond? What do you want me to see about you?"

# REPAY WHAT IS GOD'S

Day 10

Tuesday, January 19

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## Scripture Focus:

Malachi 3:10-12; Matthew 6:21; I Timothy 6:17-21

## Devotional Thought:

God's word is full of principles that explain how His Kingdom works. His commandments are guidelines for life that produce happiness, peace, and contentment. Principles in God's Kingdom work just like principles in the natural. It doesn't really matter if you understand or even agree with gravity, it still operates in your life. The same with the principles of God's Kingdom. Over the next few days, we will look at some of the most life-giving principles to include in our spiritual journey.

God's "Law of First Things" is the giving over, as required, of firstborn and first fruits. They are an offering in faith, and they prove the position in which the giver holds God (Ex. 34:19, 20, 26). When the first things were not dedicated to God, it became an open door to the devourer.

Nowhere is this more evident than with our money. God doesn't need our money. He needs our heart. The fundamental reason for the Law of First Things was to remind us of what position God holds in our lives. God cannot become second or third. If His portion is not first, blessing will not come to the rest of our lives (Ex. 13:13).

Every believer is on a journey regarding their relationship with money and possessions. The Bible tells us that we are called to be good managers, not owners of the resources entrusted to us (I Tim. 6:17-21). We are blessed to be a blessing. Tithing is one great way to acknowledge God to be first in our lives, His provision, and exercise good management. Here are a few practical thoughts:

## Resetting by Repaying what Belongs to God

Tithe as a PRIVILEGE. You GET to tithe. Change the way you think about tithing. Don't think of it as something you "ought" to do or "have" to do but something you "get" to do. Some may

think of tithing as an obligation or even come to church with a lot of old mindsets and distrust. Instead, see it as a way to joyfully acknowledge God's provision over your resources and declare that "He is first." Having a joyful mindset, while not always easy to maintain, will change everything and make your world bigger (Pro. 11:24). Besides, "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor.9:6-8).

Tithe as a GOOD DISCIPLINE, not a 10% goal. Regardless of where you are with tithing, it would be good to start a spiritual discipline with giving. Just start and trust God. The Bible talks about the discipline of being faithful with little so that you later will be faithful with much (Luke 16:10). The goal of tithing is to establish the financial priority of putting God first and honoring Him as the giver of all good gifts.

Tithe as an act of GRATITUDE. When we focus on sharing our treasure, our time, our talents, we take the focus off of us and instead our focus is on God and on others. This shift in focus cultivates a grateful heart and illuminates the blessings we have in our lives for we remember that "every good and perfect gift comes from above" James 1:17.

We encourage you to embrace the spiritual discipline of repaying what belongs to God first. May you walk into the promises of inheritance when you put God first in your life. We pray that you may "see the floodgates of heaven open over your life, the protection from pests devouring your provision, and that all will see the favor of God on your life" (Mal. 3:10-12). God is good and He delights in His treasures.

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, would You bring correction to my mindset about money and show me how it reveals the treasure in my heart?
- Where are doors that have been opened to the devourer in my life, especially with my finances?
- I want to demonstrate that You are first in my life in all areas. Today, I make a commitment to the spiritual discipline to cheerful giving of my money in the reoccurring amount of \_\_\_\_."



# RESPOND TO NEEDS

Day 11

Wednesday, January 20

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## Scripture Focus:

Matthew 25:40; James 1:12; Isaiah 1:17; Romans 12:11-13

## Devotional Thought:

In the Bible, God speaks often of the poor, needy, widows, and orphans. He says when we do things for the least among us, we are doing it for him (Mat. 25:40). God cares about the poor and needy (Deu. 15:7-8). If He does, shouldn't we?

Most who are familiar with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19) and their destruction think it is because of the wickedness of sexual immorality. But the prophet Ezekiel says the sin for which they were judged was pride, living a life of ease and excess food, and neglecting the poor and needy—not simply for sexual sin (Ez. 16:49).

We are mandated by God to help the poor and speak up on their behalf (Pro. 31:8-9). As Americans, this mandate can make us feel uncomfortable as so often the poor are not grateful for our assistance and are often suspicious or entitled or even greedy. It is easy to love those and help those who love us back. It is easy on those days to walk away with a smile thinking we did something worthwhile in the life of another. But God has mercy and wants us to be kind and have mercy for the grateful as well as the ungrateful (Luke 6:32-36).

By helping the poor and needy among us, we are reminded of the gospel by which we are saved. We did not receive mercy because we deserved it. Jesus Christ did not give His life for us because we were good people. No, we were His enemy and when we were full of sin, He died for us. We never did and never will earn His grace. Grace is unmerited. The Son of the Most High God died in mercy for those who are ungrateful and even refuse His gift. We show mercy because we received mercy. We show compassion because we have received compassion. We do "acts of kindness" because the ultimate "act of kindness" was done for us by Jesus.

## Resetting by Responding to Needs

Take off the "rose colored" glasses. The poor and needy often will not respond as you expect. They may not be grateful for your time or money or even be polite and trustworthy. That is not why you do it. He needs us to love with "acts of kindness" even the unlovely among us. They are His sons and daughters, too. Loving the unlovely is an example of "buying gold refined in fire" (Rev. 3:18). We don't do it for earthly rewards.

Check your heart's motivation. In this season of resetting your spirit into alignment with spiritual principles that draw you close to God, check that your reason for responding to the poor and needy.

Use wisdom. Is the person's situation desperate because their options are limited like "widows and orphans" (James 1:27)? The closer the person is to you (relationally, spiritually, or geographically) and the more acute the need (because it's immediate, urgent, or within your unique power to provide), the greater your obligation is to give, assist, and get involved.

Follow the nudge. Has the Holy Spirit highlighted someone to you that may not be poor but may be needing compassion? Perhaps you can buy their lunch or coffee to show them God's love. Remember we are blessed to be a blessing.

We encourage you to look for an opportunity to share an "act of kindness" with someone this week that needs to know that God loves them. We are praying that you "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to our Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 5:16).

## **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, I never want to take for granted the gift of my salvation. I repent forever thinking that I am better than the poor and ungrateful that are among us. I appreciate all that you have so generously blessed me with.
- Holy Spirit, show me someone in need today that I can share with an "act of kindness" to demonstrate Your love."

# REFRAME OUR WORDS

Day 12

Thursday, January 21

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## Scripture Focus:

Proverbs 18:21; Ephesians 4:29; Matthew 12:36; James 1:26

## Devotional Thought:

In the beginning God created the world with words. "Let there be light." "Let there be sky, land, vegetation, lights in the sky. Let there be living creatures." Then He said, "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1). If God created with words and we are created in God's image, do we also create with words?

Words do more than just convey information. God spoke the world into being by the power of His words (Heb. 11:3). The power of words can actually destroy one's spirit, even stir up hatred and violence.

Our words also have the power to build up (Pro. 12:6) and create "life or death" (Pro. 18:21). Jesus said our words are so important that we are going to give an account of what we say when we stand before Him on the day of judgment (Mat. 12:36-37).

Believers today don't pay much attention to the sins of the tongue – gossip, slander, lying, exaggeration, vulgarity, dirty jokes, swearing, sarcasm, mockery, teasing. But Paul cautions to not let "unwholesome" talk come out of our mouths but only what is helpful to build others up according to their needs (Eph. 4:29).

How will the world know we are believers, Christ followers? There is an expectancy that a change of speech follows because we live for Christ and represent Him. But there is a slight problem. James says it is impossible to "tame our tongue" (James 3:1-12). Why? The words are coming from our heart (Mat. 12:34-35).

Resetting by Reframing Our Words

Imagine a metaphor of a bicycle chain that connects the heart and the mouth. To reframe our words, we must deal with our heart's motives first (James 3:13-18). Here are a few heart motive tests:

Test 1 – Slander (James 4:11) When do we tend to speak against fellow believers or make fun of another person? Is it when we feel insecure? Why would it make us feel better to put another person down or bully them? We can put a brake on our words by pausing

and asking, "Do I feel secure in God's love for me today?" "Are my words edifying or uplifting?"

**Test 2 – Complain (James 5:9)** What is at the root of a good old serious whine session? To be honest, "It is all about me." We complain because we aren't feeling the way we want, or things aren't happening the way we wanted them to happen. While scripture is clear that complaining is a poor attitude, how we stop? A practical way is to "pour our hearts out to God" (Psa. 62:80) in a journal. He cares that we feel frustrated. It is better to tell Him than other people. Look for one thing to be grateful for in the situation. Thanksgiving can break the chain of complaining (1 Ths. 5:18).

**Test 3 – Swearing (James 5:12)** If we want our mouths to be used to speak words that represent God, should we also be saying things that represent His enemy? When we are tempted to color our communication, we can put the brake on our words and ask, "Do we think we are less than who God says we are?" "Are my words going to bring glory to God?" "Why do I feel the need to add profanity for emphasis?"

The chain between our heart and our mouth cannot be broken but a practical suggestion is to do what James suggested. He suggested learning to be "slow to speak" (James 1:19) so we can "bridle on your tongue" (James 1:26). Before you speak, pause and ask, "Why did I almost say that? What is my motive?" Then honestly submit your answer to the Lord and "resist the devil" (James 4:7). We pray for you to be empowered to "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that I may impart grace to the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, I repent for the words of my mouth that are not pleasing to You. I recognize that my heart is tempted to sin and in the moments of frustration and stress I don't represent You well. I ask, forgive me and let Your water wash over my soul and bring refreshing and make me clean and whole.

# RELEASE OFFENSES

Day 13

Friday, January 22

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## **Scripture Focus:**

Matthew 6:14,15; 18:21,22; Mark 11:25; Ephesians 4:32

## **Devotional Thought:**

Let's face it. Letting go of an offense, forgiving, is more about us than the other person. It is about our freedom. It is not natural, and it is not easy. It is often a process that begins with a decision. Then one day we wake up and we realize that our emotions have caught up with our decision.

An offense speaks of injustice. It speaks of pain. It may have been a hurt that came from a violent or reckless act. Or it may have been something that somebody should have done but didn't. It may be something that happened a long time ago or it may be something that just happened.

The command to forgive is difficult because it goes against everything in us. We want to strike back. We want to let the other person know how much they hurt us. If we can't have justice, then we vow we will NEVER have a relationship with that person again. We avoid them and ignore them. So, when we talk about releasing offenses, forgiveness, it is not surprising that our heart tries to find excuses and justifications.

## **Why forgive?**

First, it reflects God's character. When we forgive we reflect the Father's love. To forgive is not letting them "get away with what was wrong" but is allowing "God's glory" to cover their transgression (Pro. 19:11). What better way to show the wrong someone has done than to contrast their actions with grace.

Second, it releases us. The alternative to forgiveness is bitterness and resentment which causes pain to the person refusing to let go. Forgiveness releases us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Unforgiveness blocks fellowship with God.

Third, it yields power in the life of the one forgiven. Our extension

of grace to others has power to transform them. In those painful situations, remember every person, even then one that hurt you, matters to God.

### **Learning to Forgive**

Releasing an offense is a process. To begin the process takes honest conversations with the Holy Spirit who leads us to our inheritance that we find in Jesus.

### **Identify your hurt.**

Acknowledge your sinful response and repent for your sins and receive forgiveness.

"Father, I repent for my sins and my heart's sinful response when I was offended and hurt. I ask for forgiveness and for the blood of Jesus to cover my sin. Let me remember that it is your grace that empowers me to walk away from my need for vengeance."

Forgive

"Father, I forgive (name of person) from my heart for the things they did to me. I forgive them for (list the things). I let them go free. I lay nothing to their charge. I require nothing of them. I release them from my heart into Your hands for correction as you so choose. I forgive them Father, because You have forgiven me. Now according to Your Word, I pray for them and bless them in the name of Jesus. AMEN.

Let Go of the Pain and receive the comfort of the Holy Spirit knowing that He will take care of it in His way and in His time. Breathe deep and receive the "peace that passes all understanding" (Phi. 4:7).

We are praying for you, "As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, to make allowances for each other's faults, and forgive those who offend you. May you remember the Lord forgave you first so you can forgive as He forgave you" (Col. 3:12-13).

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, I am tired of hiding behind the excuses and resentment. I confess, I am offended and hurt by\_\_\_\_\_." (Follow the steps above with the grace and tenderness of the Holy Spirit as your helper.)

# RELY ON GOD

Day 14

Saturday, January 23

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## Scripture Focus:

Luke 8:22-25; Hebrews 11 1-3; Genesis 15:6; I Samuel 2:9

## Devotional Thought:

What is faith? The Bible says that faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance that God is working, even though we cannot see it. Faith will contend that regardless of the situation, in our lives or in someone else's life, we know the Lord is working. The Hebrew word for faith means "support." In other words, when we have faith, we have "the Lord's support" because we can be assured that He is working every situation to His glory. We may not understand or even agree, but we can by faith realize He knows best.

Faith comes from a new heart regenerated by God. Therefore, faith is a gift from God (Eph. 2:8-9). We grow our faith by reading the Bible and hearing the gospel. The more we immerse ourselves in Jesus and His truth, our confidence grows. Faith helps us to combat unbelief and motivates us to do what God desires us to do. Faith makes us right in God's sight (Rom. 5:1).

Faith and belief are not the same thing even though they are often used interchangeably. Belief is a strongly held opinion about an idea or worldview and can change over time as you grow and learn new things. Faith can only be received from God. True faith can take on doubts and questions and remain intact. We grow in faith, but the foundation is always the same. Believing is not enough as even the demons believe that there is one God (James 2:19).

Do you believe He is your God? God given faith gives us new hearts and opens our eyes to see that He is our God and that we need Him. Does your faith in God change how you live your life? Faith changes how we live our lives. Faith motivates us to keep moving toward greater revelation of God.

Does your faith trust God's word is Truth? As faith grows in us, God

will begin to expose new revelations and we will be able to trust God for what He has promised in His Word.

## Resetting to Rely on God More

Ask God to increase Your faith. If you are struggling in your faith and relying on God, ask Him for more of it.

Focus on Obeying God. No one is perfect and we all make mistakes. But if you keep on trying to follow God's commands and words, your faith will grow naturally.

Spend time reading and hearing God's Word. Make this an everyday habit. If you are too busy to read, listen to podcasts, sermons, or audio Bibles.

Spend time with other believers. We are meant to worship together, pray together, and share our faith. We grow in personal faith when we study the Bible with one another.

Spend time in fervent prayer. To grow in relationship with God in prayer is probably the biggest key to growing in faith as you learn to share your heart and listen to His voice.

We are praying for you, "May the message of the gospel run swiftly and be glorified... and may you be delivered from wicked and evil people who have no faith. May you remember that the Lord is faithful and will strengthen and protect you as you continue in His commandments growing in God's love and Christ's perseverance" (2 Ths. 3:1-5).

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, would You increase my faith? Would you show me where my faith is weak?"



## **Scripture Focus:**

1 Peter 1:13-16; Zechariah 13:9

## **Devotional Thought:**

Our life in God starts with Him initiating the relationship with us (John 14:6). When we realize we are sinners, need a Savior, believe in Jesus and confess His Lordship, it is just like we never sinned (Rom. 10:9). Legally we are declared righteous before God by the works of Jesus (Rom. 3:21-26). However, it is our human spirit that has been made righteous, not our soul. Our soul gets to go through the transformation of matching our righteous human spirit and that is a refining process. While our human spirit may be free from the guilt of sin, our soul must come into alignment in behaviors, affections, will, and thinking with the righteous ways of a Holy God.

The Bible talks about the “refiner’s fire” being the tests in life that produces the gold in our character and the silver of redemption (Zec. 13:9, Pro. 17:3, Rom. 5:3-4). James tells us to even “Rejoice” when we face trials (James 1:12-13).

As believers, we are invited into relationship with God.

There is only one problem. He is holy. We are not. While He cannot change who He is, He invites us to become Holy like Him. He says, “Be holy, because I am holy” (Lev. 11:44, 1 Pet. 1:16) not because He wants us to be afraid or feel obligated to serve Him. He wants us to have faith and hope in Him alone. He wants us to know the joy of being “set apart” and “dedicated” to Him. He wants us to be able to fulfill our purpose for which He has called us. Culture, even church culture, has stolen the power and joy that holiness brings to our lives. The motto of the world to “be yourself” undermines the promise that holiness can produce.

Living a Life of Holiness

Delight to “Get to Be” Holy. We need to change how we think about holiness. We “get to, not have to” obey a Holy God. We get to live

a life set apart, moral, godly, humble, following God's laws because we want to!!! We "get to" choose to be holy. The happy effect is the more holy we are, the closer we get to God.

Expect Improvement, Not Perfection. God does not see our weak love as false love (Song 2:16-17). Even when we see our darkness, He calls us lovely (Song 1:5). Even when we make mistakes, He sees in our heart we are trying (I Sam. 16:7).

Submit to Holy Spirit. He is our teacher and counselor (John 14:16). He will expose sin so that we may recognize and turn away from it, illuminate Scripture that will transform our thinking, and help us to see the glory of Christ.

The process of refining in our life, the fiery trials, the tests of willpower, and sacrifices are opportunities to grow in our dedication. They prepare us to be part of His Kingdom on earth. We are praying for you to have an attitude of "happy holiness" as "God counts you worthy [prepares you] for the calling on your life to fulfill every good purpose of yours [your purpose for which He sent you to earth] and that He fills your acts of faith with power so that Jesus may be glorified in your life" (2 Ths. 1:11-12).

### **Prayer Starter:**

- "Holy Spirit, I see that being holy like you are holy should be at the center of my life. What are past trials and tests in my life that I didn't understand at the time that were producing gold (new character traits) or silver (redeeming forgiveness) in my life?"

## **Scripture Focus:**

Revelations 2:1-7; Matthew 24:12-13; Romans 8:16

## **Devotional Thought:**

When a person comes to Christ as their Savior, they often experience the delight of “first love” for God. There is great joy and freedom (Rom. 8:16). Unfortunately, many believers fall away from this first love. Their love for God grows cold when they do not depend on God for their daily needs and pursue relationship with Him.

If you have ever found yourself in this place, you are not the first to experience paralyzing unhappiness in God. After commending the church at Ephesus concerning their patient endurance, intolerance of evil, suffering for Christ’s name, and exposing of false apostles, Jesus confronts them. Although this church looked amazing on paper, he turns to one central issue, “But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first” (Rev. 2:4).

They had a zeal for traditions, but they had lost their love for Jesus. They showed up for Bible studies and debated the heretics but lost their pure love for their Lord. They stood against evil in their midst but tolerated a sluggish love towards Jesus and each other. Privately they were abandoning Christ while publicly in crusading for truth about Christ. They were exchanging Christ himself for images of the Savior. It is a scary reality that the road to hell is not only paved with good intentions, but good deeds and religious precision as well.

And Jesus was going to remove their lampstand (influence) if they continued to move in the direction that Matthew warned against: “Because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved” (Mat. 24:12–13).

But Jesus loves his church and has compassion towards his faintly

burning candles. So, Jesus counsels them, and us, in three ways: "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent." (Rev. 2:5)

### **Resetting to Rekindle Our First Love**

Remember. Do you remember what it was like when God first awakened your soul? Do you remember the excitement? Do you remember how joyful you danced from being an orphan to a son, a dead sinner to a resurrected saint, an enemy to His beloved? Did you run to prayer, wake up early to read the word, stay up late to talk to Him about our day? Remember the time you spent with other believers? Remember.

Repent. From the conviction that comes from realizing where you once stood, you can "change your mind" about where you are today. Repent. NOT-"just try to do better next time" NOT-"just feel guilty and hide behind good intentions" Go to your Savior in the blood of his Son and cry out for mercy.

"Heavenly Father, I confess that I have grown cold and entertained other loves. I repent for not loving You as You deserve. I need your mercy. I need your grace. I need the blood of Jesus to cover my transgressions. I ask, restore me back to my first love. Let my heart burn with holy fire and passion for You just as in the beginning. Let my eyes look only at You and never at another. In Jesus name. Amen."

Return. It is amazing that God calls you to return doing what you were doing before you fell. What were the habits and graces that made your heart sing for Jesus? What were the actions, the behaviors, that brought you close to Him?

In this season of spiritual reset, He is inviting you to have a sweet relationship with Him again. We are praying for you to "Keep yourself in God's love" (Jude 21) as commanded with the habits of grace, the spiritual disciplines that will keep your spirit strong. Keep the fires of love for God strong in your heart.

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, what are the habits of grace that I should return to doing?"

## Scripture Focus:

Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 29:25; Hebrews 13:6

## Devotional Thought:

The Bible says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Pro. 1:7, Job 28:28, Ps. 111:10). The fear of the Lord is often downplayed as mere respect or reverence. But the word fear in respect to God is used 300 times in the Bible so that must mean it is important. However, it can be pretty confusing when we read that "perfect love casts out all fear" (1 John 4:18). Do we want fear or not? Yet, if we are really honest with ourselves, do we fear God's opinion or the fear of man most?

God's Design. Before we can understand how to position our hearts with righteous thinking, we must understand the beauty of our design. We were created with longings in our human heart that would create connection to God. Our desire for approval and fear of disapproval is very strong. God actually designed us to be motivated by these emotionally powerful forces to reveal what we really love.

Fear of Man – Whether we want to admit it or not, "fear of man" can weave a web of ambiguity around issues that are Biblically clear. It can gag us into silence when we should speak. It can paralyze us when we should take action. It feels powerful, but it is deceptive. He wants us to live in the safe freedom of trusting Him (Pro. 29:25). He doesn't remove fear of disapproval. He transfers fear of disapproval to the right place. He will also help us face our false fears, so they lose their power over us (Heb. 13:6, Is. 54:17, Phil. 4:6-7).

Fear of God - God's ways are wise. When we have a healthy reverence for God and His ways, it saves us from caving into our own sinful nature. The Bible is full of examples of how fearing God creates reputation, protection, opportunity, and holiness (Gen. 42:18, Ex. 1:17, Ex. 9:29-31, Ex. 18:21, Ex. 20:20, Lev. 19:14, 32, Mat.

10:28, I Cor. 7:1). In Christ we see the ultimate example of fear and love working together. He didn't mince words when people needed to face their sin and repent. But He then demonstrated love beyond human understanding by "laying his life down for his friends" (John 15:13). The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but the love from the Lord is its conclusion.

**Heart Check.** The person(s) whose approval we most desire – whose curse of disapproval we most fear – is the person(s) we will obey. If it is not the Lord, then it is a functional god in our lives. Both Moses and Jesus commanded us to direct our love and fear to the right God and fear the terrible eternal curse of God's disapproval over some minor man's disapproval (Deu. 6:5, Mat. 22:37).

### **Reset to Revere God**

**Confess.** As soon as you recognize that you fear the opinion of man over the opinion of God, confess it as a sin and repent. Confess it to faithful friends to help you fight it (James 5:16, Psa. 113:5).

**Question.** Examining your fear will often expose the irrationality of it and how pathetic it really is especially when you consider your soul is in jeopardy (Mat. 10:28).

**Confront.** Obedience calls for courage. Courage is not the absence of the emotion of fear, but the resolve to obey despite what we feel and exercise trust in God (Acts 5:29, Deu. 31:6).

In this season of spiritual reset, we are praying that though you may feel afraid of man, you will grow in your trust in God to keep you safe when you obey Him (Pro. 29:25.)

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, I ask show me any area of my life where I am struggling with "fear of man's opinion?" I want to reset that area back to a Fear of the Lord to bring me wisdom.
- I see that \_\_\_\_\_. I confess and repent.
- Holy Spirit, what is the truth of this fear? Can it really hurt me? What is the worst thing that can happen to me?
- Holy Spirit, how should I respond in courage? What are you asking me to do? I want to represent You and Your Kingdom well."

# RESIST TEMPTATION

Day 18

Wednesday, January 27

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## Scripture Focus:

I Peter 5: 8; James 4:7; Ephesians 6:10-17

## Devotional Thought:

What is temptation? Temptation is the desire to do something, especially wrong or unwise. Being tempted does not make you a bad person. Battling sin and temptation is part of the Christian walk. We have been set free from the power of sin and given powerful tools but learning to live without sin is a process.

Everyone experiences temptation (I Cor. 10:13, I John 1:8-9). Even Jesus was tempted (Heb. 4:15). What really matters is how we act when we are tempted. Dwelling on a wrong desire will create the inevitability of an action (James 1:15). Quickly dismissing the temptation as wrong will create victory.

As we grow and mature as believers, letting go of our "old man and putting on the new man" (Eph. 4:22-24) our struggles may change, but not completely go away. One struggle may go away while God may reveal another struggle that was there all along that we didn't see because it was hidden.

## Keys to RESIST Temptation

1. Recognize the enemy. We have an enemy who wants to destroy our souls and make sure we don't fulfill our God given purpose on the earth. He just looks for permission (I Peter 5:8) to devour us like a lion devours its prey. We have to be on guard to resist the enemy of our souls (I Peter 5:9). Denying he exists, being ignorant of his evil intentions behind the temptation, or ignoring his involvement will make us an easy target. He only cares that we fall. We are to stand firm in the faith against the schemes of the devil (Eph. 6:11).

2. Realize we are not alone. A powerful ploy of the enemy is to isolate a believer with shame about their struggle. But the Bible says there is "no temptation that people all over the world are not fighting" (I Cor. 10:13a). Be honest with a trusted pastor or friend (James

5:16). Shining light on a struggle takes away its power.

3. Resist the devil and he will flee. See temptation for what it really is – the enemy’s lure or bait, that can lead a foolish, naïve, or unwary person into danger (James 4:7, James 1:14). This is especially true of temptations involving sexual immorality as they have dangerous consequences (Pro. 7:22,23). As believers, filled with the Holy Spirit, we have been granted power to stand against every temptation (2 Pet. 1:3). He has given us the spiritual armor (Eph. 6:10-18). The Word of God is an offensive weapon to keep us from sin (Psa. 119:11, Mat. 4:1-11).

4. Recognize your temptations and make a plan to resist. In the quiet times, when we are not being faced with the desire of temptation, devise a game plan to resist falling into disobedience (Rom. 13:14). We may fight improper desires by intentionally focusing on something else – an activity, conversation, or a wholesome thought (Phil. 4:8). Jesus said to “Pray continually” to avoid temptation (Mat. 26:41).

5. Reach out to God. Don’t run away from God when we struggle. Instead run to Him. He commanded us to forgive “70 x 7” (Mat. 18:21-22) because that is what He does for us. Every time we fall and sincerely experience the remorse of disappointing Him and ask for His forgiveness and grace to keep trying, He forgives us. Even if it is every five minutes. He cares that we engage in the struggle to resist because He knows it is growing our faith in Him, our dependence on His strength and not our own. One day, we can testify of how His glory made our spirit strong, our heart whole and our soul free. We are praying for you to be “strong and courageous” (Deu. 31:6) and not afraid for God is wanting you to win your battle with temptation even more than you do.

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, I recognize I am tempted to sin by \_\_\_\_\_. In this quiet time, when it is just You and me, shine Your light.
- Holy Spirit, help me create a plan to withstand when the enemy comes with this temptation.
- I am ready to be strong in the spirit, whole in my heart and free in my soul.”



# REALIGN IDENTITY

Day 19

Thursday, January 28

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## Scripture Focus:

Ephesians 1:3-14; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

## Devotional Thought:

It is the cry of every human heart to know "Who am I? and Why am I here?" God designed us with innate longings to know and be known so we would search for Him. God made us who we are so we could make known who He is on the earth. Our identity is for the sake of making known His identity.

Our identity is a gift from God. At the heart of what it means to be a Christ follower is to receive a new identity (2 Cor. 5:17). In Jesus, we do not lose our true selves, but we become our true selves. It is the true selves we can only be in Him (Rom. 6:6, 5:10, 8:15-16, Gal. 3:29, John 15:15, Mat. 10:35-37, Heb. 4:16, Phi. 1:6).

God's Design. He put in us a desire for beauty so we would seek His beauty and find our beauty. He put in us a desire for greatness, so we see How great He is and make His greatness known on the earth. He put in us a desire for intimacy so we would seek to know Him and be known by Him. He put in us a desire to be enjoyed so we would know the delight He finds in us. He put in us the desire to be fascinated so we would be intrigued by His stories, His mysteries, His Kingdom, and living life with Him. He put in us a desire to be whole-hearted so we would experience the passion of being fully alive. He put in us the desire to matter, to make a lasting impact with the time we have on earth so that we will take our purpose for which He sent us seriously.

Lost Identity. We get lost when we give in to the pressure to define ourselves by the role we play or the successes we have in life. Our sense of self cannot be found in external things because circumstances change. So often, if we are honest, we feel insecure. The ones that seem to hide it the most are often the ones who are struggling the most. But our insecurity is an invitation from God to escape the danger of false beliefs about who we are and find true peace in who He is.

## **How do I Realign My Identity?**

**See Ourselves How God Sees Us.** According to Ephesians 1, we are blessed with every spiritual blessing, chosen, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, grace-lavished, and unconditionally loved and accepted. We are pure, blameless, and forgiven. We have been chosen and predestined to do something for God that has great purpose. We have received hope of spending eternity with God. When we are in Christ, these aspects of our identity cannot be changed by what we do.

**Identify Obstacles.** If we are honest, sometimes there are gaps between what our mind knows and our heart believes. Intellectually we may know these truths, but it is not reality in how we live our lives. To live out the fullness of our new identity in Christ, we must determine what is hindering us.

**Surrender False Beliefs.** Once you identify a false belief about your identity, surrender it to God with prayer. Sometimes the lie is connected to a very real, painful experience. Take some time and let God into the place of brokenness. You may not “feel” forgiven or blameless, but through faith we can hold to the truth that is the way God sees us (2 Cor. 10:3-5). See next page for table of Lies and Truth.

“Heavenly Father, I confess that I believe a lie about my identity. Today, I repent for believing (the lie about identity) and with an act of my will surrender it to you. I let go of the pain. I let go of the bitterness and forgive. According to Colossians 1:14, I nail this lie about my identity to the cross and I ask for the truth of my identity to triumph. I replace the lie with the declaration (the truth about identity).”

We are praying for you to be restored to your true identity as you were “chosen by God and predestined for a purpose” (Eph. 1:11) to partner with God to bring His Kingdom to the earth. As a believer in Christ, you are His son or daughter. That is your true identity.

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, do I have false beliefs about my identity? I ask for the word of God to be my mirror.

## THE LIE

I am rejected. \_\_\_\_\_

I am guilty. \_\_\_\_\_

I am inadequate. \_\_\_\_\_

I am a fearful, anxious person. \_\_\_\_\_

I am not very smart. \_\_\_\_\_

I am in bondage. \_\_\_\_\_

I am unlovable/unloved. \_\_\_\_\_

I am unwanted. \_\_\_\_\_

I am hopeless. \_\_\_\_\_

I have no strength. \_\_\_\_\_

I feel condemned. \_\_\_\_\_

I am alone/feel alone. \_\_\_\_\_

I have no one to take care of me. \_\_\_\_\_

There is nothing special about me. \_\_\_\_\_

I am not good enough. \_\_\_\_\_

I am defeated. \_\_\_\_\_

I am afraid of Satan. \_\_\_\_\_

I can't reach God. \_\_\_\_\_

## THE TRUTH

I am accepted.

(Eph 1:6; Ps 139:17)

I am totally forgiven.

(Eph 1:7; Ps 103:3; Heb 10:17)

I am adequate.

(Phil 1:7; 2 Cor 3:5)

I am free from fear.

(2 Tim 1:7; 1 John 4:18)

I have God's wisdom.

(1 Cor 1:30; Col 2:3)

I am free.

(2 Cor 3:17; John 8:36)

I am very loved.

(John 15:9; Eph 2:4-5)

I have been adopted by God.

(1 John 3:1; Rom 8:16-17)

I have all the hope I need.

(Rom 15:13; Ps 31:24)

I have God's power.

(Eph 1:1; Eph 3:20)

I am blameless.

(Rom 8:1; John

3:18)

I am never alone.

(Heb 13:5-6; Rom 8:38-39)

I am protected/safe.

(Ps 32:7-8; 10-11)

- I have been chosen by God.

(1 Cor 6:11; 1 Peter 2:9-10)

I am perfected in Christ.

(Heb 10:14; Col 2:9-10)

I am victorious.

(2 Cor 2:14; Rom 8:37)

I have authority over Satan.

(Luke 10:19; 1 John 4:4; 1 John 3:8)

I have access to God.

(Heb 10:19-22; Eph 3:12)

# RECONNECT TO THE

Day 20  
Friday, January 29

## GREAT COMMANDMENT

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### Scripture Focus:

Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-34; I Corinthians 13

### Devotional Thought:

One day Jesus was asked by a lawyer and expert of the law how one could "inherit eternal life" and Jesus answered "To love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind...The second is to love your neighbor as yourself" (Mat. 22:36-40).

It summed up all the laws and commands of the Bible to: Love God. Love others. Love Self.

For a God that has everything – all the money, wisdom, time, influence, fame – the only thing He wants is our voluntary love. All of Christianity comes down to how we love God and how everything we do displays our love for God. No success, status, or possession will matter at the end of our days. How we loved God and loved others will be our victory.

When our relationship is good with Him, it will be good with other people. He even gave us clues how to speak His love language when He said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). He knew we would have a hard time with righteousness on our own so Jesus took care of that for us (Romans 4-5) and gives us power to live by faith (Rom. 1:16-17). The God of the Universe, the Creator of the World, the King of Glory wants our hearts!!!! He created this world, He created each one of us, with one goal in mind, to have a relationship with each of us. Through us, He would bring love to the world by us loving others.

### Reset to Reconnect to the Great Commandment

Love what He Loves. He wants us to love others, like He loves us (John 15:9). When we love, or value, what He loves, we are loving Him. Consider for a moment the stranger in the marketplace, the unfriendly driver on the road, the rude Facebook posters, the politicians, the people who are so unlike you, friends, family, or even the person you look at in the mirror. He loves them. Shouldn't we?

Love with all our heart. Be enthusiastic about pursuing Jesus and His word. When we set our affections on God first, our emotions (heart or feelings) will follow. Decide that loving God first is the primary dream of life and all other goals support that dream (Ps. 91:14, Ps. 18:1).

Love with all our mind. Choose to fill our minds with things that support loving God instead of clutter that diminishes our capacity to love Him. There are some things in this world that we can put in our minds that are "permissible, but not profitable" (I Cor. 10:23). We show our love to God by taking the time to fill our mind with His Word and refusing to feed our mind on darkness (Job 31:1, Phil 4:8).

Love with all our strength. Use our time, money, energy, talents, words, influence and energy to express love for Him and help others to love Him (Heb. 6:10). God takes pleasure in the things we actively do for Him that Jesus set forth in the Sermon on the Mount (Mat. 5-7): serving (6:1-4, 19-21), forgiving (6:14), witnessing (5:13-15), praying (6:5-14), etc.

Love with our soul. Align our identity to agree with His love, truth and investment in our lives. We see ourselves in the way we define our success and value thus determining our identity. If we base identity on external things, we end up an emotional storm and preoccupied with self. Success in the eyes of God is being one whom God loves and who loves God. Confess over your soul, "I am loved (by God) and I am a lover (of God); therefore, I am successful." We all need grace from the Spirit to receive God's love and to love Him in return (Rom. 5:5). In other words, "it takes God to love God." We are praying "May you love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. May you love your neighbor as you love yourself" (Luke 10:25-28). We are praying that you love yourself as God loves you, seeing yourself through the His eyes "Dark...but lovely" (Song 1:5) made righteous by the sacrifice of Jesus who sees you not as you are but as what you will become while in relationship with Him.

### **Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, what is the clutter in my life that fills my mind, my affections, my soul, my strength instead of God?

# REJOIN THE GREAT COMMISSION

Day 21

Saturday, January 30

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## **Scripture Focus:**

Matthew 9:37-38, 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-47; John 20:21; Acts 1:8

## **Devotional Thought:**

The Great Commission is one of the most significant passages in the Bible. It was the last recorded instruction from Jesus to His disciples and a special call to action. Jesus said, "...go and make disciples..." (Mat. 28:19-20). He promised, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you..." (Acts 1:8).

As believers in Jesus, we are His disciples. His call to action to make more disciples applies to us all!!! Big secret, not just ministers that work at the church, or preach on Sundays, or travel to foreign countries are called to make disciples. Paul, who wrote most of the discipleship principles in the New Testament, was a tentmaker by trade (Acts 18:1-4).

First, what is a disciple? Basically, a "disciple" is someone who adheres to the teachings of another. When applied to Jesus, a disciple is someone who learns from Him to live like Him – someone who, because their heart has been awakened to God's grace and love in their life, conforms their words and ways to the words and ways of Jesus. Basically, they will be a "little Christs" (Acts 26:28). A disciple of Jesus will be a worshipper (John 4:23-24), a servant (John 13:5-8, John 13:14-15), and a witness (John 20:21, John 17:18).

The Great Commandment and the Great Commission go hand in hand. Because of our great love for God, we want everyone in our world and everyone we meet to know Him – not just about Him, but about the great hope that is found living for Him.

## **Keys to Living Out the Great Commission**

See Your World. Mark 16:15 says, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel." Who in your world needs to know that Jesus loves them? That He is for them? That He has a plan for their life? That

regardless of their level of spiritual revelation there is still another level of glory awaiting them?

Start at Home. The most important world for us to impact is our family. If we are married, we are called to make difference for Jesus in the worlds of the spouse that we commit our lives to, and to the children God sends to live with us. If we are single, we are called to make a difference to our extended families and church family. How sad if our name is famous in the land for Christ, yet our own children don't know Him as their hope and salvation. (1 Cor. 9:27)

See the One. When you think about the many lost and dying people who don't know Jesus it can be overwhelming. But you can make a difference if you see through the eyes of Jesus.

"One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked, "What are you doing?" The youth replied, "Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die." "Son," the man said, "don't you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can't make a difference!"

After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said..."I made a difference for that one."

Say "Yes." We live in a dark hour when the world is changing rapidly and the hearts of humanity is filled with fear, dread, frustration, and so much confusion. They seek to solve their problems with things that bring temporary comfort that will ultimately lead to their eternal destruction. We have an opportunity like no other to be alive in Christ!!! We know the Savior who has the answer for our neighbors, the less fortunate, the fatherless kids, the struggling moms, the wounded warriors, the town two hours away, the homeless downtown. Who will go? Can we say, "Send me?"

We believe every person has an important part to fulfill in the Great Commission. No role is more or less significant, just different. We are praying today, "Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see the fields that are white with harvest and how few are the laborers to gather the

souls ready to know you" (John 4:35). We ask, empower us with courage and boldness to say "yes" to love with a heart of compassion that "none would perish" (2 Pet. 3:9). We ask "fill us with the promised power to tarry in prayer for breakthrough in our world" (Luke 24:49-50).

**Prayer Starter:**

- Holy Spirit, open my eyes and ears to see what you see and hear what you hear. As I look around my world today with You, can You highlight who needs a word, a prayer, to be heard today?
- Holy Spirit, how am I doing loving my family?
- Am I discipling well at home?"



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