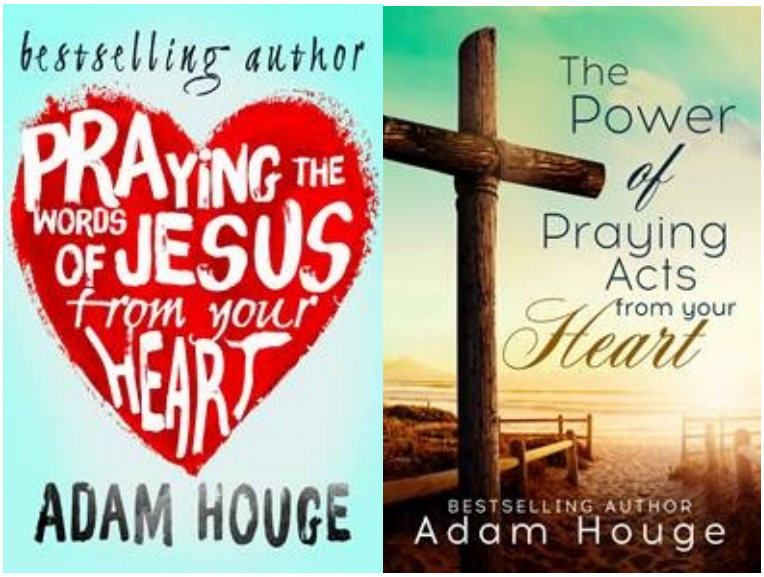
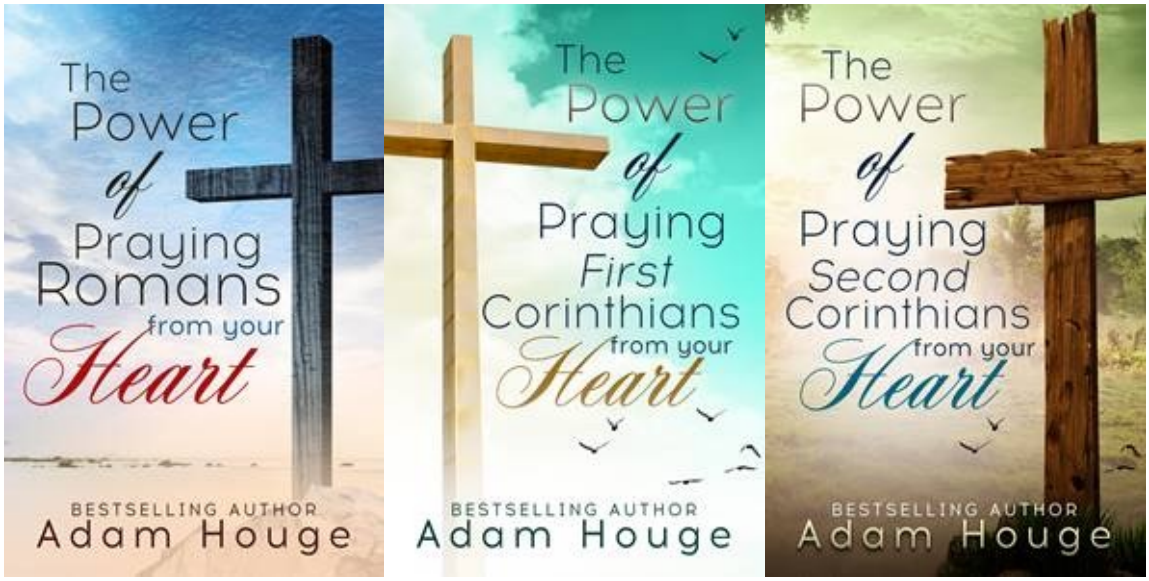
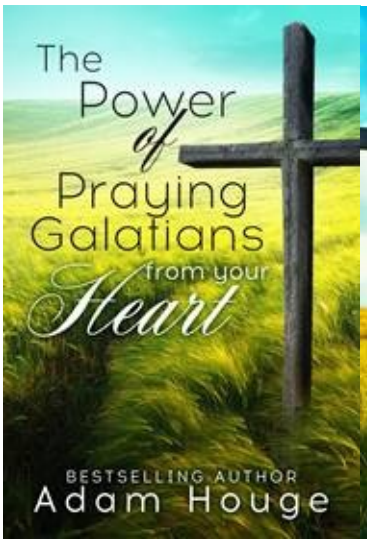
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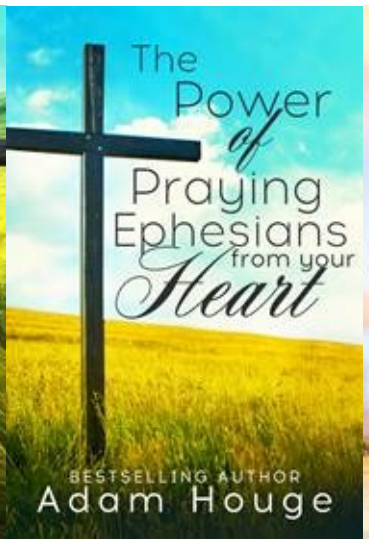
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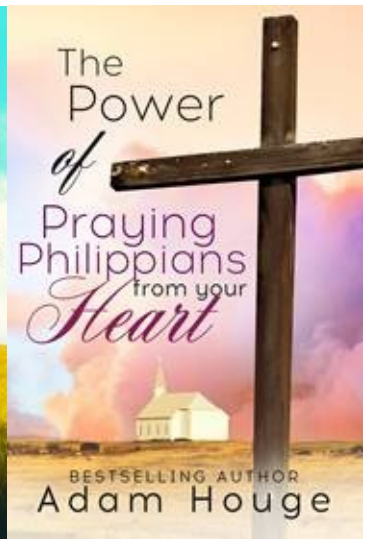
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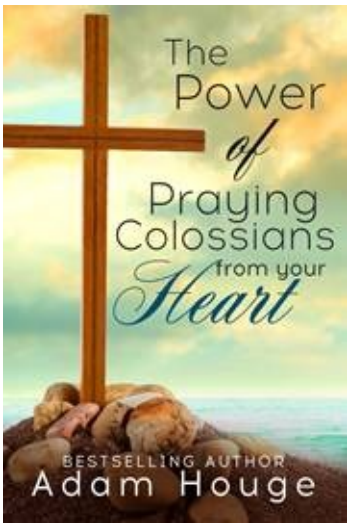

The
Power
of
Praying
Colossians
from your
Heart
BESTSELLING AUTHOR
Adam Houge

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Praying the Words of Jesus from Your Heart—A 31-Day Devotional

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Introduction

There is nothing more powerful or life-changing than the words of Jesus. By His word the world was made, and by His word you are born again. When His words enter your heart, He has promised, they will not return to Him void. They will go forth and prosper your soul in the fruit of God.

Knowing this, take the next thirty-one days to be renewed and changed by praying the words of Jesus. Come out from the distractions around you and spend some time being recharged in His Spirit through prayer.

Day One

Dedicated to His Word

“But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”’” Matthew 4:4

Jesus was referring to Deuteronomy in this passage. As it is written,

“So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.” Deuteronomy 8:3

Everything you have and everything you are is God’s. He provides all things, and there is no reason for worry. Only follow His Spirit, and all will come together for good. His Holy Spirit communicates the will of God to you on a moment-by-moment basis. He is the source of God’s voice, so it is imperative for you to be sensitive to His voice—that you may obey His words.

Notice that this verse doesn’t say, “Man lives by the written word of God (Bible),” but rather, “by every word that proceeds from His mouth.” The written word proceeded forth from His mouth and came from the Holy Spirit. His written word is not greater than His oral word. Anything God tells you to do, whether written or spoken inwardly by the Holy Spirit, must be obeyed.

Do not seek your daily bread, but let God give it to you. For Christ is your daily bread, and if you have any physical needs, God will provide even for those. His love compels Him to. If you have need, He will allow it to occur so that you may learn to live by every word of God. While He is teaching you, He’ll provide for your needs. It won’t be what you want, per se, but it will be what you need. Then, when He has finished teaching you that lesson of life, He will bless you with things you want because your heart has been tempered to receive and use them properly. If we have too much of what we want before our hearts are conformed to the Lord’s, we will be fleshly and contrary to His character. But if we learn obedience through the things we suffer, we will have a heart prepared to abound properly. For even Jesus was tested this way. As we read,

“…though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.” Hebrews 5:8

And as Paul wrote, so each of us must be able to say as well,

“I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” Philippians 4:12

Learn to suffer need so that, through your suffering, you may become obedient. Learn also to remain sensitive to God’s heart, abiding always in the Holy Spirit when you abound. For it is easy to become distracted from the Holy Spirit by the many idle activities and toys that surround us through wealth.

So whether you are abased or abound, obey the Holy Spirit as He teaches you how to apply the written word daily.

The Prayer

Father, I know that I must not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from Your mouth. I choose to sensitize myself to Your Holy Spirit, that I can obey Him. For I know that if I don't pay attention to Your words, but allow life to distract me, I cannot obey you. How can servants obey if they don't hear their master's commands? Lord, I choose obedience. Provide for my needs as I learn to rely upon You for everything, even as Jesus did. And if I should suffer need as Jesus did in the wilderness, even then I will praise You and wait for Your mighty hand to save me and lead me out of my sufferings. From this day forward, I will live for Your word alone.

Day Two

The True Righteousness

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:17–20

While God has not called us to legalism, the law is still in full effect. Not one of the least of the marks (“jot or tittle”) will pass away until heaven and earth pass away. Jesus tells us that if we break the least of the commandments, we will be called least. How can this be so if we are not called to live according to the law? It would almost seem contradictory. But Paul explained it simply with one sentence:

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Galatians 5:14

God calls us to love and to be the image of His love. If we are not loving perfectly, then we are not putting on the perfection of Jesus. As we also read,

“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” 1 John 4:8

And also,

“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.” 1 John 4:20–21

This is why we also read,

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.” 1 John 5:3

There is nothing burdensome or hard about love. However, sometimes we can overlook those who need love, and the Lord calls us to have open eyes to see

their need. Pray, therefore, that God will open your eyes to see those around you whom you have not seen, and who need a healthy dose of His love.

But now the question is, “How is His love properly fulfilled?” Through His guidance. Remember that the first fruit of the Spirit is love. If the Spirit guides you, then whatever He does through you are the righteous, loving works of God. So surrender all things to the Lord in prayer. Learn to be led by His Spirit, that you can be the image of Christ through obedience.

The Prayer

Lord, open my heart. Show me the needs of those around me, that I can be the shining example of Your love. Give me a servant's heart also. I pray that You would work in me and through me so that your righteousness would be alive in me. I know that the law is good but that it is better to walk in Your love through the guidance of Your Spirit, for by doing so I fulfill the law naturally. Save me from the self-righteousness that a legalistic life brings. But make me righteous, as You are righteous, as I surrender to the inner working of Your Holy Spirit.

Day Three

Be Perfected by Love

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Matthew 5:43–48

Love knows no bounds. If the love you show is truly unconditional, then do not allow the actions of others to influence how you portray it. If you are loving in all things, then like Christ you will convict your enemies into repentance through kindness. As it is written,

“If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for so you will heap coals of fire on his head, and the LORD will reward you.” Proverbs 25:21–22

So look for those who act as enemies toward you today. Pray and ask the Lord how you can repay them with loving-kindness. Don’t just do a small deed, but be willing to do a great act if God calls you to it. Jesus convicted you through His cross, which was not a small act. Likewise, carry your cross today and become the image of God’s love in everything you do.

If you have no enemy, then look into other areas of your life. Sometimes those we’re closest to can act as enemies. Even our friends, spouses, children, or other family members can be guilty of this. But when they are, show them gentle love in return, and they will be convicted to repent and love you back. Remember that we can only reap what we sow. Knowing this, sow love; it will change everything.

The Prayer

Help me to be patient. When others are wicked to me, please help me to be meek. Teach me true love, that I can walk in it always. Be my strength in my weakness so that I may heal with my words rather than divide and will build up rather than break down others with my actions.

Day Four

The True Treasure

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” Matthew 6:19–25

Whatever your eyes search for will determine who you are inwardly. If you seek wealth, or turn to money for help before you’d turn to the Lord in times of trouble, then the Lord makes it clear your heart is dark. Those who live to prosper themselves heap sorrows upon themselves. For such people are not content with the supply of God. If God supplies abundantly, then you shall prosper; but if not, will you still follow Him?

Jesus made it clear that the things your eyes desire determine whether you are dark or light inwardly. And as we also read,

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” 1 John 2:15–17

Those who get wrapped up and ensnared with the cares of this life forget to continue in the affairs and will of God. But those who surrender each of their steps to be led by God, whether in financial providence or in daily decisions, are full of the light because the Spirit orders their steps. As it is written,

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way.” Psalm 37:23

God deeply cares about your well-being. He didn’t give His life to watch you fall into ruin and abandon you in your most desperate hours. He gave His life to adopt you, and He will love you and care for you as any father does for his child.

Carefully consider this fact today and ask yourself if you’ve been living a life of total surrender or if, rather, you’ve been forgetting to be intimate with the Lord, as you are distracted by slaving away at the nine-to-five grind. While work is important, it is more important that you should meditate on the Holy Spirit through prayer and worship while you’re there. When you leave the secret place today, nothing should take your gaze off of God.

Sometimes in the back of our minds, we think of the presence of God as being in the secret place. Therefore, when we leave, we also leave God behind subconsciously as we continue about our day. We know that God is always with us, but we treat the secret moments as if they are a pinnacle—a peak of a mountain. Then, when we are done, we climb down and get back to our lives. But our lives belong to God at all times. When you offered your life to Christ, you gave Him twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week, not a mere twenty minutes a day during a time of devotion.

You can and must carry the experience of the secret place with you. This is what it means to shine your light! Because as you sit in the secret place, your spirit becomes sensitive to the presence and voice of the Holy Spirit. If you carry that sensitivity with you while meditating on His presence throughout the day, then you will hear Him more clearly. Moment by moment, He is speaking to you to lead you to the Father’s will. If you aren’t listening, how can you obey? Those who obey have the light shining at full strength in their hearts. But those who disobey are only interested in living their own life and not the life God has made for them.

Examine your heart today to determine how you’ve been practicing obedience and living for the Lord’s will.

The Prayer

Lord, I surrender! Jesus, I want to be Yours and only Yours. I choose to grow in my relationship with You, day in and day out, so that I can lay up the true and heavenly treasures. Save me from distractions today while I take to heart to meditate on Your Holy Spirit. Fill me with Your light, that all my actions could represent who You are to those around me. Let them find Your love in me, and by Your work in my life, I pray they will be convicted to desire You more.

Day Five

Be Content with His Supply

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” Matthew 6:31–34

God will always provide for you. Don’t worry about your needs; rather, just follow Jesus, and He’ll lead you to the circumstances that will fill those needs. It doesn’t mean life will be easy—because it won’t be. Remember, He calls you to carry your cross. But if you follow God, He will be with you in every situation of life. He will deliver you from evil in His perfect timing and give you a life of peace, even here on this earth. As it is written,

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ…” 1 Peter 1:6–7

And also,

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” 1 Peter 4:12–13

And as Peter further says,

“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.” 1 Peter 5:10

The Lord will settle you and establish you. Though trials may abound, God will not leave you without help: He will strengthen your spirit through lessons of wisdom. Then, after you have gained His wisdom, He will deliver you from every evil thing that has burdened you.

So no matter the circumstances of life seek the kingdom of God. But what

exactly is Jesus calling you to seek? Is He calling you to merely "remain Christian" or is there a deeper concept to this scripture? For our Lord also says,

"Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, "See here!" or "See there!" For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.'" Luke 17:20–21

There is no kingdom without a king. And it is certain by the scripture that Jesus means to say this: The kingdom that has come is the Holy Spirit within you. For by the King of kings, the Lord's kingdom shall be established in your life. Thus, God is calling you not only to remain a Christian but also to pursue the Spirit of Jesus daily. It shouldn't matter what's going on in your life; you should always seek to grow in your relationship with the Lord. If storms abound, then rest in the presence of His Spirit. Do not live for an idle life in this world, in a pursuit to build your own personal Eden. Remember that God made Eden for mankind so we would have everything we need and could abide in His presence without distraction. And work came through the curse. Jesus, having come to lift the curses, has called you to rely on His daily provision. Can you do this? Can you be content with the Lord's supply?

Live for the will of God and let the Lord take care of you, that you may not be distracted by the cares of this life. Dedicate yourself from this day forward to abiding in and meditating on the presence of the Holy Spirit so that you can live for the will of God in everything.

The Prayer

Take care of me, Jesus. I rest my needs in Your hands. Save me from the distractions this life brings and deliver me from the curse of daily need. You made my needs, and I believe that just as You have made them, so You also will fill them. Help me to abide in You today and continue to listen to Your Spirit. I choose from this day forward to grow in You always, not worrying about my life here on this earth but, rather, building a life eternal with You in the heavens.

Day Six

You Must Obey!

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

“But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” Matthew 7:24–27

True justification comes through obedience. Some claim grace is all that’s necessary, but they forget that they were saved through obedience to the gospel. When the Spirit convicted them that they needed Jesus as Savior, they happily obeyed—for which reason they are saved.

The works Jesus calls us to complete are not the impractical, idle works of the law but, instead, those of obedience to His voice. Remember that the Scriptures tell us this:

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Romans 10:17

Therefore, every time God speaks to you, your natural response must be with faith. But what good is it to believe only and not obey? True righteousness is faith in motion, and if you believe the Lord, then you must do something with your faith. As it is written,

“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” James 2:17

And also,

“But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

“Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” James 2:20–26

So commit yourself from this day forward to obeying the Spirit of God. It is how you came to Christ in the first place and how you should continue in Him. But those who do not obey, and believe they are justified by grace, deceive themselves. As it is written,

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” James 1:22–25

It is not that works save us, by any means, for only the Lord’s work saves us. And that’s exactly the point: If we do not obey, then God is not working in us and through us for salvation. After all, works of obedience are really just the works of God in our life as we submit. When Gideon was told by God to fight the Midianites, the Lord only gave him three hundred men to do so. Then Gideon destroyed and put to flight an uncountable multitude of men. Thus, it was obvious that, by obedience, God worked through him. Likewise, God will work through you to give you victory according to how you act on your faith. And as it is written,

“For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” 1 John 5:4 ESV

So take it to heart to increase your faith today and to obey. Every time you hear the Lord’s voice, no matter how softly spoken it may be, listen to it and submit. For God has not called you to legalism but, rather, to faithful obedience.

The Prayer

Lord, I understand that I must obey You in all things. How else could You be the Lord of my life, unless I allow You to be my Lord? I surrender as Your vassal; justify me, Jesus, as You work in me and through me.

Day Seven

The Cost of Following Christ

“As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, ‘I will follow You wherever You go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.’ Luke 9:57–58 NASB

Some people may think that when God is leading them, victory will come first. Yet they forget that our Lord was crucified first, having been led to Calvary; only afterward was He risen. They forget that Peter likewise was led to his cross, and Paul was led to places where he was whipped, beaten, imprisoned, and stoned. Just because something goes wrong in your life doesn’t mean God hasn’t been leading you, and it doesn’t mean that He isn’t in control. Paul was called by God through a wonderful vision to head to Macedonia and preach the gospel. Then, when he obeyed, he ended up in prison. But rather than questioning God, he chose to worship the Lord cheerfully from the depths of his suffering.

We too should be like Paul, willing to praise God no matter the circumstances. For it was during a moment of praise that God loosened the iron bars, and not a moment sooner. Likewise, God may not always loosen your bars until you can learn to praise Him amidst your storms. So wherever God may lead you, follow Him. Jesus was homeless, and to follow Him when He walked this earth meant to follow Him into homelessness. What would He do when it rained, or in the cold of winter? No one ever said that following God would be easy, but the Lord has promised that if you do so, He will bless you with eternal life and take care of you while you yet live in this world.

So if something goes wrong in your life, don’t question God. If anything, you should question your motives and your own heart. For we know that God disciplines us, and it doesn’t hurt to ask the Lord if you have taken a wrong turn when everything falls apart. Then, if the Lord says you have, the way out is through getting back on track with God’s will. If He says you haven’t taken a wrong turn, then the way out is through bearing your cross. And if God confirms that you, like Job, have done nothing to merit your suffering, then know He intends to bless you in the end—just as He did for Job. This is reason enough to rejoice in the midst of a trial.

The Prayer

Lord, I will follow you everywhere You go. I pray that I would not have to suffer if it is not necessary. However, if it is for Your glory and You lead me into suffering, I will not question You. I will glorify Your name and preach Your love among the unbelievers, being an example of Your faithfulness through the way I practice my faith in You.

Day Eight

Live for God and Forget the Rest

“But Jesus said to him, ‘Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.’” Matthew 8:22

The Lord has called us to be sanctified. But how can we be set apart if we choose to cling to the people and things God calls us to leave behind? If we fellowship with the world, we will become like the world. Thus, it is written,

“You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” James 4:4 ESV

Therefore, the Lord also exhorts us through Paul,

“Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,’ says the Lord. ‘AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you.’” 2 Corinthians 6:14–17 NASB

If there is any person, activity, or object that is taking your attention away from God’s will for you, then consider what God would have you do. Pray the matter through earnestly, that you may be led by God. For we cannot cling to the things of this world if we desire to partake in the Lord’s world. Do not be friends with the spiritually dead but, rather, increase in fellowship day after day.

The Prayer

I completely and wholeheartedly lay this life behind to embrace You. Your love is better than this place, so why should I give it more attention than I give You? I choose to bury my past life and lay behind my past sins, as well as people in my past who would influence me to cease from honoring You. I put You first above all things.

Day Nine

Keep Your Eyes Fixed on the Prize

“Another also said, ‘I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.’” Luke 9:61–62 NASB

In the days of Jesus, a plows required the driver to focus on the path he was carving out, lest he went off-course and did not keep a straight and narrow row for planting. What was left behind? A fertile, loose soil for planting seeds, creating life, and bearing fruit. God wants the trial you leave behind to bear the fruit of the kingdom. But if you look back to your former life and relationships, or your past sins, you’ll be distracted from the course God has plotted for you. Consider the wisdom of living in abandon for God, leaving everything behind to embrace the future He has for you. Be a pilgrim in this world, not a partaker of the worldly things. For when Lot’s wife was tempted, it was to her own undoing. As we read,

“But his wife, from behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.” Genesis 19:26 NASB

God commanded Lot and his wife not to look back, but she disobeyed the word of the Lord. Can we be saved through disobedience? Consider this and take it to heart to press forward in your journey with Jesus. And just as all the forefathers of the faith abandoned this life, so should we do likewise. As we read,

“All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.” Hebrews 11:13–16 NASB95

If we consider where we came from, we would have opportunity to return. However, if we love the Lord, we won’t consider such things but, instead, press forward in the faith.

The Prayer

Remind me that I'm a pilgrim, Jesus. I know I need to be wholly devoted to Your purpose in this world. So please, save me from being distracted by the affairs of this life, that I can grow more abundantly in You and leave behind a trial of holy fruits to Your glory.

Day Ten

You Must Evangelize!

“And he said to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’” Luke 10:2 ESV

Each of us needs to have an evangelist’s heart. Have you been praying lately that God would send you out into the field? Remember that wherever God has you, there are people in your midst who need His salvation. Whether you’re a janitor, a corporate CEO, or a stay-at-home mother, you are surrounded by people who need to be changed by His love.

Consider that, as a parent, your children need the Lord. Be a shining example of His love toward them. Kindle friendships with them, that they may respect you. For it is certain that they respect a friend more than anyone else. So if you become their friend, you can guide them more easily to follow the Lord and to make the right decisions. In regard to those with whom you work, be an example of the loving-kindness and joy of God, knowing that it is written,

“Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?” Romans 2:4 NASB

Show them not only small acts of kindness, but also deep acts that lead them to ask, “Why have you done this?” Then you can reply, “Because God loves you and cares about what’s going on in your life.”

Ask yourself if you’ve been evangelizing as you ought? Sometimes we forget to do this; and then, through time, we build friendships with those we should be leading to Christ. We are not called to be their friends but, rather, to show them their need for the Lord so that they can become our brothers and sisters. Test yourself in this to see if you’re been obeying God as you ought. Pray that the Lord would send many laborers into the field to labor with you, that the unbeliever may be convicted by the presence of many brethren.

The Prayer

God, I pray You'd open my eyes to those around me who need You. I choose to be the example of You, that they can be led to You. But I also choose to share the gospel with the unbeliever, because I know that no one can be saved without faith and faith comes by hearing your word. Lord, I also pray that You would send me the easy ones—people who will convert quickly because they have already been prepared. I pray also that You will be with my hands to till up the soil of the hardhearted through Your loving-kindness, that they can receive the seed of the gospel. Finally, I ask that You would bring more members of the faith to help me in my labors, that my efforts could be more fruitful as we work together to guide others to Your love. I especially ask this because I know that many hands make light work.

Day Eleven

A Time to Stay a Time to Flee

“When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.” Matthew 10:23

We are not always called to embrace persecution. While we are called to love our enemies, if they do not repent, there is a time and a place to flee. Remember that Paul was let down in a basket to flee the Jews of Damascus. As we read,

“When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.” Acts 9:23–25 ESV

Be attentive to the Spirit of God in everything. If He is calling you to endure persecution, then humble yourself and stoop your back to receive the blows. But if He calls you to flee, know that it is not righteousness to remain and suffer. Righteousness comes by obedience, so flee that situation and let God lead you into the next season of life. Sometimes persecutions come because God is doing a work. Those are the times when you must remain and endure. However, when God calls you to flee, He is allowing persecution to guide you from one season of life to another.

The Prayer

Save me from persecution! If it isn’t necessary for me to suffer it, then please keep it from me. But if it should come, I ask that You would strengthen me and make me the example of Your love toward my enemies for their salvation. And if they refuse, I pray You would give me a way out, to lead a life of freedom in You. Save me from the ongoing burden of persecution and set me free, Jesus!

Day Twelve

Let Your Words Be Seasoned with Salt

“Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.” Matthew 10:27

These whispers are the whispers of the Holy Spirit. Listen carefully to them and speak the words God gives you. But must we be given words to preach? As the Lord has said, according to the Old Testament,

“Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.” Exodus 4:12 ESV

The Prayer

Lord, share Your heart with me in the dark and secret place. Whisper in my ear, that I may have words to share. For I know that faith comes by Your word and not by my opinions. So help me to be silent before You, that Your words, not my own, may be on my lips.

Day Thirteen

The Good Fear to Have

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Matthew 10:28

Revere God; remain pure. Do not let a sinner corrupt your relationship with God through fear. Whatever you fear will have power over you. If you fear Satan, you will act on fear and disobey the Lord. Consider that a woman who is beaten won’t leave her husband. Why? For fear of what he will do. Fear can be your friend or your enemy, but it will always enslave you. Whoever you fear, you will obey. So consider how wonderful it is if we fear the Lord who loves us. By loving, fearful respect, He will be given authority over our lives.

Look at your own life. Have you been tempted to please men, be it a neighbor, a friend, a relative, or someone at work? Do not give them power over your life but, instead, return that power to Jesus through faith.

The Prayer

Establish my heart in faith and save me from all my fears. I believe You are able and will do it as You have promised.

Day Fourteen

You Are Worth More Than Life to Jesus

“Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.” Matthew 10:29–31

If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground apart from the Father’s will, then how much more can nothing evil happen to you unless it passes through the hands of God first? He will not forget you or your need. Perhaps He will allow it for your growth, but He will not leave you in the midst of it and watch you apathetically while you suffer. He loves you more than life itself, and He proved it when He gave His life for you!

Consider all that Jesus suffered to love you. He was homeless, hated, and despised by His own nation. He was rejected by His own, and when His days came to an end on this earth, He was handed over to death by those who should have magnified Him as God and King. Then He was punched, spat on, brutally treated, despised, mocked, whipped, scourged, crowned with thorns crushed into His scalp, stripped naked, and left to die on a cross.

And this He did all for you—to love you. He has shown you by His sacrifice that He would rather step down from His throne, give up life, and be hated, tortured, and crucified than live another moment in eternity without you. You have always meant so much to Him!

Now let Him mean much to you. Devote yourself wholeheartedly to growing in Him, to drawing near to Him, and to growing in how you practice His love.

The Prayer

Thank You that I’m worth more to You than anything else. I can’t even begin to comprehend Your love, but I want it! Fill me up with You and wrap Yourself around me, Jesus. Help me to be more like You, and save me from my fears. Your love inspires me to be a better person.

Day Fifteen

The Good Confession

“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 10:32–33

Do not hide your light, but take it to heart to shine it at full strength. As we read,

“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God…” 2 Timothy 1:8 ESV

Shamelessly share the love of God, and do nothing without His words of truth. Show the unbeliever, unapologetically, his or her need for Jesus. Become a true evangelist for Christ and seek to spread the gospel far and wide as the Lord has commanded you.

The Prayer

I make myself available to be Your chosen vessel. Set me aside for Your purpose and use me for Your glory. I chose to confess Your name before men and give You the glory in all things. Make me a true evangelist for You, Jesus. Today I dedicate myself to sharing Your words, unapologetically, with the unbelievers around me for their salvation.

Day Sixteen

What It Takes to Be Worthy

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” Matthew 10:34–37

Sometimes you don’t know how much you need Jesus until He’s all you have. Friends and family will abandon you, but He will always love you. Put Him first in everything. Make certain you are taking the time you need to be refreshed in His presence daily. Many priorities would beckon us away from meditating on the Lord, but we must remember to wrangle our thoughts back in and live for His will.

Sometimes those of our own household will be our enemies, and it will seem we don’t have a friend in the world. But whether they are good to you or persecute you, put God first, for even your family can become an idol. Examine yourself in this today: Are you honoring people whom the Lord doesn’t honor? Are you fearing a friend or family member and refusing to sacrifice your peace with him or her, which you have attained only by hiding your light? If you truly love others, then you must show them how much they need Jesus. Otherwise, they will depart into hell, and you will be separated from them forever when you go home to the Lord. So show them real love, and don’t be afraid to break the peace of the home by sharing Jesus.

If you have to remove the Lord from your lips to have peace, then it’s a false peace, to which God doesn’t call you. It would be better to be at odds with another in the short term so that you can receive him or her as brother or sister forever. Then, at that time, true peace will overtake your house.

If your family is saved but sinning, you are required to rebuke them for repentance sake. Do not think you are keeping the peace by keeping your peace. If you love them, you will speak up and help them come to peaceful terms with the Lord. For as we read,

“Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.” Proverbs 27:5–6 ESV

The Prayer

I know that You came to bring peace between me and the Father. But I know that my peace with You will bring a sword between me and my unbelieving members. I know also that my brothers in You will not always walk uprightly with You. I will not hide my love for them. Give me words for their sake, that they may repent. I would rather be at peace with You, loving You with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, than allow my relationship with them to become and idol. If any will not receive You, and You desire me to leave them so that I can focus on the kingdom, I will obey You. Only, let such a circumstance be Your hand guiding me and not my own heart running.

Day Seventeen

A True Reward

“For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.” Mark 9:41 ESV

“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward.” Matthew 10:40–41

How have you been showing the love of Jesus lately? Have you been going out of your way to find someone in need of comfort, prayer, or a helping hand? Commit your day today to finding someone named a brother who needs some help. Put on a servants heart and be prepared to do whatever God may call you to do, whether a small deed or a great one. But be certain you show this act of kindness to a brother. Many show the love of God to the world but forget to do the same for a believer. When a brother is in need, they say, “He has God, so let God help him. But who does the world have?” The world doesn’t want Jesus; that’s why they don’t have Him. But justice would suggest that those who have been faithful to God should be blessed. Meanwhile, the unsaved who refuse to be faithful should be shown kindness to convict them, but not at the expense of a brother. As it is written,

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35 ESV

And it is also written,

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Galatians 6:10

Put on Jesus and show kindness to everyone you meet today, but especially for your brethren. However, do not do it for your own blessing in Christ. You already have that coming because you choose to be like Jesus. Instead, tell your brother or sister that your blessing is to love him or her today, and watch your sincerity truly affect his or her heart.

The Prayer

Lord, I dedicate my day today to showing Your love, so please send someone my way to bless. If there is a need that is greater than I anticipated filling today, I pray You would open my heart up to do it, and provide for my needs as well.

Day Eighteen

The Hidden Wisdom Is Yours

“At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.’” Matthew 11:25

God reveals and teaches all the hidden wisdom of the Father to us. This isn’t something we are taught by men, but which God teaches us for our own personal growth. Be attentive to the Spirit’s voice today and commit to growing. Examine your own heart right now and ask yourself if you know what the Lord is trying to teach you in this season of life. He is always trying to teach you something, but are you paying attention? If you don’t know what He’s teaching you, then spend some time in prayer today and over the next few days asking Him what lessons He’s teaching you. Read your Bible today, especially, so that you can grow by meditating on the word of God:—this should be a daily practice.

If you’re facing a major decision or a change of seasons, pray earnestly that the Lord would give you revelation and show you what you should do.

The Prayer

Please speak to me in the Scriptures today. Make them come alive and give me revelation. Teach me from Your book, God, and let me learn from You. Show me the decisions I should make today and guide my heart in wisdom. I surrender to Your Spirit, that I may have Your mind today.

Day Nineteen

The Easy Way Out Isn't So Bad After All

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Matthew 11:29–30

The law is a heavy and encumbering weight to bear. But when we allow God to work through us, suddenly that burden is made light. It is not that we should try to apply the law, for this would be legalism, which does not justify. But when we walk in the Spirit, the law is fulfilled by nature. Examine your heart today and ask yourself how you've been walking in the Spirit lately. Have your words been founded in love? Have your actions portrayed Jesus?

Now one may ask, "How do we walk in the Spirit?" Every time God speaks to you and you obey, you have taken a step in the Spirit. So the key to walking in the Spirit is being more sensitive to His voice and determining to obey immediately when you hear Him speak. So dedicate your day today to listening carefully to the voice of the Lord.

Surrender to Jesus and rest from your own works and good deeds. Let God work through you. It isn't wrong to be eager to do the works of God. Most likely, whatever work you're doing is from the Lord. But take today to confirm this in prayer. If God isn't working through you, then you're following your own heart and not bearing the easy yoke and light burden of God.

The Prayer

Lord, please open my ears to hear You more clearly. I choose to rest from my own ambitions and good deeds today. I pray that Your Spirit would show me how to work out Your love today. Please confirm to me that You're working through me, and if there is any way in which You aren't, I pray You would convict me to stop. That way Your Holy Spirit, not my flesh, would do the work.

Day Twenty

Praise Without End!

“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” John 4:23–24 ESV

To worship isn’t merely to sing praises about God; rather, it is to adore Him to His face. God desires that we should praise Him not with the mouth of the flesh but, rather, with sincerity in the Spirit. Focus on the presence of God while you worship, and sing directly to it as if talking to His face. You will feel His presence more powerfully by singing “You are holy!” versus “He is holy!”

We know that He is relational in every way. So why wouldn’t He want us to speak directly to Him when we worship? How is it different from prayer? Commit yourself today to praising the Lord earnestly. Worship Him privately whether at work at a desk or at home doing dishes. Make it your effort today to show God a heart of gratitude through continual praise.

Do not slack! Try to worship Him every waking moment. It is hard, and it takes practice. You have an enemy who will try to distract you with idle thoughts. But try to recognize when your mind is wandering and bring it back constantly to worship and pray. This is something you should do every day to abide earnestly in the Holy Spirit. And as it is written,

“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” Hebrews 13:15

And likewise,

“I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.” Psalm 34:1 ESV

Apply the word today and worship the Lord with an earnest heart in the Holy Spirit.

The Prayer

Thank You, God for everything You do for me. Thank You that You offer me atonement through Your Spirit and that by Him You give me a new heart to praise You with all I say and do. Today I choose to be a living worship for You. From this day forward, I dedicate my days to praising You with everything I say and in everything I do. May your Spirit be with my heart and incline me in the words I should use.

Day Twenty-One

You Are a House of Prayer!

“Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, ‘It is written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” but you have made it a “den of thieves.”’” Matthew 21:12–13

The temple that was is no longer. Now we are the temple, and God dwells in us. Let us not be filled with evil desire, self-seeking, or the pursuit of wealth, but let us be filled with the Spirit of God in all righteousness and holiness. For the Lord has come to prosper us in the spiritual things. If the Lord has come to give us what is best, why would we thrust His plans aside to live for idle gain? Will not this world be destroyed? Do not cling to the goods of this life, but cling to Jesus Christ and live for the will of God. You, Beloved, are not called to allow a den of thieves to build up in your heart. But let yourself be sanctified and holy as a house of prayer to your God.

The Prayer

Jesus, I read about what You did in the temple, and I pray You will do it likewise in my heart. Drive out the things that are contrary to You. Drive out the things that buy my time so You won't have any, and that sell me out to sin. Overturn the tables of self-seeking and reliance on money. Why, my Lord, should I sell the dove of peace that You have given me? If I should be sold out to idleness on my spiritual chair, I pray You would overturn that chair for my sake. From this day forward, I devote myself to be a house of prayer for You, my God.

Day Twenty-Two

You Were Made in His Image, So Act Like His Image

“Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, ‘Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?’

“But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, ‘Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money.’

“So they brought Him a denarius.

“And He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription is this?’

“They said to Him, ‘Caesar’s.’

“And He said to them, ‘Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.” Matthew 22:15–22

In whose image have you been made? Who has inscribed you on the palm of His hands? You are loved beyond comprehension! Do not live for the idleness of this world or the casual pleasures of its entertainment. But entertain yourself with godliness, walking in the Holy Spirit at all times. Let love guide your heart and listen to the voice of the Lord, that you may become like Him. For love makes a man perfect, and the Holy Spirit cleanses our walks.

Commit yourself today to living for the Lord’s purpose. Wherever you’re at, remember that you were made to bring glory to the One who made you.

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31 ESV

Furthermore, the Scriptures instruct us,

“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Colossians 3:17 ESV

The Prayer

I commit each of my deeds to Your glory, that I can represent the image of who You are. Make me more like You—I surrender to Your guiding hand in everything. I render all of me, all of my works and words, to You so that I can become like you –reflecting Your love with everything I am.

Day Twenty-Three

Be Circumspect. Watch and Pray.

“Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, ‘What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’” Matthew 26:40–41

Whenever you’re tempted, enter into prayer immediately. Remember how Jesus instructed us in prayer:,

“So He said to them, ‘When you pray, say…’” Luke 11:2

Then, getting straight to the point, He finishes the prayer with these words:

“…And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” (Luke 11:4)

So when you’re tempted, pray immediately for deliverance and keep praying. Keep your mouth focused on prayer rather than on choice words. Keep your hands folded together rather than operating in sin. After a while, the temptation will pass and the Lord will strengthen you to act in holiness. As it is written,

“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness…’” 2 Corinthians 12:9 ESV

And why is His power made perfect? Because in your weakness, you’ll allow Him to be your strength and work for you rather than trying to work and fight temptation under your own strength. Jesus will be your strength. All that’s required of you is faith. As we also read,

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” 1 John 5:4

Your victory comes through faith in God’s ability to help you. A strong Christian is not defined as a person who is strong in and of himself or herself. Rather, strong Christians are actually weak but have the ability to humble themselves and admit their weakness. They only appear as strong because they have God as their strength.

Now. one may ask, “Why does God allow me to have temptation, anyway? Doesn’t He want me to be holy? Why would He give me the chance to be unholy?”

God allows the temptation to give you a choice. Will you follow your own heart or God’s heart? Will you follow God’s heart even when it doesn’t appeal to you? Will you love Him with sincerity and refine your heart through His Spirit?

Let God refine your words and your deeds today. Choose works that build up in love and words that heal. Be the image of Jesus.

The Prayer

Jesus, I pray You would give me strong conviction in my sins. My spirit is willing to honor You always. Help me when I'm tempted to use those choice words that I know I shouldn't. Save me from the actions I'll later regret. I know that if my hands operate in Your love and through Your Holy Spirit, there will be nothing to regret. So please remind me to pray and hold my tongue when tempted to speak as I shouldn't. Afterward, may my mouth speak Your praises and not the evil thought that was on my mind.

Day Twenty-Four

You Must Have Perfect Doctrine!

“Jesus answered them and said, ‘My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.’” John 7:16–17

“How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? —but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” (Matthew 16:11–12)

Doctrine is one of the most neglected issues among the churches today. Some may argue this, but if it were not the case, then why are there so many denominations, and so many interpretations of any one scripture? If we all had the mind of Christ, we would have the doctrine of Christ, thus making everyone likeminded in Jesus. But few people take this issue to heart, as if doctrine were not as important as other issues in the church. Yet doctrine dictates what you’re putting your faith in, what your faith looks like, and how you apply it. Imagine, then, the supreme significance of the scripture that says,

“For by grace you have been saved through faith…” Ephesians 2:8 ESV

Doctrine therefore determines whether you’re saved and whether or not you’ll please the Lord. As we also read,

“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” Hebrews 11:6 ESV

Since faith saves us and it pleases the Lord, doctrine is integral to salvation and how a believer relates to God. Without proper doctrine, our relationships with the Lord will fizzle, even though we may perceive them as going well. But what we perceive is worthless compared to how the Lord judges us. In the end, His opinion is all that matters, and we should be faithful to cling to that reality. That doctrine is central to our salvation is evident, however, for it is written,

“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” 1 Timothy 4:16

And it is also written,

“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.” 2 John 9:1

So the question is this: How have you been taking to heart to abide diligently in the doctrine of Jesus? If you are not certain, then consider making a change in this area of your life. Be passionate for the Lord! Earnestly seek to know Him for who He is. Listen inwardly to the Holy Spirit while you read your Bible, for He will tell you what the Scriptures mean. Even though you may feel you already know, He will add to your knowledge—or rewrite it. Therefore, remain completely submissive to His voice because nothing He teaches is wrong. By contrast, the teachings of men can and will be wrong if the Holy Spirit has not led their teachings.

The Prayer

Teach me Your doctrine, Jesus. I understand the importance it holds for my life and want to draw nearer to You through a constant pursuit of the truth. I know that You are the truth and the life, and to seek truth in doctrinal purity is to seek You. I want to know You for who You are and not who I want You to be. Share Your heart with me and let me know it perfectly.

Day Twenty-Five

Praying for His Mighty Deeds

“So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.” Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.’” Matthew 13:57–58

Constantly seek to increase your faith. America doesn’t see the mighty deeds of God as the early church did because of the unbelief here. You hear about the dead rising in Africa; you hear about miraculous healings in India; but what do you hear about in American? Nothing with the consistency and magnitude of what seems to occur in other nations. Why? Because Christians in those nations are poor and rely wholeheartedly on God for everything. Hence, the saying “You don’t know God is all you need until God is all you have” could never be truer.

It isn’t that wealth is wrong. But what we choose to put our trust in determines what is right or wrong. Test your own heart in this. Do you believe God can and will commit mighty deeds, right now and today, as He did in the old church? Can you trust Him with everything? It’s easy to say in this moment, but imagine if your bank account froze right now. What would you do?

Trust in God and pray for greater intimacy with Him. When He performs His miracle for you, He is being intimate with you. So pray for more of His miracles in your life and have faith He will furnish them.

The Prayer

I believe. Jesus, I believe in Your power. Please commit mighty works in my life, that I can be more intimate with You through them. Stretch out Your hand before me and perform many mighty signs and wonders to Your glory, that others may see the working of Your hand and have faith in You, Jesus.

Day Twenty-Six

Praise God for Grace!

“When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, ‘Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?’

“She said, ‘No one, Lord.’

“And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.’” John 8:10–11

Thank God for grace! This woman was in the middle of sin, yet Jesus didn’t attack her. He didn’t yell or rebuke sharply. He said lovingly and gently to “sin no more.” Can you imagine that? Look at your sins and all the grief you’ve caused your own heart. Then consider that, as you’re bowing before God in judgment, Jesus will draw near and lift up your face. With tears in His eyes, He’ll say, “I don’t condemn you. For this reason I came, and for this reason I died. Come enter your master’s happiness.”

Take today to reflect on His forgiveness. Show Him the gratitude He deserves, and make today a day of worship and thanksgiving for all He’s done to love you, nourish you, and forgive you. Then be inspired by His forgiveness, and go and do likewise.

The Prayer

How can I keep from worshiping You, God? How can I ever say “enough”? You’re so amazing! Your love inspires me, Jesus. Give me a heart like Yours, that I may gently convict those who offend me and swiftly forgive them. If you receive them, then who am I to remain angry? Forgive me this sin also and purify my heart, that it may be like Yours.

Day Twenty-Seven

Walk by the Light

“Jesus answered, ‘Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.’” John 11:9–10

To “walk by the day” means to walk in the light of God, which is the Holy Spirit. The light is in you because you have the Holy Spirit. When you walk, do you rely on the light of day to keep you from stumbling? Undoubtedly. Go and do likewise in your walk with God. Rely on the Holy Spirit to light your way. Let Him show you each and every step you should take in life, lest you take a misstep and stumble. A misstep is a step not taken in the Spirit of God.

So listen carefully to the inward voice of God. Don’t allow the circumstances that surround you to distract you from God’s voice. Don’t allow the affairs of life or cares of this world to captivate your thoughts. But keep your mind steadily focused on God’s voice all day and every day. That way, when He speaks, you may walk rightly in the light of Christ.

The Prayer

Lord, show me the way I should walk. Show me each step I should take, and keep me from stumbling. Open my eyes to Your light to see the way I should go. I ask this both for the small, daily steps in life and for the bigger decisions. Be with me through all of them, and teach me what I should do. I choose to sensitize myself to Your voice. I know that You don’t speak unclearly at any time. As if anything You say or do could be imperfect! But when I don’t understand You, I know it’s an issue with my ability to comprehend. Give me wisdom and discernment in Jesus’ name. Help me to understand You, that I can obey and do everything You want me to do.

Day Twenty-Eight

Increase Your Faith!

“Then Jesus answered and said, ‘O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.’ And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

“Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’

“So Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.’” Matthew 17:17–20

It wasn’t the unbelief of the father or child, but of the disciples, at issue. Sometimes when a miracle doesn’t happen, one person may be inclined to blame the other. However, the first person we should consider in this regard is our own self, and the first heart we should inspect is our own. We won’t see many miracles in our lives without faith. Notice that Jesus basically said, “If you have faith like a mustard seed, mountains will move and nothing will be impossible for you.” So why do the bigger miracles seem harder to obtain? It’s as if we think the miracle must have a possibility of happening for us to believe. But the condition of a miracle does not require possibility—it requires faith. Perhaps, then, the greater miracles are lacking when faith is lacking as well.

Yet no miracle will happen if God hasn’t told you it will. Some try to perform miracles and wonder why they won’t happen, but this is due to a misunderstanding regarding faith. It is written,

“…faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Romans 10:17

When God tells you to perform a miracle, it shall be performed. But if He hasn’t specifically said it will happen, then it will not likely happen. If God hasn’t said He will perform a miracle, then pray and ask Him to do so, and He likely will if you have faith He can. In such a case, it is a matter of His will. But if you don’t believe that He could even be willing to perform a miracle, He likely won’t. Trust God and have all faith, for if a little faith can do great wonders, what can much faith do.

We could even elicit God’s admiration in this way! As we read,

“When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!’” Matthew 8:10

The word for marvel in original Greek is *thaumazō*, which means “to take a pause and stand in admiration” or “to be in wonderment” or “marvel.” This word is used many times throughout the New Testament regarding people marveling at Jesus. They marveled over His words, His actions, His miracles, and many other things. But only two times did Jesus marvel: when someone lacked faith despite all obvious reason to have it, and when someone had great faith. In which way do you want Jesus to marvel at you?

We know that faith pleases God, saves our souls, and makes the Lord marvel. So it is evident that we should all be on a constant pursuit for greater faith. Take today to dedicate yourself to growing in faith—which you should be doing always. Pray that the Lord would increase your faith as well.

The Prayer

Lord, increase my faith! Grow me in faith, that I can truly please You. I want You to marvel at me as You did the centurion. I dedicate myself from this day forward to increasing my faith in You.

Day Twenty-Nine

Bear Your Fruit in Every Season

“And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, ‘Let no fruit grow on you ever again.’ Immediately the fig tree withered away.” Matthew 21:19

The fig tree is harvested in the fall, but Jesus came looking for fruit in the spring. Why would God curse the tree, then? What would He mean in doing this? It is written,

“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” 2 Timothy 4:2

You are commanded by the Lord to be ready, in season and out of season, to bear the fruit of the Lord. Walk in His love, even when life is unseasonable. If you walk in the Spirit, then the fruit of the Lord should be on full display all day, every day, year round. Examine yourself and consider: If God took a tour of your heart right now, what would He find? Would He be pleased? What would He think when He opens the closet and finds something nasty lurking in there?

Let there be no hidden issues but, rather, be purified through continually abiding in the Spirit. Two of the best ways to do this are by constant prayer and by continual worship. As it is written regarding prayer,

“…pray without ceasing…” 1 Thessalonians 5:17

And also,

“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving…” Colossians 4:2

Pray without ceasing, all day and every day. Have you ever practiced this? Have you taken to heart to pray at every moment and be in constant connection with the Lord, being sensitive to His voice? The more you pray and the more you worship, the more sensitive you will become. Then, when He speaks, you will hear and understand Him with clarity. When you understand and obey, then you’ll bear the fruit of God.

Do this always and practice His love toward everyone you know.

The Prayer

I commit myself to bearing fruit for You always. Jesus, take a tour of my heart right now, and if there is anything at all within me that displeases You, please reveal it to me and cleanse me. Teach me how to have a holy, godly walk in You at all times. Save me from idle distractions and help me to focus on Your voice, that I can walk in You without hindrance.

Day Thirty

The Need for Perfect Truth

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” John 16:13

Seek the truth always! To seek truth is to seek Jesus. As it is written,

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” John 14:6

Jesus is the truth, and to seek the truth in your doctrine is to seek Jesus. Remember also that no one comes to the Father except through the truth. When we walk in the truth and pure doctrine, it pleases the Lord. As the Spirit said through the Apostle John,

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” 3 John 4:1

So pursue truth with all your heart; seek to please the Lord, and the Holy Spirit will give it to you. Today we will rededicate ourselves to the truth. Due to the extreme importance of walking soberly in God’s true doctrine, we will revisit the concept and commit ourselves to it again.

The Prayer

As I have prayed before, so now I pray again: Jesus, I commit myself to Your truth. Purify me in doctrine, that I can walk in Your light. For I know that to love Your truth is to love You.

Day Thirty-One

The Need for Spiritual Instruction

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” John 14:26

The Holy Spirit must teach us all things. As it is written,

“These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” 1 Corinthians 2:13

Seek, therefore, to be taught by God. As we mentioned in a previous prayer, you must listen inwardly to the Holy Spirit while you read your Bible. He will tell you the hidden meaning behind the Scriptures. Whenever the pages seem to come alive, this is the Holy Spirit speaking to you. Pay attention to these parts and memorize them because they will apply to the current lessons the Spirit is teaching you. When memorizing, ask the Holy Spirit to help you retain the words. Even as Jesus said, the Spirit will “bring to remembrance all things I said to you.” Everything Jesus has taught, and everything the Spirit is pointing out to you in the word, He will bring to remembrance—but only if you memorize with faith. As we read,

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord…” James 1:5–7

Trust in the Lord and pursue His wisdom. Don’t presume to know something and ignore God’s voice in the process. If the Holy Spirit clearly tells you that a scripture means something contrary to what you thought it did, His teaching is above whatever you’ve been holding onto.

Hold onto His teachings, knowing that His knowledge is perfect.

The Prayer

Lord, teach me in everything. Give me wisdom and help me to retain Your word. Show me what You want me to read, and make the pages come alive. Read the word to me when I sit to meditate on the pages. Give me Your mind and teach me Your doctrine. I choose to have a humble heart, that I may learn from You.

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The Power of Praying Acts from Your Heart

The Power of Praying Acts from Your Heart ™

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Give The Holy Spirit More Room to Work in Your Heart

Introduction

The Lord has promised that His word shall not return to Him void. So take this time to be filled by it, renewed through it, and changed because of it.

Over the next thirty-one days, commit yourself to praying the book of Acts from your heart and watch how each of its daily lessons has the power to transform your walk, and even your life.

Day One

You Shall Receive Power

"*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" Acts 1:8 NKJV

Lord, teach me to be full of the Spirit always. Help me to walk in Him, make my decisions through Him, work as He leads me, and love as He teaches me. I choose to absorb your presence, to grow more passionately, and to connect with You more intimately. Please bless me with more of You and less of myself. Please use me to increase Your kingdom, and open the doors for me to share You with an unbeliever today.

*****

Do you understand the difference between having the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Spirit? The Scriptures mention in nearly forty different places that the Holy Spirit came upon or filled believers who already had the Holy Spirit. We also read,

"For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure." John 3:34 NKJV

While you have the Spirit always, you can overflow with His presence and joy if you meditate on His presence through prayer and worship. Then, when you are empowered through the infilling of the Spirit, you can step forward to do His work mightily.

Commit yourself today to the constant practice of abiding in the Spirit. While it may seem difficult at first, if not impossible, to abide continually, remember that all things are possible for Jesus, who strengthens you. Keep your heart attentive to His presence and your ears open to the voice of His Spirit. Let Him teach you the best words to share with the unbeliever, for He knows his or her heart better than you do. He knows what they need to hear, and you can only assume to know. Pray that He would send you into the harvest, that you may speak the words of God today. Allow God to guide your mouth today. Seek to be filled with His presence constantly through ongoing prayer and worship in your heart; then listen to His voice intently, and everything will fall into place as the Spirit leads you.

*****

Day Two

Meet Other's Needs

"*…and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*" Acts 2:45 NKJV

Lord, help me to have a heart like Yours, that I may give cheerfully to my brethren. Open my eyes to others' needs and show me how to fill them best. Whether they need prayer, providence, or comfort, I want to be the one who portrays Your heart to them. So fill me, that I may fill them.

*****

It is written,

"For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality. As it is written, 'He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.'" 2 Corinthians 8:13–15 NKJV

This concept is completely contrary to the American church. Some toss money in the bucket but leave those around them un-impacted with the fullness of the love of God. Churches teach to tithe to pastors, but how often do you hear of tithing to needy brethren?

Churches have elegant outreaches and pour money abundantly into them. They show faithfulness and loving-kindness to the world, but inject little money into the body of Christ itself. Yet Jesus said,

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:35 NKJV

And as it is furthermore written,

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." Galatians 6:10 NKJV

Lastly, we have an exhortation to give, by which we reassure our hearts before God. As we read,

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought

to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him." 1 John 3:16–19 NKJV

Pray for open eyes and an open heart today. Be prepared to portray the full image of the love of God. If any of your brethren have need, lift them up and encourage them. We should be strengthening one another before we go to the world. We should be stabilizing the interior of the building before we worry about the landscape and exterior. We must have an in-reach before we have on outreach. That way we can all go forward together, making a corporate effort to witness to the world and change lives. If we don't take the time to love each other perfectly, how will the world know we are Jesus' disciples? By that simple statement Jesus made, in which He called us to love, He made it clear that a believer is not a believer in word, but in deeds. Actions speak louder than words. Let your inward faith be proven by your outward actions of love.

As we know, there are some unbelievers who call Christians hypocrites. But how can we blame them? When they see a few believers walking on a needy brother, they ask, "Why would I want to be a part of that?" Sadly, such an unbeliever has more conviction than those Christians do. Yet they wrongly charge all Christians with fault.

Take it to heart to shine your light. The world is a dark, nasty place because it has no love. Your brethren are being torn down by its wickedness and unfairness daily. Don't say in your heart, "My brother has the Lord to save him, but who does the world have?" God has chosen you to be His hands and feet. So step forward to the call and put your hands to the labor and work of love.

The world has willingly and openly rejected the Lord. But your brother has been faithful. Would justice dictate that a faithful person should be made to suffer while the unfaithful goes free? Should you be made to suffer when it is in others' capacity to help you?

Don't say, "I will do for them as I would do for myself" and then say, "I wouldn't expect help, but I'd pull myself up by the bootstraps."

Love them as you love yourself. If you'd pull yourself up by the bootstraps, then do the same for them. Finally,

"And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs,

that they may not be unfruitful.” Titus 3:14 NKJV

Day Three

Obey Christ

"*For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'*" Acts 3:22–23 NKJV

Lord, I come to You fearfully yet confident. Fearful, knowing that Your word is true and cannot be broken—that those who disregard Your voice cannot be saved. Yet I am confident in Your grace, because You know my heart—that I desire to know You more intimately, daily, and to obey Your voice fervently because my love for You compels me to.

Lord, please help me to understand You more clearly. I know that You don't speak unclearly—as if Your word could ever be imperfect! The fault lies with me. This world is full of distractions; even at work and in my entertainment, my mind can be taken off You. Help me to love You with all my mind, that I may keep it steadily fixed on Your presence as I pray in sober-mindedness. Yes, Lord, please help me to stay sober in a world that can intoxicate a believer with many cares, riches, and various forms of idles. Help me to glorify You in my conduct and my thoughts, that as I reflect on You more continually, I may hear You more clearly.

*****

The Lord is always speaking to you. At every moment of every day, the Lord is sharing something from His heart with you. But the question is: Are you listening? Are you cherishing His heart?

Pay attention to His voice and obey it always. If His voice is difficult to hear, then likely you're being distracted by the noises around you. In seasons of peace, those distractions can come from entertainment, from the atmosphere of working among the worldly, from your children, friends, and family, and from many other sources.

The best way to hear God clearly, some believe, is to come out from those distractions. Then, after having a time of devotion and hearing the Lord, they "get back to life." But if getting back to life means stepping out of God's presence, then there is something wrong with that person's mindset and heart. By

implying that we step out of God's presence, we are admitting that there are other things captivating our attention.

"Well, life can't always be a mountain experience," I have heard some say. "Even Moses climbed down from the mountain." Such a person continues to refute.

However, such a person is missing the scriptures that show us that God came and met with Moses face to face at the tabernacle of meeting. So when Moses left the mountain, the presence of God was still with Him. And when Israel left Sinai, God was still with them in a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day. So the real question is: Are you experiencing the pillar of God? Or, that is to say, are you experiencing the presence of God and hearing His voice clearly as He leads you moment by moment? For we must all be led by the Spirit continuously. As it is written,

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God these are the sons of God." Romans 8:14 NKJV

How are you being led daily, moment by moment, by the voice of the Spirit? Do you know how to discern His voice clearly and be led by Him continuously? Ask yourself with an honest heart: Do you know exactly what it means to be led by the Spirit and how to do it? If not, then Beloved, I'd like to encourage you to grow in understanding God's voice, for by His voice you are led. He will interpret the Scriptures to you and show you how to apply them daily. Remember that the written word is called the word of God because the Holy Spirit spoke the Scriptures into existence. His voice is truly the "word of God" and must be obeyed fervently. The men who wrote the word did so as the Spirit led them. As we read,

"…knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1:20–21 NKJV

So don't brush off the voice of the Spirit, for by His word you are saved. Remember that it was the Holy Spirit who met with you on the day of your salvation and convicted you of the gospel. If you do not listen to Him, but walk in a pattern of sin by ignoring His voice, you do so against your own soul.

Please do not take me as being harsh. These things I speak in love, that you may understand that every word God speaks to you is for your own good in leading you to eternal life daily. If you love Him, you will desire to grow in

understanding and obeying His voice.

When Moses was on the mountain, the finger of God carved the commandments and His word onto tablets of stone. Moses didn’t leave those stones behind, but carried them with him. Likewise, when God meets up with you in the secret place, He writes His words on the tablet of your heart. Carry those words with you and practice them. Continue to focus on His presence and meditate on it throughout the day.

The secret place is not where we merely meet with God, but where we get recharged and strengthened by God to meditate on His voice and presence throughout the day. That way you can live out His written word as the Spirit teaches you to apply it. Then, as we practice this concept of continually abiding in and meditating on His presence, His voice grows in volume and clarity, making it easier to obey with sincerity. Consider dedicating yourself from this day forward to growing nearer to His presence and voice always.

*****

Day Four

Be Filled with the Spirit

"*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders of Israel…'*" Acts 4:8 NKJV

Lord, help me to understand the difference between You never leaving me nor forsaking me, and being empowered in the moment by the infilling of the Spirit. I see that Samson had You always. But when it came time for him to do great feats of strength, You filled him and overflowed him. You likewise poured upon Peter and filled him with the Spirit, that he would speak Your words through the Holy Spirit. Teach me to be filled and to abide in that infilling always. Be my strength in my weakness to accomplish this. For though it may seem impossible to meditate on You always, I know through faith that nothing is impossible for You. So please, meet with me where I am weak, lest I be distracted. I commit myself fully to being filled by You always, from this day forward.

*****

There are some who struggle with the concept of abiding in the Spirit. Some believe that because the Spirit abides with them forever, they always abide in the Spirit. But just because the Spirit abides in you and His mind is ever attentive to you doesn't mean you are abiding and meditating upon Him as you ought to.

Do you want to be filled with the Spirit? Focus on His presence and worship Him. Do not merely sing songs about Him, but sing directly to His face and presence. Talk *to* Him in your worship, not at Him. A relationship requires good communication, and those who talk to each other are more intimate than those who talk at each other. Change the lyrics of the song if you need to, and you will notice the difference it makes. Then, as you feel the Spirit upon you, focus on Him through prayer and worship and continue to be attentive to His voice. When He speaks, no matter how softly, obey Him.

*****

Day Five

Witness Boldly

“And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” Acts 4:31 NKJV

Help me to say the necessary words that lead others to the faith. Be with my mouth and teach me what to say. For I know that faith comes by Your word, and if I don’t speak it, others may not receive You. So I commit myself from this day forward to having holy, godly words that edify rather than putrefy, build up rather than break down, and heal rather than harm.

*****

Commit your mouth to the Lord today and let Him fill your heart to speak His word with boldness. Let the Holy Spirit guide your mouth and teach you what to say and how to respond to others. It’s easy for our conversations to go astray, following the idle patterns of our minds. Yet, as Jesus declared,

“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” Matthew 12:36–37 NKJV

So now the question is: How have you been leading others to Jesus lately through the things you say and do? Do your words speak on behalf of the heart of Christ? Do your actions speak for your words?

Is the unbeliever hearing the gospel? If not, then why not? What would Jesus call you to do? Is the believer being encouraged and turned back to the Lord? If not, then why not? Speak all things in love as the Holy Spirit guides your heart through conviction. Do not allow your conversations to grow idle but, rather, wrangle in your thoughts and the contemplations of your heart, and your words will follow.

*****

Day Six

Do not Please Men but Obey the Lord

"*But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'*" Acts 5:29 NKJV

Lord, save me from the temptation to man-please. Even though I may not be doing it now, if I am without realizing it, please open my eyes, that I may please You above all things.

I know that I must be the example of You everywhere I go, but sometimes Satan distorts "hiding my light" and calls it "being a peacemaker." While I know it is important to make peace, I understand that true peace only comes through obeying You, not men who call me to act contrarily to Your conviction. Strengthen my heart to submit to You in everything, regardless of the pressure the world and my peers lay on my shoulders. Open my eyes to perceive Your will, that I may live by it.

*****

In today's society it's easy to become a man-pleaser even without realizing it. One example may be in the workplace, where our bosses tend to lay undue pressure on us. Then, out of a natural response of fear, we overwork ourselves, ignore the Holy Spirit's presence and voice, and focus on the desires of our boss, lest we lose our job. While it is certainly important for a believer to maintain a good witness and example of Christ through love, dedication, and hard work, it is not required of us to meet demands that go contrary to the heart of Christ. If God is convicting you to do one thing and someone else is telling you to do another, obey God regardless of the repercussions. If you're being threatened, then don't give into the threats. Fear God, not men, and obey Him through love. Search out the will of God and submit to it always.

*****

Day Seven

Let the Spirit Speak through You

"*And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.*" Acts 6:10 NKJV

Lord, give me an unrelenting wisdom. Help me to speak Your word boldly through Your Spirit and teach me what I should say. That way others may be edified and turned to You. Please give me a wisdom so true, so pure, and so precious that it cannot be resisted.

*****

From where does wisdom come? From the Holy Spirit, as we know. But how often do you pursue that wisdom? Are you making a daily pursuit of His wisdom? Commit yourself today to wholesome study of the Scriptures and to listening more intently to the voice of the Spirit.

*****

Day Eight

Loving Your Enemies

"*Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*" Acts 7:60 NKJV

Help me to portray Your heart, Lord, which was apparent in Stephen, in loving my enemies and praying for them no matter what they do to me. Do not charge my enemies with their sins against me, but have mercy. Lead them to repentance, that they may find Your saving grace and become a brother instead. Help me to express Your kind, patient, and loving heart, that they may be convicted by my actions and led to Your salvation.

*****

Do you have an enemy? Pray and ask the Lord what You should do to express His love and kindness to him or her. Do not do what you think is best. Rather, let the Lord guide you to the appropriate work of love as you step out in faith. Be kind; be gentle; be Jesus to everyone.

*****

Day Nine

Being Led by God

"Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, 'Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' This is desert." Acts 8:26 NKJV

Lord, help me to understand Your voice and to hear You more clearly. Lead me by Your Spirit to each of the works to which You call me. Help me to understand what they are and what Your will is.

*****

The first thing we should notice from this verse is that the angel of God *spoke*. God leads and directs us through His spoken word, and particularly through the Holy Spirit. While His written word is vital for every step of a believer's life, we must not forget the importance of listening to God's inward voice and obeying it. The second thing to notice is that Philip was called to preach the gospel in the desert. Sometimes the Lord calls us to do unusual things, which may cause any logical person to question Him. It would make more sense to preach in the city, not a desert. Yet God doesn't call us to be logical, but obedient. Then, as we obey Him, we see His hand moving and working. In fact, it is in the most illogical things that we see the hand of God working most powerfully.

Take this time to sensitize yourself to the Spirit's voice. Dedicate yourself to grow in understanding His whispers and be diligent to obey them, no matter what He may be calling you to do.

*****

Day Ten

Your Prayers Matter, and God Considers Your Deeds

“And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, ‘What is it, lord?’ “So he said to him, ‘Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.’” Acts 10:4 NKJV

Lord, help me to keep the heart to serve You always. Save me from being distracted by this life or by my day-to-day responsibilities. I choose to keep my heart steadily in prayer, that I may offer a continual memorial to You, Lord.

*****

When God sent an angel to Cornelius, it was no coincidence that the angel first mentioned the man’s prayers and deeds. He filled his heart with love and his mind with prayer. Like Cornelius, shouldn’t we be loving God with all our minds?

Let your thoughts be consumed by heartfelt prayer, that you may honor the Lord with your thoughts rather than allow idleness to reign in your mind. Because where idleness is, sin is not lacking. But whatever God consumes, and wherever the Holy Spirit is, there are purity and peace.

Cornelius was the first Gentile—that we know of—to receive the Holy Spirit. Before he received the Holy Spirit, he sought the Lord in heartfelt prayer and loved others through cheerful giving. While actively performing the works of the Law is pointless and dead because the Holy Spirit fulfills such things in us, the works of faith, love, and obedience to the Spirit are vital to apply. God sent the Holy Spirit to Cornelius because he desired God’s presence and wanted to love and honor Him from his heart.

We should be found doing likewise—loving our brethren from a sincere and giving heart, as well as continually seeking the presence of the Spirit to hear His voice and obey Him. Without taking the time to sensitize yourself to His voice through ongoing prayer, you will struggle to hear Him. If you struggle to hear God, how can you obey the active, living faith that works through obedience to the voice of God?

It is by the inward working of faith that you have received the Holy Spirit. So be diligent to let your faith be evident through the outward-working expression of

obedience to God’s voice. If faith works in you, then let it also work and operate by love through your hands. As it is written,

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” Galatians 5:6 NKJV

The law avails nothing, but faith working through love is everything.

*****

Day Eleven

Being Acceptable to Christ

"*But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.*" Acts 10:35 NKJV

Jesus, make me righteous. Give me the strength to practice everything You desire of me. Make me pleasing to You and guide me by Your Spirit's voice.

*****

Wasn't Cornelius accepted by God for working out righteousness? Now, one might ask, "What is the work of righteousness, and how does it differ from the works of the law?" The works of the law, which are unnecessary and dead, are the works of obedience to the written law without the inward guidance of the Holy Spirit. The works of righteousness are obedience to the voice of God through faith. Obedience is necessary because only those who obey the gospel's demand to repent and receive the Lord as Savior are truly saved.

Since you began your walk in Christ through obedience, be found continuing in the same. Beloved, remember your first works of obedience to the conviction and voice of the Spirit of God, and be diligent to continue to practice them now.

*****

Day Twelve

Submit to the Works God has for You

"*As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'*" Acts 13:2 NKJV

Lead me and guide me by Your Holy Spirit. I surrender to the purpose for which You have appointed me. Sew me into the body of the church wherever You see fit. Show me the work You have appointed for me, that I may live it out submissively through obedience.

*****

It is by the Holy Spirit that we must be led. As it is written, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Romans 8:14 NKJV

Not only does the Lord have a grand plan for you, but He has a daily plan as well. His Spirit will lead you and convict you on a moment-by-moment basis into the works and activities you should be doing. So take the time today to sensitize yourself to His Spirit.

Grow always in understanding His voice. This shouldn't merely be a goal in this time of devotion, but a continual process in your life until the day you die. The more you understand God's voice, the more you can obey Him and please Him through faith. As it is written,

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17 NKJV

God's word is expressed by the Holy Spirit. We call the Scriptures the word of God because we know that the Holy Spirit spoke them into existence. Anything God speaks, whether it was written or is actively spoken to you by the Spirit, is the word of God. So if you grow in understanding and obeying His voice, you'll grow in pleasing Him. As it is written,

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6 NKJV

If you love the Lord, you will diligently seek Him and diligently please Him. As

we also read,

“Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:9 NKJV

Beloved, learn to be led by the Spirit in everything you do. He will guide you through His voice, and by obedience you will be well pleasing.

*****

Day Thirteen

Being Sent and Led by the Spirit

"*So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.*" Acts 13:4 NKJV

Lord, keep me from presumptuous sins. Save me from stepping out to perform works that I devise to honor You, which You may not have called me to do. I know that You are not honored through the works I contrive, but through obedience to the Holy Spirit. Let me not sacrifice Your best plan on the altar of my own good intentions.

Send me out daily by the Holy Spirit, that each of my steps may be established in You. Help me to continually meditate on Your presence so that I can remain sensitive to Your Spirit. I know that my day-to-day activities can distract me from You, as they do a worldly person whom I may encounter in the workplace. Help me to keep pure and to shun idleness, that I may hear Your voice when You call me to work out Your love or preach Your gospel to the lost or hurting.

*****

Acts was written not only to be a historical documentation of the foundation of the modern church age, but also for your edification. Each disciple follows a common trend: He is sent out and led by the Spirit into each activity he does. So the question is: How has the Holy Spirit been leading you lately? Have you been sent to the places you go? Does God have you at your workplace, for example, or are you trying to build your own life? Do you let Him make decisions for you, or do you ignore His voice, apply for jobs where you want, and do as you think is best and safest for your life?

Let God lead you. Even in the workplace, He has works for you. He may have a lesson for you to learn there as He grows you in His Spirit, or a person to whom you must preach. Keep a watchful eye and attentive ear. Dedicate yourself right now, through prayer, to discerning and following God's voice always.

How can you build the kingdom of God when you're focused on making your own fortress? Let God be your safety and do not find security in the things of this life. Won't the Lord lead you down the best possible path?

*****

Day Fourteen

Being Filled with the Joy of the Spirit

"*And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*" Acts 13:52 NKJV

Fill me with Your Spirit, Lord. Daily I will meditate on Your presence. Help me to abide continually and be filled with Your Spirit and joy. Prepare me also for the unbelievers who will approach me because of Your joy. Give me words to share with them the hope You have given me, that they also may receive You.

*****

The love and unquenchable joy of a Christian sets him or her apart from the world. When we rejoice, especially in hardships, the world wonders what we have that's different from them. As Paul said,

"We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—*always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body*." 2 Corinthians 4:8–10 NKJV

The Holy Spirit is the center of the life of God. He is the eternal breath of life by which we are born again. When His joy is on full display through us during hardship, it testifies to the life of Christ—thus making a few people curious about the gospel. Eagerly share the hope of your salvation with them, that they may find the love and salvation of God.

Be also filled with the Spirit continually. While the Holy Spirit always abides in us, we don't always abide in Him as we ought to do. We allow our minds to go idle and sins to enter our mouths and hands. While God certainly has grace on this, He calls us to a higher purpose than grace alone: growth. God has given you the power to conquer all things through the Holy Spirit. Even as death is conquered by the Spirit, likewise sin, which brings death, is vanquished by Him.

When did Samson accomplish his feats? When did Gideon defeat the Midianites? When did the early disciples preach the word boldly (Acts 4:31)? When they were filled with the Spirit of God. Seek to have the Holy Spirit upon you always, that you may operate in the full power of God. This is done by continually meditating on His presence, by prayer, by worship, by needful study of the Scriptures, and by obedience.

*****

Day Fifteen

You Must Discern the Truth

"*And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.*" Acts 15:1–2 NKJV

Help me to discern the truth, Your true and pure doctrine. That way I can walk perfectly in Your word, because I understand it. I pray also that, as You give me wisdom, You would give me boldness, too, to share Your doctrine with others.

*****

Why is doctrine important? Why does it matter? Isn't grace enough? It is written,

"For by grace you have been saved through faith…" Ephesians 2:8 NKJV

We are saved by faith. Doctrine dictates how our faith must be applied. Without grace there is no room for faith; but without faith, grace has no effect. If our faith is not established on God's truth, then it is not established at all. And as it is also written,

"Since *you have purified your souls in obeying the truth* through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart…" 1 Peter 1:22 NKJV

Your soul is purified by believing and obeying God's true doctrine. Men have a tendency to add to it, but His Holy Spirit clarifies everything. So take it to heart to learn His doctrine and to establish yourself in it. Now one may ask: Where can I learn God's perfect doctrine, since there is no such thing as a perfect church?

We learn it directly from the Holy Spirit. He may teach it through our pastors, but we also must learn to grow in a relationship with His Spirit, being attentive to His voice. As you read your Bible, listen carefully to the Spirit's voice. Write down anything He shares with you. Do not write your own thoughts, but only His words. By so doing, you'll train your mind to ignore your thoughts and listen

to God’s voice, which is His perfect word.

The Spirit wrote the Bible, so only He can interpret it the best. Therefore, don’t try to determine what a scripture may mean to you or for you, but simply ask God to open your mind to comprehend the Scriptures, and to give you wisdom. For it is written,

“And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Luke 24:45 NKJV

Furthermore,

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” James 1:5–8 NKJV

And finally,

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth…” John 16:13 NKJV

The Holy Spirit is the One who guides you to the truth through the pages of your Bible. So remain attentive to Him as you read, and He will clarify the doctrine that the Father calls you to apply.

*****

Day Sixteen

Increase Your Faith

"*…and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.*" Acts 15:9 NKJV

Lord, increase my faith daily. Purify me by it and establish me in Your word. Today I dedicate to sitting in Your presence.

*****

Our hearts are purified by faith. Faith comes from His word. So the question is: How have you been growing in the word of God lately? Grow in understanding His voice and take the time for needful study. Read the Scriptures today as God guides you. Read until the Scriptures speak to you. When they do, this is actually the Holy Spirit speaking, so listen carefully to those sections and memorize them if need be.

Then, through time, as you study and memorize the Scriptures, the Spirit will compare each lesson with another lesson and teach you deeper concepts through these comparisons. As it is written,

"These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." 1 Corinthians 2:13 NKJV

And as Jesus said,

"To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God…" Mark 4:11 NKJV

And as it is furthermore written,

"Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." 1 Corinthians 4:1–2 NKJV

So be found faithfully reading and applying the Scriptures daily, that you may growth through them. As the word also says,

"…as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby…" 1 Peter 2:2 NKJV

You can only grow in Christ through growing in the wisdom and knowledge of

God’s truth. As you know, this is taught to you by the Spirit. So study the Scriptures daily while remaining attentive to His Spirit’s voice continually.

*****

Day Seventeen

Obey Conviction

"*For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.*" Acts 15:28–29 NKJV

Lord, increase my conviction. Help me to hear Your voice more clearly, that I may obey You accordingly. For I know that righteousness comes through obeying You, and perfection through applying love. Therefore, I pray that You will help me to apply my faith in Your words through love.

*****

If we remain attentive to, and immediately obey the conviction of the Spirit, purity and righteousness will fall into place. As it is written,

"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Galatians 5:16 NKJV

And also,

"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." Galatians 5:18 NKJV

The Spirit leads us to everything the Father wants us to do, especially by conviction. But sometimes God has already shown us what we should do, by wisdom and knowledge, and we are called to apply that. For example, if you see a brother in need, pray for direction, and according to whatever knowledge God gives to you, step out to love your brother. If you know to do good, then do it. As the Scripture says,

"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." James 4:17 NKJV

But be certain to establish your steps by the guidance of God. As it is also written,

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Romans 8:14 NKJV

I have heard some say, regarding a brother or sister in need, “I don’t hear God telling me to help that person.” But such people may not be hearing God because they are ignoring His voice and not giving Him an opportunity to speak. Unlike them, we shouldn’t wait to step out to do good. Rather, when we see the need for doing something good, we should have the heart to help.

Then step out to pray for direction, that we may know how God wants us to work out His love. He will show you what you should do. Give God the opportunity to convict and lead you by His voice, by searching for His voice continually in everything. Then, in time, you will learn that God has much to say and is always speaking to you.

*****

Day Eighteen

What it Looks Like to be Led by the Spirit

"*Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.*" Acts 16:6–10 NKJV

Teach me to be led by You in all things as Paul was. I know that my life is Your plan, so lead me according to it. I will submit and surrender to the life You have preordained for me.

*****

The book of Acts continually beats into our heads both the necessity and outcome of being led by the Spirit. Each step Paul took as he fulfilled his ministry was a step taken through the leading of the Spirit. We likewise should be led by God daily, learning both to season our words and to operate in the Spirit.

*****

Day Nineteen

Making Plans in the Spirit

"*When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.'*" Acts 19:21 NKJV

Help me, Lord, to learn how to make plans in Your Spirit. That way You can plan my day and I can live by Your leading as Paul did.

*****

Learn to make your plans in the Spirit. Before making any plans, pray and let God lead you. Is He not your Lord? Then let Him act as your Lord, making the decisions about how your life should be lived out, both in the small steps and in the great steps.

Remember, Jesus told us that those who are trustworthy with little will be trustworthy with much. Similarly, the largest steps in life aren't nearly as important as the small and seemingly insignificant ones—because it is the smallest steps that lead up to the larger ones in life. If you haven't been obeying God and following Him in the small steps, how can you expect to hear and obey Him in the larger? Each small step down the path has determined the direction you should go. If you've taken the wrong direction, then your larger steps in life may never have been ordained by God.

How can you grow in the Lord if you don't know the direction in which you are supposed to be growing? Seek His will and live for it. His Spirit will lead you step by step to where you should go and what you should do.

Take them time to test yourself. Judge yourself to determine if you are living out God's plan for you as you ought. If you find that you haven't been, then get back on track with His plan. Submit to His will and obey it.

If you would judge yourself, there would be no need for judgement ever. As it is written,

"*For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.*" 1 Corinthians 11:31 NKJV

Therefore, Beloved, learn to test yourself always, that you may grow in Christ as

you ought.

*****

Day Twenty

Want to Know Your Future? Here's How

"*…except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.*" Acts 20:23 NKJV

Teach me what my future holds. Share it with me and prepare me for it.

*****

Listen carefully to the Spirit and He will tell you what your next season holds, especially as you get close to it. He calls you to pay attention to the steps you're taking now, but He will also share the steps He wants you to take in the future. As it is written,

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and *He will tell you things to come*." John 16:13 NKJV

Pray that the Lord would open your eyes to the future He has planned for you. Listen to the Holy Spirit and He will govern and guide you by the Father's will, teaching it to you, before the events of His will even happen.

*****

Day Twenty-One

Take Your Place in the Body

"*For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*" Acts 20:27–28 NKJV

Lord, show me my place in Your Church. Open my eyes to it, that I may live out the purpose You have for me. Help me to know and understand Your will for my life. I dedicate myself from this time forward to growing, and diving headfirst, in a relationship with You daily. That way You may be able to prepare me for the work that lies ahead of me.

*****

Seek the whole counsel of God always and in everything. The Holy Spirit determines where our place is in the church. Yet there are some who just dive into ministry and help without allowing the Spirit to guide the process. They go to Bible college and make plans to be a pastor, but never pray to ask the Lord what He wants for them. They figure out their own works that they think are good, then try to honor God by them. But God has a plan for us in these things, and we ought to honor Him by submission and obedience to His will.

Let the Lord lead you not only in your daily steps, but into the body as well. Let Him sew you into the sinews of the church, and be grateful for the place He has given you.

If you don't know what your place is, then pray until He reveals it. Pray also that He would prepare you for it. Do not dive into it immediately, but let Him guide the process. He knows what He is doing and doesn't need our help.

*****

Day Twenty-Two

Take the True Doctrine Seriously

"*For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.*" Acts 20:29–30 NKJV

Lord, teach me Your truth, that I may not be deceived. I know that wolves come in sheep's clothing and present false doctrine as a delectable and tasty treat. I refuse to have an itching ear. Lord, guide me by Your truth and give me the wisdom to understand Your doctrine, that I may not be deceived but, instead, live according to Your truth. Because I love You, therefore I will seek Your truth.

*****

If you love the Lord, won't you seek to know Him for who He is? Yet there are some who have itching ears and would rather seek the opinions that appeal to their hearts. But God has not called us to live by faith in what makes sense to us individually. He has called us to have faith in the Lord's pure and perfect truth—His undefiled doctrine, which He has personally delivered to us and personally communicates to us through His Holy Spirit. Remain attentive to His Spirit, therefore, that you may be able to discern the truth.

*****

Day Twenty-Three

Let God Work Through You

"*When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.*" Acts 21:19 NKJV

Lord, help me to remember that I must cease from my works and allow You to work through me. Increase my strength to labor according to Your work as Your Spirit leads me. Increase my sensitivity to Your voice as I earnestly seek to hear it. That way I can obey You with a fervent heart. For I know that whatever work or ministry You call me to isn't about what I do, but about what You do through me.

*****

Remember that God deserves the glory. Sometimes we get so caught up in what we're doing for God that we forget that it needs to be Him doing it through us. When we realize this, we need to take a step back, prepare ourselves to submit to God, and then pray for direction.

Let God guide your work or ministry. Do the good you know to do, but allow the Lord to guide the process. Give him room in your life to move freely, and let Him act as Lord over every action you take and every decision you make. Because it isn't about what we do. God doesn't need our hands, because His can make anything. Instead, He desires a submissive and humble servant, one who is willing to do His will. That way He can receive the glory for everything we do, because everything we do will be done through His power, Spirit, and hand.

*****

Day Twenty-Four

God Has Works Ordained and Appointed for You

"*So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.'*" Acts 22:10 NKJV

Lord, I submit to Your design. I know You have works that are appointed for me, just as You appointed them for Paul. So I surrender, that You may accomplish what You desire to do in my life, rather than I get in the way of Your plans to fulfill my own.

*****

When we make plans to honor God, if we don't allow the Lord to guide the process, then our plans have nothing to do with His plans. Such plans don't honor or please Him at all. Let us not be snared by the seductive nature of self-righteous works. Rather, let each of us surrender to the will of God, that we may fulfill the plans He has appointed for us.

But does the Lord truly have a plan for your life? Does He have works mapped out for you to do?

In reply, we may ask: Is He not all-knowing, and doesn't He make plans according to His foreknowledge? As it is written,

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10 NKJV

God has prepared works for you beforehand. This is His foreknowledge at work. And as the Scriptures also say,

"For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29:11 NASB95

Beloved, God not only has a grand plan for your life, but a daily one as well. The book of Acts was mapped out in God's head and on His heart before the world spun on its axis. God had a plan for Paul and the early church. In order for Paul to fulfill that plan, he needed to fulfill the daily plan God had for him, one small step at a time.

As with Paul, God has a plan for you, too, and for your function in the modern

Church age. Search out that plan, that you may fulfill the function for which God created you. Surrender to that plan and keep a submissive heart. That way you may be found faithful in the daily “acts” of your own life. God is writing a book about your life—not unlike the book of Acts—and you will have to give an account for every idle work or word you’ve ever said or done. So stay submissive, that everything in your book may glorify the Lord. Let each of the pages discuss how you submitted to the story He was writing.

Paul was faithful in his daily acts, and when you read the entire book of Acts, you can see how each little step played a part in a bigger picture. As Paul lived out his life, he didn’t know where each step God made him take would bring him, but at the end of his life, he was able to step back and see how it was all planned and how it all came together for the Lord’s glory.

Each of our small steps, like Paul’s, is important. Each small step is like the small strokes on a painting, which shade and detail everything. A painting is not made by many large strokes, but by many smaller ones. Without those small strokes, the picture would be incomplete. We, through our own plans, make the painting of our life that was meant to be a Da Vinci look more like a Picasso.

So let God guide you through the finer details, that He may make the canvas of your life beautiful. Then, when you come to the end of your days and take a step back, you’ll see the bigger picture in its fullness and understand that every moment of your life was not only a gift from God, but ordained by God for His glory—and as He worked, you were blessed to be able to go along for the ride.

*****

Day Twenty-Five

When God Tests You

"*But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, 'Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.'*

"And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul." Acts 23:11–12 NKJV

Why is it, Lord, that when you promise me something, or call me to do a work, opposition rises up? Lord, I believe You are faithful and will deliver me from every evil thing that comes my way. Help me to increase my faith and not waver, even as Paul didn't waver when his life was threatened. Stand by me, as You did with Paul, and share Your words with me so that I may live by them.

*****

Have you ever noticed that whenever God calls you to do something great, suddenly mountains shift and move in the way of your path? When He calls you onto the water, why do the waves and wind suddenly rise? Why can't following God just be easy?

We know that the enemy resists us to hinder or stop the work of the Lord. But God cannot be stopped or hindered. So why would the Lord allow such opposition? To examine and test your faith. Sometimes before the greatest blessings of life come, trials come first. Before the light, there is dark. Before the sun rises, the world is darkest.

Remember, Beloved, that at creation the Lord spoke into darkness and created light. Likewise, when all hope seems lost and nothing good seems possible from your situation, God isn't going to pull anything good from the current circumstance itself. Instead, He will create new blessings in the midst of your hardships and work your trials together for good. As it is written,

"Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful.'" Revelation 21:5 NKJV

God's promise to make all things new is faithful. He is always creating new things. When you were born again, you became a new creation. When the world

ends, He will make it new. And when trials rise up, He is faithful to create new works and bless you. All you have to do is be patient with God, wait, and have faith.

Lastly, our personal experiences also reflect the End Times. Before the absolute end of the world, the Antichrist,,whom the Lord will destroy with the breath of His mouth, will be in full power. Before the new era dawns and the Son of God rises up to put a final end to all darkness, evil will be at its greatest. Likewise, in the days of Noah before the flood, the world was at its worst. Similarly, God will wash away your afflictions and give you a new hope and renewed peace.

Have faith, Beloved, no matter the circumstances. For the Lord has promised to take care of you.

*****

Day Twenty-Six

Being Mindful of God's Work and Not Our Personal Comfort

"*Then Agrippa said to Festus, 'This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.'*" Acts 26:32 NKJV

Lord, help me to remember that my trials are for learning, and help me also not to be carried away with being saved from them. Give me the heart to submit humbly to You in them, that You may carry me out of them.

*****

Sometimes we get so caught up in trying to get out of our trials that we forget to submit to God's work in the midst of them. Paul was suffering in prison, yet the Lord's ultimate plan was not for him to be immediately released, but to witness to Caesar. So rather than seek to be released, Paul chose to be occupied both with the purpose for which God sent him into prison and with witnessing to the unbeliever.

Similarly, God has a purpose for us in our trials. Many times that purpose is simply to teach us a valuable spiritual lesson. Knowing this, we should always be attentive to whatever the Lord may be teaching us through the situation. However, there are times when our suffering is for the purpose of saving or encouraging others in Christ. Some may argue this; however, Jesus calls you to carry your cross. God used the cross to save life, and He will likewise use the crucifying moments of your life to bring life and light to others. Is this not what it means to be like Christ? That we should be molded to His image and His sacrifice so that, as we crucify ourselves to this present life, we can partake in the resurrection? As it is written,

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Galatians 2:20 NKJV

And also,

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." Romans 8:16–17 NKJV

And finally,

“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” 1 John 3:16 NKJV

By commanding that we must “lay down our lives for the brethren,” this scripture also implies that we will suffer for one another in the process. So be willing to be like Christ in your trials; know that you are blessed as you partake in your Lord’s crucifixion. Let the Lord work through you, and when He is finished, He will lift you out of your situation.

*****

Day Twenty-Seven

When You Walk Contrary to God's Will

"*When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmone. Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.*

"Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, 'Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives.'" Acts 27:7–10 NKJV

Help me to recognize the difference between the enemy resisting me and Your hands resisting me when I am not on track with your will. Give me the humility to admit where I have gone wrong, that I may repent and get behind You again to follow closely at Your heels.

*****

God desired Paul to preach on the island of Malta. However, the centurion was resisting God's will and trying to go straight for Rome. As a result, the hand of the Lord resisted the group because they were not on track with God's plan. Obviously, it wasn't Paul's fault, but he was forced into the situation by an unbeliever.

However, this can happen to a well-meaning Christian as well. When we chase after our own plans, God's hand may resist us. This can happen even when we try to honor God if we are doing so through our own plans and not His. Then there are a few believers who, when they try to honor God through their own plans, get confused and call the resistance they feel the hand of Satan.

But whenever you feel resisted, it is good to stop for one minute and take a step back to pray: "Lord, is it really You who is pressing me forward? Or are You resisting me? What is Your will, that I may fulfill it?" If God has sent you forward in your plans, He will confirm His will to you and give you confidence

to embolden your faith. But if you were not on track with the Lord, He will confirm it and gently lead you back to His will.

Knowing this, take the time to examine each of your steps and to confirm that they are being taken in the Lord.

*****

Day Twenty-Eight

The Need for Total, Unconditional Surrender

"*Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul. And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there.*

"When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete. But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon. So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let her drive. And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty. When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven. And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship. On the third day we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands. Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up." Acts 27:11–20 NKJV

Lord, if ever I walk contrary to You, help me to reach the place of giving up so I can get back on track with You. I offer my back freely to You for discipline. Remember me in Your love; turn me back around when I need it. Please lead me gently.

*****

At first the centurion and crew thought they had obtained their desire through the soft wind. God allowed them to follow their hearts, but then rebuked them in the midst of their attempt to do so. This can happen to us as well if we get carried away with following our own plans. The Lord will chastise us until we give up. Then, when we have given up, He will meet with us, encourage us, and pull us out of our situation.

*****

Day Twenty-Nine

God Communicates His Future Will For You

"*However, we must run aground on a certain island."* Acts 27:26 NKJV

Lord, as I follow You, open my eyes to the road that lies ahead. Share it with me, that I may know Your will and what the future holds so I may be encouraged by it.

*****

It is written,

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; *and He will tell you things to come*." John 16:13 NKJV

The more closely you follow the Lord's voice, the more of your future He will share with you. He will tell you before trials come so that you can see He is in control. He knew about them beforehand, is not shaken by them, and has prepared a way to save you from them. He will also tell you about future blessings, that you may be encouraged by them.

But do not be swift to rush into these blessings for tomorrow as if they were for today. Let God guide you into them, and be patient for them. Pray for foresight, and in time to come, God will give it to you through the Holy Spirit.

*****

Day Thirty

God Wants to Use Your Trails for Good

"*But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, 'No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live.' But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.*" Acts 28:3–6 NKJV

Lord, use my sufferings to save others. Let them not be without purpose, but bring them together for good and use them for your glory.

*****

God works through our hardships, that the resurrecting power of God may be manifest. When it is manifest, it makes the unbeliever marvel, which gives us an opportunity to witness. So when the vipers of life fasten on your hand, do not question God or be angry with the situation. Rather, be sober and continue in the Spirit. Then you will see how God allows those unexpected moments, the trials that catch us off guard, to glorify Himself. Therefore, be on your guard and always be ready to give an account for the hope that is in you.

*****

Day Thirty-One

Give The Holy Spirit More Room to Work in Your Heart

No Scripture for today as we recap briefly what we read.

In conclusion to reading through Acts, Lord, I see that Your Church was built by the Holy Spirit as He led men. Build my life also through Your inward leading. Teach me through Your Spirit as I submit to Him. Guide me and govern me by Your voice.

*****

Let the Holy Spirit interpret the written word to you. Jesus said,

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” John 14:26 NKJV

Furthermore, He said,

“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.” John 6:45 NKJV

The Father instructs us through His Holy Spirit. So make it your aim to draw near to Him always and to abide in His presence. By so doing, you will hear Him more clearly and, thus, can follow and obey Him as He maps out your life.

*****

The Power of Praying Romans from Your Heart

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Introduction

Jesus said that the most blessed person is the one who hears the word of God and keeps it. So how have you been meditating on the word and binding it in your heart lately?

Consider taking the next 21 days to dedicate yourself to praying and reflecting on all the lessons of Romans. If you take each of these lessons to heart you will not be able to walk away without being transformed.

Day One

The Birthplace of Faith

"*Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name…*" Romans 1:5 NKJV

Lord, I commit myself always to obey the call of faith. I know that the blessings and promises are only received through obedience to the faith. Therefore, I ask that You would increase me in faith, that You may increase Your gifts and blessings on my life.

*****

Faith is born whenever God speaks, so pay attention to His voice throughout the day. He doesn't merely speak to you once a day or every so often. Rather, He is constantly communicating with you and teaching you. But are you listening? When He speaks, He expresses His love, His will, and His plan for your life on a moment-by-moment basis. God always has something for you to be doing. Have you been listening to and obeying His Spirit as He leads you?

Commit yourself today to growing in faith, to listening to God's voice, and to obeying Him sincerely without question. Dedicate yourself to being led by His Spirit. Surrender to His daily plan, that you may experience the fullness of His gifts, promises, and blessings. God's gifts and promises are made to those who walk by faith, so grow in hearing His voice, that you may grow in obedient faith.

*****

Day Two

Seek the True Doctrine with All Your Heart

"*…but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath…*" Romans 2:8 NKJV

Lord, You know that I desire to obey Your truth and to please You with it. I choose to lay down my heart to live according to Yours. I know that my heart can be contrary to Your words, so I will deny myself to obey You with sincerity. Who ever said that carrying a cross would be easy? I am prepared to please You in everything.

And why should I make my own opinions about the Scriptures when Your Spirit can explain them plainly to me? Open My understanding to comprehend the Scriptures according to Your truth. Give me perfect wisdom and the strength to obey You always.

*****

It is written,

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." 3 John 1:4 NKJV

Given that the Spirit wrote the Scriptures, the Lord is saying through John that nothing could please Him more than if you walk in truth. Notice that this verse does not say to "sit in truth" but, rather, to "walk in truth." Walking is a process, which suggests that you take steps. God is calling you to draw nearer to the truth and grow your understanding of it through the Holy Spirit, one step at a time. You cannot approach something if you do not walk toward it. While the Holy Spirit presents truth to you, it is up to you to search Him for it and grab it. God's wisdom is in truth. Just because God gives you wisdom doesn't mean He will drop it on your lap. You have to be dedicated to seeking it continually. You must be on a constant pursuit of the truth. Remember that Jesus said,

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” John 14:6 NKJV

If you love Him, you’ll seek to know Him for who He is and not for who you assume or want Him to be. And since it gives Him no greater joy for you to walk in truth, then if you love the Lord, you will seek to please Him through growing in truth.

Our hearts can be contrary to Jesus. The heart is sinful, and for that reason we need Him as our Savior. So you can’t listen to your heart or your own opinions, which will lead you astray.

Beloved, let the Holy Spirit be your mind; then you’ll truly have the mind of Christ. Be attentive to the Spirit’s voice, for He is always speaking to you. Be sensitive to it by meditating on His presence always, even after you leave your time of devotion. Pay attention to His presence through constant prayer and worship. Whether you’re at home or at work, your heart should be seeking Jesus inwardly.

Then, by continually seeking Him, you will hear His voice more clearly. When you hear Him, obey Him immediately. Do not question Him, but obey. By listening and obeying, you’ll have the mind of Christ. But why must we listen to the Spirit? Because the Scriptures tell us that it is He who gives us the truth. As it is written,

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth…” John 16:13 NKJV

Furthermore, that we should seek God for wisdom is evident. For we read,

“And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Luke 24:45 NKJV

Truth is more than the gospel message. It also explains how to walk fully as an adult in Christ. Merely studying the Scriptures won’t help us to grow as Christians. Rather, we must be sensitive to the Spirit’s voice as we study Scripture so that He can interpret the hidden teachings and mysteries to us. As it is also written,

“But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” 1 Corinthians 2:10 NKJV

Then, after He has revealed the truth to us and after we have memorized a given scripture, He will bring it to mind and show us how and when to apply it. For

Jesus informed us,

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” John 14:26 NKJV

So take it to heart to remain attentive to the Spirit. He is the wealth of your salvation—the very beating heart of Jesus. Cherish His heart by cherishing the Spirit, and tap your roots deeply in Him. By growing in the Spirit and being more attentive to Him, you will build up all of the defense you need against deceitful doctrines.

But does doctrine matter? Romans tells us it does when it addresses “those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth.” And as it is written elsewhere, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” 1 Timothy 4:16 NKJV

True doctrine saves. Why? Because doctrine dictates how your faith works and should be applied. Which will empower you in Christ: believing subtle lies about Jesus, or believing truth? The answer is obvious. And furthermore,

“Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” James 5:19–20 NKJV

Therefore, what error of way leads to death and a multitude of sins? Wandering from truth leads to these things, according to this scripture. Jesus warned us that many deceivers would rise up in the last days, for which reason we must be circumspect toward our walks. And Paul said,

“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Acts 20:29–30 NKJV

Satan subtly tempts the heart and twists the Scriptures to keep a believer from growing fully in Christ. Why? A full-grown believer is a threat to him and his kingdom. His twisted notions do not appear sinister but, rather, appealing and logical. They will make sense to you if you are not fully equipped in the word of God. If his lies were not desirable, no one would believe or follow them. So he has carefully crafted each one to appeal to the human heart and mind in such a way as to lead a believer from the truth found in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Some of these perversions and false doctrines are everywhere and in every

church. Satan fights the truth everywhere. But the truth is not everywhere; you can find it in one place only—the Spirit of God.

Remember that Scripture, your sword for fighting the enemy is the sword of “the Spirit.” So let the Spirit teach you how to wield it and battle with it. It’s His sword, after all, and nobody knows it better than He. Seek the truth and be serious about it. Show God you love Him by pleasing Him through obedience to the truth.

*****

Day Three

Put Your Faith in Motion

"*And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.*" Romans 4:11–12 NKJV

Lord, help me to take the steps of faith You require of me. That way I may walk in the direction You have mapped for my life. Above all, Lord, I surrender to Your will. Give me the strength to obey You that I may walk in Your righteousness.

*****

Notice that Romans 4:12 says "steps of faith." Steps suggest a direction to walk, and each step requires effort to accomplish. Faith is more than a feeling; it's an outward action that proves the inward belief. So take it to heart to do something with your faith. If you believe God, then show Him as much through obedience to His word. As Abraham obeyed the Lord and was found righteous, so we also must do. As it is written,

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." James 1:22 NKJV

And we also read,

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?" James 2:21–22 NKJV

This isn't a call to apply the Bible legalistically, but rather to obey the Holy Spirit as He teaches you how and when to apply the Scriptures.

"These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." 1 Corinthians 2:13 NKJV

Knowing that the Spirit teaches you, take it to heart to sensitize yourself to His voice. How can you learn if you can't hear Him? How can you obey without knowing His words? Faith is born whenever God speaks, so pay attention to Him.

Righteousness is faith in motion. Therefore, take the necessary steps of faith to which God is calling you today as He leads you in His Spirit. As it is also written,

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Romans 8:14 NKJV

*****

Day Four

Rejoice in Suffering and it will Change Your Heart

"*And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance…*" Romans 5:3 NKJV

Lord, teach me to glory in my trials and not merely to sorrow. Open my eyes to see the lessons You are teaching me through them. Help me to grow in patience as I increase my faith in You so that You will carry me through every difficult moment in life.

*****

Sometimes when we suffer in trials, all we can think about is getting out of them and being comforted through them. But the Lord also desires to teach us in them and to bring trials together both for good and for His glory. Knowing that the Lord will bless you and heal you from every broken moment in life, take it to heart to rejoice always—during both the good circumstances and the bad. As it is written,

"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" Philippians 4:4 NKJV

And the Scriptures also tell us,

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 NKJV

Dedicate yourself to continual praise. When you worship during trials, it increases your faith and joy as the Lord overflows you with the Spirit. Look for a reason to give thanks during your hardship. When you find a reason for thanksgiving, your faith will be further increased through remembering the Lord's faithfulness.

*****

Day Five

Become Love

"*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*" Romans 6:1–2 NKJV

Lord, please give me an earnest heart both to obey You and to become the example of Your love in everything. Eradicate sins from my life, no matter how small they may be. Cleanse me of words I shouldn't use, thoughts I shouldn't think, and decisions I shouldn't make. Bless me with Your heart, that I may become the image of Your love always.

*****

We may not always see sin as an issue in our lives if we aren't struggling with any of the major ones. But it's funny how we testify to unbelievers that even their smallest sin matters because it makes them guilty and Jesus was crucified for it, yet then we regard ourselves in a different light. After we're saved and walking in Christ for a while, the small sins don't seem to be a big deal to us because of grace. They are small things that we repent of, and then we move on; but we may commit them again later because we aren't taking it seriously to grow always in the Lord. While God certainly covers us in His grace, we shouldn't use this as an excuse to forget to grow.

Beloved, test yourself. Are you getting distracted by daily life? Are your day-to-day activities, whether work or play, causing you to forget to remain committed to needful growth? How have you been growing lately? When you draw nearer to God, sin is eradicated naturally because God and sin cannot occupy the same space. As it is written,

"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Galatians 5:16 NKJV

So growth isn't merely about weed-plucking sin, but rather about dedication to

being more intimate with Jesus daily. How have you been doing this lately?

Dedicate yourself to studying your Bible, to practicing it, and to obeying the voice of the Spirit of God. Remember to seek His presence always so that your spiritual ears can be attuned to Him and hear Him more clearly.

Certainly His grace is enough for you. But has your love been enough for Him lately? Take the time to prove your love by continually approaching a deeper and more intimate relationship with Him. People who love each other prove their love by growing closer and trying to spend more time together. Do the same with God. Always be passionate about drawing nearer to Him and growing in your love for the Lord.

*****

Day Six

Why Trials Are Awesome

"*For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection…*" Romans 6:5 NKJV

Lord, help me to retain a humble heart in remembering not to live for the joys of this life, but for You. Thank You for the joy You give me. But I pray that You would keep me sober in the Spirit, crucifying the desires of the flesh to conform my will to Yours.

*****

Beloved, remember to walk in Christ just as You have received Him. Have a humble heart to discern the difference between the daily desires of your heart and the desires of God. Be found spending more time with the Lord, not only in a devotion but also quietly in your heart. When you're sitting at the desk, pray and worship quietly. Whether you're washing dishes, taking care of the kids, making dinner, working, or resting, be found meditating on the Lord.

Do not allow the passing pleasure of this life to distract you from Him. Many Christians are snared by the plague of too much entertainment: TV, internet, movies, games, and the like. Even some churches have gone from having Bible studies as the center of fellowship night to making games, food, and idle chatter the focus.

Beloved, seek the Lord with a serious heart, conforming yourself not to the pattern of this life, but to the cross of Christ. The calling of Christ is a call to die —to die to this life and to die to self, that you may live for the Lord. So search your heart for idols that may have risen up through idleness without you knowing. If anything is taking the place of time with the Lord, remove it. Be honest with yourself. What do you spend more time doing: entertaining yourself and unwinding from a long day, or seeking God for His comfort and to grow in Him? Let God be the God of your time. Honor Him with it by spending it in His

presence, meditating on His Spirit.

*****

Day Seven

Having the Spirit's Mind

"*For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*" Romans 8:5–7 NKJV

Jesus, give me the mind of the Spirit. Help me to meditate on Him always, that I may hear His voice and obey His conviction. Help me to be more sensitive to Him so that you can increase my conviction. Yes, Lord, increase Your conviction in me. Amplify it, that I may live by it.

*****

It is written,

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. *Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.* For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:1–3 NKJV

And also,

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." 1 John 2:15–17 NKJV

Beloved, keep your eyes fixed on the Lord. Meditate in His presence continually. That way you can hear His voice more clearly in order to obey Him. The duties and tasks of this present life tend to distract us. Five times a week you wake up, head to work, become spiritually pressed down by worldly people, and then come home with your mind in the flesh. At work we spend all our time thinking about going home. Then, when we get home, we can't stop thinking of work. Everything about this present life is distracting.

Knowing this, you must learn to abide always. By 'abiding' we do not mean to

say “having the Spirit.” Rather, abiding means keeping your mind in the Spirit through meditating on His presence and voice always.”

Two of the best ways to meditate are ongoing prayer and continual worship. God gave you two eyes, so keep one eye on what you’re doing—such as work—and another on the Spirit through inward prayer.

The Spirit is always speaking to you, but are you always listening? Incline your ear, that He may lead you through every moment of the day. In order to walk in the Spirit, you must be able to hear His voice. If you can’t hear Him, you won’t obey.

So dedicate yourself from this day forward to abiding continually in the Spirit, that you may have His mind.

*****

Day Eight

Indebted to Live for the Spirit

"*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*" Romans 8:12–13 NKJV

Lord, I commit myself to walking in Your Spirit always. I surrender my heart and my plans to You, that I may live for You. And I surrender my mouth and my hands to You so that I may be godly with them.

*****

Nothing could be plainer: You must live according to the Spirit of God. But just because you have the Spirit doesn't mean that you're living by Him. For the Scriptures exhort us,

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Galatians 5:25 NKJV

And we read as well,

"He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." 1 John 2:6 NKJV

If we walk always in the Spirit, then why do we still sin? Is the Spirit of God a minister of sin? Certainly not! Therefore, it is evident that when we follow our own hearts, opinions, and ideas to live by them, we are walking in the flesh. But if we surrender to the inward working of the Spirit—to live by God's opinions, thoughts, mind, love, heart, and plans—we are living according to the Spirit. The only time you walk in the Spirit is when you obey the Spirit. If you cannot hear Him, how can you obey Him to walk in Him?

Be committed to listening to Him and His convictions always, that you may put to death the deeds of the body. For God does not call us to cherry-pick sin, but rather to walk in the Spirit. Sin is not a weed that we can pick from the garden of God. Remember that the Lord is the gardener, and if you submit to and walk in His Spirit, He will completely eradicate all sin. Is this not why Christ was crucified? Do we not need a Helper to walk in a godly manner? All you have to do is be willing to love God, hate sin, and resist it by ignoring temptation—choosing instead to abide in the Spirit.

God doesn’t call us to put away only the big sins, but all of the little ones as well. When we witness to others we say, “Even the smallest sin separates you from Christ; and even if you committed only one little sin, He still needed to be crucified.” Yet we act otherwise when it comes to our own small sins, saying, “God has grace.” While He certainly does have grace, we cannot use grace as an excuse not to resist sin, no matter how small. As the Scriptures explain,

“And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” Galatians 5:24 NKJV

Therefore, Beloved, if you are indeed convicted by the cross of Jesus, put away your little sins by walking in the Spirit and love of God. For it is written,

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Galatians 5:16 NKJV

And it is also written,

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” 1 John 2:15–17 NKJV

Meditate on these things, Beloved, and grow in them always.

*****

Day Nine

You Must Be Led By the Spirit

"*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*" Romans 8:14 NKJV

Take me by the hand, Jesus, and lead me. Guide me into the Father's will through Your Spirit. I know that I cannot follow You unless I am fully surrendered. So I let go of this life, remembering that this world is not my home. I am a pilgrim, and I will keep my heart and eyes fixed on You by walking in the Spirit.

*****

God has a plan for you. As it is written,

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10 NKJV

And also,

"'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.'" Jeremiah 29:11 NASB95

You cannot fulfill the plan of God unless He leads you into it. We are not God, that we can guess His will or plan. He desires to tell us His plan plainly. Jesus came giving parables, but the Holy Spirit came to explain them. Without the Spirit we cannot comprehend the heart or mind of Christ. Jesus speaks in a mystery; that way only we, the children of God, can understand the message through the interpretation of the Spirit. It's His way of being intimate—like whispering in a lover's ear. Except He uses His Spirit as the mouthpiece to do the whispering. So if the plan God has for your life seems more like an unclear parable, then it's because you aren't listening to the Spirit or being led by Him.

So now the question stands: How have you been led by the Spirit lately? God guides us through every step of life. The Spirit doesn't merely speak and lead us during changes of season in life. Rather, He communicates with us throughout the day-to-day activities as well. The Lord always has something for you to be doing, and He communicates that to you on a moment-by-moment basis.

So listen intently to the Spirit. Dedicate yourself from this time forward to inclining your ear to the Spirit at all times. Live for the Lord by living through the Holy Spirit.

*****

Day Ten

Be Conformed to His Suffering

"*…and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*" Romans 8:17 NKJV

Lord, I choose to conform myself to Your cross so that You may conform me to Your resurrection.

****

Again Romans tells us not to live for ourselves, but instead to suffer with Christ:

"As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." Romans 8:36–37 NKJV

If we suffer with Him, we will be glorified together. So rejoice in tribulations, knowing that the resurrecting power of Christ is at work in you. Glory in your trials with thanksgiving, knowing that you are bearing a cross because you have been chosen for eternal life. Let the marks of the nails that pierce your life be a sign to you of God's faithfulness—that although you suffer, you have been chosen to be conformed to the resurrection of Jesus.

As Jesus was not raised until He died, however, so we shall not be raised unless we die to self to live for Christ. Therefore, the Lord will help us by leading us into seasons of leanness and self-discipline. So do not sorrow, Beloved, when life crucifies you. Rather, remember the joy that is set before you.

*****

Day Eleven

You Must Evangelize

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!"" Romans 10:14–15 NKJV

Lord, I dedicate myself to sharing Your gospel always, as Your Spirit leads me. For I know that those who preach must be sent by You. Yet I know that I cannot be sent if I'm not willing to go. So I surrender to Your command to evangelize. Lead me to the easy ones. But for those who are hardhearted, I pray that You would till up the hard soil of their heart through Your love at work in me. That way they may be able to receive the seed.

*****

It is written,

"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen." Matthew 28:18–20 NKJV

This is a command, not a matter of concession: If you love the Lord, you will obey Him. For Jesus said,

"If you love Me, keep My commandments." John 14:15 NKJV

And He also said,

"You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." John 15:14 NKJV

Furthermore, it is written elsewhere,

"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." 1 John 5:3 NKJV

And we also read,

“But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.” 1 John 2:5 NKJV

So if you love God, then let your love show through obedience. God calls each of us to be an evangelist. If it is at all possible, bring every conversation back to God. Let the Spirit guide you in the process, that you may share the Lord’s words and not a canned witness. For Jesus told us,

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” John 6:44 NKJV

And as Jesus said,

“He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.” John 7:18 NKJV

Knowing this, allow the Father to draw others through you by being His mouthpiece. For as He said to Moses, so He also says to you:

“Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.” Exodus 4:12 NKJV

However, you will not always be granted words immediately. Sometimes you need to test the situation by bringing the conversation back to God; then, when you are on the subject, either the Lord will tell you not to speak to the person at that time or He will give you words. Stay attentive to the Spirit and let Him guide the process.

For example, I recently bought a puppy for my wife and needed to build a dog house for it. So I went to the local hardware store to purchase wood for that project and a few others I’d been neglecting. A worker offered to help me load the wood, and during that time he started talking idly. I felt convicted to bring it back to God, so I compared a situation he had mentioned with a personal experience I had in Christ. Then, when he understood that I was a preacher, he immediately declared, “Well then, you’re exactly the person I need to talk to!”

In talking with him, I had found that his girlfriend had cheated on him, and he wanted advice. That’s when the Lord stepped in and gave me words to compare his heartbreak for his girlfriend with God’s heartbreak for him. The Lord desired this man who had given himself over to everything but God. Jesus wanted love, dedication, and a relationship with him, but the man chose to love other things. When he heard this, he felt terrible for hurting the Lord and wanted Jesus

immediately.

If you allow God to guide the conversation, it will always turn around for the good. In my case, God didn't give me words until I had already begun the conversation and turned it around to talk about the Lord—and it may be a similar situation for you. You have to search for the opportunity. While God may cause both His words and the opportunity to share them to fall on your lap, you have to be willing to pick them up and do something with them. Don't remain in idle chatter and say, "God didn't give me words." Rather, search the conversation for the opportunity.

Also, an unbeliever may not receive the Lord on the spot, but your conversation may be what they need to hear to receive Him a little later. I have had personal circumstances where people wouldn't hear a witness from me for years. They just needed to see His love at work toward them through me. Then, when circumstance arose in their life that broke them, they came searching.

So search each conversation and just speak what you're given, then let God do the rest. Remember that it's God's work, not yours, and sometimes it takes a while to prepare hard soil to receive a seed.

*****

Day Twelve

Where does Faith Come From?

"*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" Romans 10:17 NKJV

Lord, I dedicate myself to growing in Your word—in understanding both your voice and the Scriptures. That way I may live by faith as You call me to do.

*****

It is written,

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6 NKJV

And also,

"For by grace you have been saved through faith…" Ephesians 2:8 NKJV

Knowing that you cannot please God or be saved without faith, dedicate yourself to growing in it always. And from where does faith come? Faith is born every time God speaks. So also grow in understanding His voice, that you may live by faith.

If you cannot hear God, then sensitize yourself to His Spirit. The inability to hear is not an excuse to refrain from walking in unrighteousness. For God is not pleased by the unrighteous but by the righteous. Therefore, be serious about growing in understanding His voice and be serious about growing in the Scriptures. Do not merely read the Bible, but study it faithfully. And as you study, allow the Spirit to guide you through the pages. Anytime He speaks, write those words down—not your own thought but, rather, His words only. Doing so will train your mind to listen to God and not to your own heart.

*****

Day Thirteen

Be a Living Worship

"*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*" Romans 12:1 NKJV

Jesus, you sacrificed Yourself for me. Now I choose to lay down this life, along with my ambitions and desires, to follow after You. I choose to worship You not only with songs but also in how I live my life for You.

*****

Test yourself. Have you been giving every idle moment to the Lord? When you gave your life to Christ, did you give Him twenty minutes a day for a devotion or twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week? Be a true, living sacrifice and give God everything. Let Him be Lord over every second by remaining dedicated to listening to and obeying the Spirit. A life with Christ is not about the morning and nightly devotion, but about every little moment in between. As the Holy Spirit works in your heart during a devotion or time of study, be diligent to carry each lesson with you and live it out fully.

*****

Day Fourteen
God's Will Is Perfect

"*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*" Romans 12:2 NKJV

Lord, I know Your will is perfect. Save me from temptations that would make me think otherwise. I choose not to make plans without laying them before You first in prayer, and I will not get off my knees until You give me an answer. You know better than I how my life should look. So I dedicate myself to hearing it from You, that I may live the life to which You call me and live according to the mind of Christ.

*****

Sometimes we may be tempted to ask, "Why would God want me to do that?" after He tells us to do something illogical. But God doesn't need man's logic to operate. All He requires is a submissive and obedient servant.

But sometimes, rather than obey God or clarify what voice is speaking to us, we brush off the voice and declare that it isn't God because it doesn't make sense. Beloved, test the spirits. If you are not certain that something is God, do not brush it off—in case it is. First take the time to confirm the will of the Lord, that you may live according to it.

Sometimes God pulls at our hearts with the faintest whispers. And it can be difficult to discern the voice because it comes as still and small. However, the Lord whispers because He wants you to incline your ear and listen carefully.

So confirm all things by His voice, that you may be established in His will. If you know something to be God, but it doesn't makes sense with what you think is best, then be a jellyfish. A jellyfish doesn't swim in the water to follow its own direction; it is carried by the current. You, likewise, be carried by the current of God's will.

Follow after His heart. There will be many times in your walk when God will call you to do things that are contrary to your heart. This is merely to test you: Will you trust yourself or God? Will you love your own ideas or love the Lord with everything you are? Will you die to self to follow Christ? Yet God's will is perfect, so don't question Him. Has He ever done anything to merit distrust? Therefore, increase your faith, for God deserves it.

Beloved, follow the Spirit, that you may walk in the will of the Lord.

****

Day Fifteen

Love Is Everything

"*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord…*" Romans 12:10–11 NKJV

Lord, I dedicate myself to having a kind and affectionate heart. I will practice love and humility and be diligent in these things. For I know that when I serve the brethren, I serve You. Therefore, I will be fervent to love.

*****

The first-fruit of the Spirit is love. So be diligent to press into love, that you may bear much fruit. If you love the Lord, you will love the brethren. As it is written,

"And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also." 1 John 4:21 NKJV

And Jesus said,

"And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'" Matthew 25:40 NKJV

Jesus takes it personally when we don't love one another. He doesn't call us to be kind only to those we know, but also to strangers—especially if any of those strangers are brethren. Stretch the fabric of your love to cover more people with it. Be willing to move and grow beyond your borders. Do not be comfortable with loving friends and family only, but cherish that unknown person who sits alone at church. Cherish the brethren. Besides, who knows whether you will entertain an angel in this way? And if you haven't entertained an angel, then at least you loved your brother or sister as you should.

There are many Christians who pour out more love and effort on unbelievers than on believers. While it is good to share God's love with unbelievers, we must

remember to love the brethren as well. As it is written,

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Galatians 6:10 NKJV

And as we also read,

“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35 NKJV

Love is an action word, being a verb. So do something with your love! As the Scriptures tell us,

“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.” 1 John 3:18–19 NKJV

I have seen churches cherish unbelievers who were homeless yet forsake their own brethren in need. What good is it to evangelize and lead unbelievers to Christ if we later teach those same people to walk contrary to the Holy Spirit by not bearing the fruit of love toward the brethren? Be the example of Christ in everything.

Pray and ask the Lord for an opportunity to bless someone today. If God opens the door to show exceeding kindness, do not turn the other person down for fear of loss. Rather, remember that Christ was crucified to deliver you and calls you, likewise, to deliver your brethren from need. As we read,

“For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality.” 2 Corinthians 8:13–14 NKJV

Furthermore, the Scriptures say,

“And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.” Titus 3:14 NKJV

If you do not show kindness, then you’ll be unfruitful. Remember that Christ will call you to give an account of your life, and He will judge you according to your fruits. If you have loved, you’ll have boldness. As it is written,

“Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.” 1 John 4:17 NKJV

Remember that we are a family in Christ—a true and real family. Should family

take care of one another? What if you didn’t get a chance to know your brother? Should you forsake him or still take care of him and love him as family? What would Christ convict you to do? Go and do likewise.

*****

Day Sixteen

Continue Steadfastly in Prayer

"*…rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer…*" Romans 12:12 NKJV

Lord, I dedicate myself to rejoicing through worship and continual, steadfast prayer today. I choose not to be lazy in spirit but, rather, to prove my love to You by drawing continually nearer to You throughout the day, as I ought.

*****

Patience comes easily to those who walk soberly in the Spirit. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit, after all, and if you are operating in Him and through Him, His fruits will come easily and naturally. So take up the nature of the Spirit today through abiding. Keep your head up in worship and prayer. Do not merely listen to encouraging music, but actively engage your heart in praising God. Dedicate yourself to remaining steadfast in prayer throughout the day.

It will be difficult, and there will be opposition. The enemy will rise up to stop you because your prayers are powerful against his kingdom. He will distract you with idle thoughts and will even use people around you to talk idly with you, to keep you from remembering to pray. But abstain from idleness and you'll keep your head in prayer as you should; for idleness leads to ungodliness. As it is written,

"But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness." 2 Timothy 2:16 NKJV

So refrain from idleness at all levels. An idle mind is the devil's playground; idle lips are the devil's mouthpiece; and idle hands are the devil's workshop. Therefore, continue in the Spirit through steadfast prayer.

*****

Day Seventeen

Pursue the Mind of Christ Together

"*Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.*" Romans 12:16 NKJV

Lord, I choose to have a teachable spirit. I choose also to be unified with my brethren through the mind of the Spirit. Make me wise in the Spirit, but give me a heart of humility. I choose to dedicate myself to living a godly, humble life—the life that You desire me to have. I will not set my mind on high things, but on Your plan. I will not have false humility and choose less than You want to give me. And I will not have greed and pursue more than You give. I choose to be content with Your plan and providence. Help me to live by this always.

*****

The only way to perfect unity in God's church is through the Spirit. If we would all conform to His mind, heart, and doctrine, there would be no contentions or disagreements. The number-one thing Christians argue about with one another is doctrine. But if we stopped allowing our own opinions to fuel our beliefs and, instead, allowed the Spirit to teach us the Father's one true doctrine, we would never argue.

So the first step is to dedicate yourself to growing in the Father's doctrine as the Spirit teaches you. Open your Bible and study it diligently. Let the Spirit instruct you from the pages. Any time the words come alive, it is the Spirit speaking. So drown out your own thoughts and just listen. When you realize that God is speaking, meditate on those portions. Memorize them and practice them.

Then, as you grow in having the Spirit's mind and doctrine, encourage your brethren in the Lord to do the same. As you seek the Spirit together, fellowshipping in the Spirit—not engaging in idle activities—you will grow into the unity that God calls you to have.

But as you grow in knowledge, remember:

"Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies." 1 Corinthians 8:1 NASB95

So use knowledge through love, that it may be edifying. Do not live for your

own thoughts, plans, or opinions, but let God guide your heart. Remember that humility and submission make a man a useful tool of God.

*****

Day Eighteen

If You Will Give an Account to God, How Should You Act?

"*So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.*" Romans 14:12 NKJV

Lord, knowing that I will give an account for every action I take and every word I speak, I choose to be sober in Your Spirit. Cleanse me and purify my heart. Conform my heart to Yours, that I may love as You do. Conform my hands to Yours, that I may work as You do. Conform my mouth and mind to Yours, that I can talk as You talk and think as You think. Conform my will to Yours so that I can live out the plan You have for me. Jesus, make me like You, that when You judge me I may have boldness.

*****

It is written,

"Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world." 1 John 4:17 NKJV

Become the love of God and let it guide your heart. Don't apply it the way you think His love should be applied, but rather how the Holy Spirit teaches you. God has not called us to apply the Scriptures legalistically, but to be led by the Spirit. For the Spirit teaches us how and when to apply each concept.

Yet some may argue, "You can't wait for the Spirit to tell you when to do something. If you can't hear Him, sometimes you need to rely on your own judgement. You have the mind of Christ, after all."

However, the Holy Spirit gives you the mind and heart of Christ. Without Him you have nothing. He is the one who revives your dead soul, that you may be born again. He is the one who convicts you and leads you according to the Lord's heart and plan. He is the one who teaches you everything, protects you, comforts you, and guides you. He is Christ, being the Spirit of Christ. For God is One, and His Spirit is His beating heart. He is the treasure of God, deposited into your heart to guide you to godly things.

But if anyone says that the Spirit cannot be depended upon, such a person risks

open condemnation for blaspheming (speaking evil of) the Holy Spirit. He is God's treasure, so treat Him according to the value He has. Pour your whole self into drawing nearer to Him and growing in Him. Since He is God's treasure, let Him become your treasure.

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:21 NKJV

If you want your heart to be for God and with God, then you must be fully committed to His Spirit, both in listening to Him earnestly and in obeying Him faithfully. Remember that His first-fruit is love. So seek to love, and when the opportunity is presented to you, practice that love as the Spirit guides you.

If you have a hard time hearing Him, it isn't that He is not dependable but, rather, that your senses are not dependable. Grow in understanding the voice of God. Do not be complacent in this, but be committed to continual growth. Every relationship is mortared through communication. If you can't understand God's voice, then how strong is that mortar?

So sensitize yourself to the Spirit, obeying Him every time, and search diligently for opportunities to love and serve God and others. Then you'll have true boldness when you give an account, because you were just like Christ in this life.

*****

Day Nineteen

Increase Your Faith

"*…for whatever is not from faith is sin.*" Romans 14:23 NKJV

Increase my faith, Lord. I dedicate myself to growing in it always. Make me fruitful through faith, that You may be glorified in the works of my hands. Work in me and through me so that what I do with my hands will be done through Your hands and my deeds may bring You glory always.

*****

Believe it or not, it is actually sin to struggle with faith. God certainly has grace, but He desires us to grow in faith always. Since when has He ever been wrong? When has He ever failed? What reason is there not to believe God? God deserves our trust, and He commands us to have faith and to increase in it always.

Faith and love are foundational to any relationship. In order to grow in the Lord, you must be dedicated to growing in faith and love always. Have you been doing this lately? If not, then dedicate yourself today to drawing nearer to the Lord by growing in faith and practicing His love.

*****

Day Twenty

Abounding in Hope and in the Power of the Spirit

"*Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*" Romans 15:13 NKJV

Help me to live by the power of Your Spirit, Lord. Teach me to meditate on His presence always, that I may hear Him more clearly. Be my strength in keeping my mind sober while I reflect on Him, lest I be distracted by the daily chores of life.

*****

Remember to meditate on the Spirit during every moment of life and not merely during your devotion. That way you may walk always in the full power of the Holy Spirit. Take some time to worship and pray. Then, after your devotion, continue to pray so that you may be able to pay attention to the presence of the Spirit.

As it is written,

"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving…" Colossians 4:2 NKJV

And also,

"…pray without ceasing…" 1 Thessalonians 5:17 NKJV

Keep your line of communication with God open so that you can offer up continual praise and petitions and so that you may hear Him more clearly.

How do you obtain the perfect peace of God? It is written,

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6–7 NKJV

In other words: Establish yourself in the will of God and He will give you perfect peace. And how can you be established in the will of God? By listening to and obeying His voice. So keep that line open, that the Lord may share His

heart whenever He wants. Remember that, as a slave of Christ, you do not work for a few hours a day for Him. Rather, you are always on call. So keep your spiritual ears attuned to Him, that you may hear Him when He calls.

*****

Day Twenty-One

Grow in Wisdom

"*Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.*" Romans 16:17–19 NKJV

Help me, Lord, to note those who teach and live by doctrines contrary to your truth. Give me wisdom and keep me from being deceived. If those whom I trust have false doctrine without realizing it, help me to recognize this, that I may guard myself and lovingly encourage them to abide in truth. I choose to grow and become wise in what is good, but simple and ignorant toward evil and foolish things.

*****

Grow in the Scriptures daily. If you don't know the Lord's doctrine perfectly, how can you tell when a teaching that is being presented to you is wrong? So be diligent to study your Bible today, listening to the Holy Spirit while you read. Make this an ongoing practice so that you can grow in the word. For it is written,

"…as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby…" 1 Peter 2:2 NKJV

*****

I’d Love to Hear from You!

As an author I regard the feedback of my readers highly. When considering a book, many people weigh reviews in the balance.

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How to Memorize the Bible Fast and Easy

About the Author

Adam is a preacher, teacher and #1 internationally bestselling author of over 100 books on the Christian faith. He is a devoted husband and father of three boys. Through his travels, he’s seen the need for a new awakening and a new revival: a revival of the heart. Come join Adam on this journey of redemption and experience God like never before!

The Power of Praying First Corinthians From Your Heart

The Power of Praying First Corinthians from Your Heart™

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Introduction

There is nothing more powerful or life changing than God’s word. By His word He created life, and through His word we are strengthened in faith.

So consider taking the next 14 days to renew and strengthen your faith by meditating on and praying through God’s word. If you take the lessons in First Corinthians to heart you will not even be able to walk away without being changed.

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Day One

Being Unified through the Spirit

"*Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*" 1 Corinthians 1:10

Lord, I know I must increase my fellowship as I see Your return approaching. So help me to be unified fully with my brethren in the manner You desire. Help us to come to the same mind and same love through Your Spirit. But even if they should not agree with me, I commit myself today to being the example of Your love. I also dedicate myself to searching for the perfect and complete truth in Your word, that I may live by it.

*****

Whose mind do we have? Is it not Christ's? But how do we obtain His mind? Through the Holy Spirit, no doubt. Commit yourself today to growing in the Spirit and in your understanding of His voice. If we would all listen to the Spirit's voice, especially as we read our Bibles, likemindedness would come naturally.

Take it to heart to be a peacemaker, but do not be a man-pleaser. True and everlasting peace comes through Christ. If your brothers or sisters have an argument with the truth, then guide them lovingly to it. Remember, a bone that is broken heals stronger. Likewise, do not be afraid to disrupt physical peace in order to facilitate spiritual peace through unity among the brethren. As it is written,

"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." Jude 3:1

If you are unsure on any point of the faith, then do not contend earnestly for your position, but instead seek God earnestly for wisdom. Then, when He has taught you, remember from whom you have learned and hold onto this knowledge. Share those truths the Holy Spirit gave to you and, in this way, create unity among your saved family and friends.

The greatest causes of contention in the church today are differences in opinion regarding doctrines. Each person nowadays has his or her own interpretation; but if we all listen to the Holy Spirit and are taught by Him together, we will be naturally inseparable.

Day Two

Focusing on the Teachings that Matter

"*Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*" 1 Corinthians 1:12–13

Help me to focus on the teachings that matter, remembering that Your Spirit teaches all things. Let me not glorify one man who does God's work above another man who does likewise. But I commit myself to glorifying You alone always.

*****

In today's modern terms, the attitude that is admonished in this scripture can be likened to "I am of this church, and you are of that church." Everyone seems to think that the church he or she attends is the best one in the city. Then each church acts as if it is an individual body; but in Christ there is only one body with many members. One church is an arm, and another a leg.

Do not neglect a needy brother or sister just because the person worships at a different facility. Do not allow a rift to exist due to differences in belief. Rather, allow the Spirit to guide you to all truth, and encourage others to do the same—no matter what church they are from. For we all belong to one Savior. We all have the same Father and worship the same God. So strive to be unified through love, truth, and the Holy Spirit.

Day Three

Growing in God's Wisdom

"*And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.*" 1 Corinthians 2:1

Lord, I commit myself to growing in true wisdom. I will submit to Your Spirit so that He can speak through me. Help me to understand how to do this fully and always. In this way I may glorify you in everything I say.

*****

In today's church some sermons have lost their fire and replaced it with eloquence and heady knowledge. When Jesus came, however, He didn't come with eloquence, but with the power of the Spirit of God. The works of His hands spoke louder than His words.

Each of us is called to season our words with salt. This salt is the Holy Spirit. When witnessing, don't deliver a canned witness, but instead allow the Spirit to guide your heart to the words that the individual person needs to hear. Every person needs something different, and God knows others' hearts better than we do. So in all things allow the Spirit to speak for you.

Learn to do this in fellowship, at work, when with friends or family, and at every moment of life. Bridle your tongue so that God may have control. As Jesus taught us,

"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Matthew 12:36–37

If our words have been spoken by God, shall we not be justified?

Day Four

Increasing Your Faith

"*And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*" 1 Corinthians 2:4–5

Lord, increase my faith so that Your works may be more abundant in my life. Please help me to grow intimately closer to You, that demonstrations of Your Spirit—both in fruitful love and in power—would be a natural part of who I am.

*****

Where has the power gone in the church? Where are the true miracles that could inspire the broken or help an unbeliever to believe? There are some, but they are few—in the first-world countries, at least. Living in a wealthier nation forces us into a corner of thought.

God's sovereignty slowly loses out to our own plans, in some Christians' lives. Rather than allow the Lord to plot their course, such believers fall into a trap of self-reliance because the ability to do so is always right there at their fingertips. God's way makes less sense, and logic wins the day. As a result, their faith abandons the truth found in God's inward voice and finds its resting place in their own interpretation of His word—both the Scriptures and the voice of God. In essence, such believers, without realizing it, become their own god.

Who are we to interpret the word of the Lord? That work is for the Holy Spirit. Our faith must be solely and incredibly in the word of God alone. We must not make alterations, interpretations, opinions, or assumptions. God's words are perfect and must be believed no matter the cost. True faith is not the mere state of believing; it is the outward action of the inward heart. Therefore, practice faith through obeying the Holy Spirit. He is always speaking, so practice the ability to listen constantly. Don't be distracted by the day-to-day activities and the grind of work. Keep your eyes fixed on the Spirit at all times.

Remember that the sword of the Lord is the word of the Lord. Everyone calls the Scriptures "the sword." While this is true, many Christians seem to forget that God's sword is a two-edged blade, being sharp with Scripture as well as with the active voice of God. We must have a fully honed and balanced blade before we can wield it skillfully. We must both study His word and listen intently to the

Spirit that we may know how God intends us to apply His word.

So Beloved, sensitize your ears to the Holy Spirit and be swift to obey Him even if it doesn't make sense. Remember that the most effective faith is carried out blind. The less you have to go on, the more incredible your faith is.

But if you struggle with hearing God's voice, then take the time to grow in discernment. Not every voice that comes to our hearts is God. Satan loves to masquerade as God, and our own hearts can deceive us masterfully. Therefore, the only way to determine God's voice perfectly is to take the time to grow in discerning and understanding it. You must press into it and be intentional about daily growth.

Have you been dedicating yourself to such growth? If not, then commit yourself to doing so today.

Day Five

Earnestly Seeking to Be Taught by the Spirit

"*These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*" 1 Corinthians 2:13

Lord, help me to understand Your voice more clearly, that I may be taught by You always. I choose to surrender to You now in this so that I can grow in the Spirit and be taught by You at all times.

*****

Are you being taught by the Spirit? What has He taught you lately? Everything in your walk with Christ must be taught to you by the Spirit. When you read your Bible, learn to spend more time listening to God than you do thinking. Some Christians seem to have a habit of listening to their own thoughts while reading the word, rather than paying attention to how the Scriptures jump out at them and relate to their life.

When the scriptures seem to come alive, this is when the Spirit is speaking. Memorize and meditate on those portions. Grow in them, for they are practical lessons for today. As you do this continually, each lesson will be like a brick in a foundation that the Spirit will use as a basis of comparison for future lessons. Thus will He bring you to a fuller and greater understanding of His word, through intricately woven lessons of faith.

Day Six

Seeking True Wisdom

"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, 'He catches the wise in their own craftiness'…" 1 Corinthians 3:19

Lord, I desire Your wisdom. Increase me in it and in Your word, that I may grow thereby. Bless me with the depths of wisdom You gave Solomon. That way I may live according to Your truth and everything that pleases You.

*****

God's wisdom is all that matters. His truth can only be communicated by His Spirit. If we are not connecting our ears to His lips, we'll never hear the true words by which we must live. Some preach the gospel with a canned witness or with heady knowledge, thinking that these things are useful for the world to believe. But faith never comes through man's understanding of God; rather, it comes through blind obedience to His word.

Even in our own walks, we can build up worldly wisdom without realizing it. By interpreting the Scriptures and forming opinions about God, however, we do not lay bricks of truth upon the foundation of Christ. Instead, we must take heed to truth and pursue it with all our hearts. All wisdom is false and worthless if it is not the wisdom of God's truth.

But are our opinions about God actually worldly? We have two natures, both the old man and the new man. The old man interprets the word of God, whereas the new man hears the word of God to live by it and obey it. The word we hear is the voice of the Holy Spirit by which we all must be taught. It is said that you must think before you speak; yet before God speaks, it is best not to think at all. Just wait for His word and listen.

If we drown out God's voice with our own thoughts, then it is obvious that the old man has taken charge. The old man is the worldly man, and thus the wisdom we build during these moments is worldly wisdom.

Now, some may argue, "I am listening to the Spirit merely by reading my Bible." It is true that God's word is Spirit-breathed. However, there are many who read God's word—both believer and unbeliever—yet not all of them understand. As we read,

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory…” 1 Corinthians 2:7

And furthermore, as Paul goes on to explain,

“But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” 1 Corinthians 2:10

God reveals His wisdom and mysteries to us, especially the wisdom and mystery of the word, through His Holy Spirit. So seek wisdom from above, not from merely studying and trying to figure out how the Scriptures apply to you. Rather, study the Scriptures through the Holy Spirit as you listen to His voice. Remember that every time the pages come alive, God is talking. So read until the Scriptures speak to you. Become familiar with each book and study it thoroughly.

One of the best methods to grow in the Scriptures and in understanding the voice of God is to write everything the Spirit speaks to you. Write everything He says word for word, not paraphrasing. That way you may attune your ear to His words and understand Him more clearly. If you paraphrase God’s word, you’ll understand His voice as a paraphrase and may miss out on some smaller but vital details. But if you record precisely the words His voice speaks, you’ll expand your knowledge boundlessly and perfectly.

Nor should you write your own thoughts; rather, write only what the Spirit speaks. By so doing, you’ll train your ears to listen to God over your own heart. This will come in handy later on, such as during a trial.

Finally, memorize everything that speaks out to you. If you struggle with memorizing, then stop trying to make it your own effort. Instead, apply faith. Pray that God will help you memorize the word. Then believe with all your heart that He will help you retain the scriptures you memorize. Yes, you need to put forward the effort to memorize; but as you do it by faith, you’ll find that the more faith you have, the easier it is to retain His word.

The trick is twofold, however. You must memorize only what speaks out to you and not some random verse you like. Then you must apply faith. Keep stride with the Teacher’s lesson and do not randomly flip through the workbook (your Bible).

Remember that Jesus said,

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will

teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." John 14:26

Have you ever applied this scripture before? Start now and it will change your life forever. Be submissive and let the Spirit help you in every situation, teaching you and bringing God's word to remembrance. If this technique of memorization is a process with which you are not familiar and you would like to read more information about it, see the more detailed discussion in my book *How to Memorize the Bible Fast and Easy*.

Day Seven

Running to Obtain the Prize

"*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*" 1 Corinthians 9:24–27

Lord you're worth everything to me. Help me to run with endurance that each of my strides in life will please You. Help me to know and understand Your will that I can strive, not according to my works, but Your work as Your Spirit moves and works in my life. Help me to understand Your will that I can be fully submitted to it, remembering that my life is a pilgrimage.

*****

How have you been running the race? Have you been passionately diving into all that Jesus is? Have you been pouring into your relationship with Him and growing in Him? As a child grows, it changes. How have you been changing and becoming more intimately attuned to the Spirit of Christ?

Beloved, examine yourself always and test yourself. A race is not won by looking backward, so don't look at your previous accomplishments and boast in them. The race is still going! Your current life is not about how you once ran, but about how you're currently running. If you've done well, then press forward. If you've stumbled and skinned your knees, get back up. This race can still be won!

Everyone who races for a medal presses forward, ignoring everything that lies behind. As Paul said,

"Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13–14

Focus on the goal. Keep your eyes fixed on the prize. Make today a day of dedication: Dedicate yourself to walking more passionately in Christ from this

day forward. Be the image of His love and walk in His Spirit, listening to His voice, pursuing His truth, and obeying Him diligently.

Day Eight

Avoiding Modern Idols

"*Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.'*" 1 Corinthians 10:6–7

Lord, I commit everything I am to You. Keep me pure in my fellowship and pure in my walk. I will not allow idols to rise up in my heart. Nor idleness to overtake my mind and hands. But if this should happen without my realizing it, then I pray You would reveal my idols to me, that I may repent.

*****

Notice how the scripture does not mention the gold bull (Baal) when talking about idols? Instead it mentions the idle activities in which the Israelites participated. Why does the scripture describe idleness as idolatry? Because we can't all relate to the primitive religions of worshipping golden gods and engraven images. However, we can relate to the kinds of activities that were centered on their worship. If we give too much time to idle and purposeless things, then we render our time to a personal idol we've created. Idol literally means, "Thing of nothingness" and if we choose to be idly entertained, rather than pressing continuously into the Spirit, we will be distracted by the nothingness of this world. Every idol begins as a distraction, then slowly takes over the time and attention God deserves to have.

Have you ever noticed how some fellowship nights at certain churches spend less time focusing on prayer, worship, or study of the word and more time on games and food? The Israelites worshipped golden gods, but we sin by worshipping excessive entertainment, overindulgence in food or activities not pertaining to Christ, and excessive attention to credit, money, our careers, and our own plans to prosper ourselves. God has a plan for each of us, and we are called to render ourselves to His plan.

But is it really wrong to increase ourselves financially? Consider these questions: For what purpose do we labor, and in what are we trusting, when we further ourselves? How can we further God's kingdom if we're caught up with building our own? How can we bless others and the name of God if we're caught

up in blessing ourselves?

By covetousness we commit sin. As it is written,

“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” Colossians 3:5

Beloved, although I am using hard words, I do not speak them to discourage or condemn you. For Jesus has given us a way out, and it is necessary that each of us grasps it. It is necessary that we take our relationship with the Lord seriously, pressing into Him fully.

So in today’s moment of devotion, take the time to examine yourself. Do you have any idols? Every idol begins as a distraction from God until it takes time away from Him. So is there anything that’s distracting you from meditating and abiding in the Spirit? How are you lining up with God’s heart and plan? Have you been pressing into the kingdom and into growth? For we all must grow in the Lord. A vine that does not grow does not bear much fruit. What did Jesus do to the fig tree that bore no fruit? But if you desire to be well-pleasing to the Lord, then take it to heart to grow in your relationship.

Study your Bible. Come to know the Scriptures perfectly. If you believe that all things are possible through Christ, then you know that it is possible to grasp every concept of the word and to understand His voice precisely. So study the word while being attentive to the Spirit’s voice, that you may grow in His truth and teachings. Idleness and idols tend to cloud our vision of God and muddy our understanding of His voice. But if you grow, the ability to understand His voice will come naturally and easily.

Beloved, take it to heart to lay the desires of your heart behind, to pick up your cross, and to walk in the Holy Spirit. Doesn’t Jesus deserve such devotion from us? Therefore, let this time of devotion be a commitment to continual growth in Christ and abstinence from meaningless activities. For ‘idol’ literally means “thing of nothingness,” and when we partake in nothingness, we are not fellowshipping with Christ as we ought but, rather, gratifying the desires of our own hearts.

Day Nine

Understanding the Severity of a Modern Idol

"*What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?*" 1 Corinthians 10:19–22

Jesus, I understand how serious a person idol is. I will not sacrifice my time to demons through idleness. Instead, I will commit myself to abiding in the Spirit always.

*****

Yesterday we discussed how idleness is a form of idolatry. To practice any form of idolatry, whether by having faith in abundance or indulging in anything not pertaining to Christ, is to sacrifice your time and a piece of your heart to the will of demons.

Beloved, do not make the Lord jealous by not making time for God. God is the master of your life and deserves every moment of your time. So stop setting time aside for Him and keeping the rest for yourself. Rather, fully and wholeheartedly dedicate yourself to Jesus. Take the time to meditate on and abide in His Spirit throughout the day. Pray and worship constantly throughout the day.

Day Ten

Loving from the Heart

"*Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.*" 1 Corinthians 10:24

Jesus, I commit my heart to practicing Your love continually toward all people. Open my eyes to those who need it. I choose to be a continually kind person, no matter the circumstances happening in my own life.

*****

It's easy to say that we'll become the image of God's love, but the real test comes when we are suffering our own trials in life. God calls us to look not only at ourselves, but also at others. Love like there's no tomorrow and don't let your plans in life get in the way of God's love.

I once knew an old man who was set to retire. He had one year left at the hospital and a large lump of money saved up. He was set for life; all he had to do was wait. At that time God sent a brother in the Lord to the man. This brother was homeless from a series of uncontrollable financial disasters, and to make matters worse, his wife had just given birth. Now they were facing the loss of their children because social services was pressing them to get off the streets: Living in a car in the dead of winter was no place for a newborn.

Having met the wealthy brother in the hospital, he asked him for prayer—and a home. Not money, but help with finding a place to stay. The wealthy man was convicted by God to help, but out of fear of losing his retirement money, he turned down the needy family. "This man's young and I'm old. If I lose what I've worked for, I can't rebound like he can!"

But the young man and his family weren't looking for money, just a place to stay. God must have convicted the wealthy man to do more—hence his words—so he closed his heart out of fear of loss. He refused to pray for the man or help him in any way.

Satan has a funny way of tempting us to act contrary to the works of love. We pray hard to have an opportunity to accomplish them, but then, when they're at our feet, we are swallowed by fear, afflictions, and doubts. But that's just like Satan—to tempt and afflict us in order to keep us from fulfilling all

righteousness.

Beloved, do not fear the fulfilment of kindness. For those who fear are not made perfect in love.

Day Eleven

Can Other's Learn to Walk like Christ by Imitating You?

"*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*" 1 Corinthians 11:1

Lord, I commit myself to growth. Give me the holiness, faith, love, and everything else I need in my walk, that I may also say to others in all confidence, "Imitate me"—knowing that they will be imitating Christ in me.

*****

Are you confident enough to tell others that they can safely imitate each detail of your walk? Paul had this confidence. And if you don't, then take the time to examine why.

When you find what's holding you back, then you'll know the areas in your life where you need growth. Focus on changing these parts of yourself. Press into Christ and take daily growth seriously. Do not only draw near to God during a time of devotion, but rather draw near Him always—continually abiding in and focusing on the presence and voice of the Holy Spirit. When reading God's word is not possible, this can be best accomplished through continuous prayer and worship.

Can you worship without ceasing? Press into it daily, focusing on and singing praise to the presence of God, and watch how it changes your life through time.

Day Twelve

Judging Ourselves First

"*For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.*" 1 Corinthians 11:31

Jesus, open my eyes to my own conduct. I know that I cannot grow unless I focus on the areas of my life that need sharpening. I understand that I am not having a negative or ungodly mind by being hard on myself to increase in Your love and grow in You always. For You said that I must remove the plank from my own eye. Therefore, help me to remove not only the planks but also the specks that obscure my vision of You.

*****

Take the time to test your own heart. Are you practicing abiding and walking in the Spirit? Are you diving into the word daily and growing in it as you should? Are you listening constantly for that still, small voice so that you may hear the Spirit in order to obey Him? God is always speaking to you, but are you taking it seriously to hear Him and obey Him throughout the day?

Beloved, test yourself always and do not judge another. It is easy to examine others to see how they need growth, but we ought to turn our eyes inward and commit to a lifetime of growth toward excellence in Christ.

Be swift to glorify the Lord and not your own works. Judge yourself against Christ. How do you lack? Don't look at your successes, but instead examine what needs work in your walk, that you may press forward.

Do those who run a race stop halfway through the course to look back at the goals they have accomplished? Certainly not! They press forward with their mind focused on one thing: obtaining the prize. And we also have a prize that lies ahead of us.

Therefore, Beloved, run in such a way that you may obtain this prize, keeping your mind fixed on the Spirit of Christ continually. Judge yourself, that you may grow.

Day Thirteen

Growing to Understand Perfectly

"*Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.*" 1 Corinthians 14:20

Lord, I dedicate myself to growing continually in Your word and in Your truth. Stretch my understanding and increase my wisdom. Make me more like You.

*****

Have you been taking diligent study of the word seriously? Have you allowed the Holy Spirit to teach and guide you through the pages?

Keep your course with His lessons. Read the pages from which He speaks to you. You must put to memory and meditation anything that comes alive for you, that you may practice it later. Beloved, be dedicated to increasing in wisdom daily.

Day Fourteen

If You Do Everything Through God's Perfect Love, How Will You Go Wrong?

"*Let all that you do be done with love.*" 1 Corinthians 16:14

Lord, increase me in Your love. May each of my words and actions express the goodness, kindness, and soberness of your heart. Let me not be carried away by negative emotions—whether anger or fearful thoughts. But I commit myself to being perfect in love and in the way I express it toward others.

*****

Has every word and every action of yours been done through love? Test yourself, and press forward into the goal of perfect and continuous love toward all.

Has your love been perfect lately? Although we are not perfect people, love—perfect, gentle, kind, and unconditional love—should come naturally to us since the Holy Spirit has been poured out on our hearts. We know that the first fruit of the Spirit is love. Therefore, submit to the Spirit and press forward to become the image of God's love daily.

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The Power of Praying Second Corinthians From Your Heart

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Introduction

Every believer should take it to heart to meditate on God’s word. For by His word we increase our faith, and if we don’t meditate on His word how can we remember it to practice it?

So consider taking the next fourteen days to meditate on and pray through Second Corinthians.

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Day One

Doing All through God's Will

"*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia…*" 2 Corinthians 1:1

Lord, help me to walk according to Your will. Give me wisdom in it and save me from my own works with which I contrive to honor You. I see that Paul was an apostle only because it was Your will. Help me also to understand the gifts You have chosen for me, that I may walk with them through obedience. Help me to understand the power of grace so that I no longer need to pursue my own works. Help me instead to walk in wisdom, understanding that I must obey Your voice and thereby allow You to work through me.

*****

God has called us to cease from the works of the law. When we attempt to please God through our own plans, we are living legalistically without realizing it. All that God requires of us is obedience. For we cannot come to Christ unless we obey the call of the gospel both to repent and to receive Jesus as Lord.

Yet how can we obey if we cannot hear His voice? How can we hear His voice if we do not pay attention? Beloved, do not be distracted by the world around you, or by your own heart within you, but rather be sober in the Spirit, giving constant heed to His voice and convictions. For we sin when we disobey God. By contrast, when we obey the Spirit, we walk in all righteousness.

Therefore, Beloved, be fervent about hearing and obeying the voice of God. You cannot even begin to obey if you are not fully surrendered to His will. Let God be glorified as He glorifies Himself through you. Can our works attain to His? Can we make light from darkness? Can we reach into dust and create a man? Can we raise and lower the seas? Can we make valleys and mountains and all manner of life? Can we destroy that life in a flood and then shift the tectonic plates, raising the land so the world may never be flooded again? When Christ was crucified, could we have brought Him up from the dead?

It is more than obvious that we are the ones who need Christ and His works in our lives. But what would God ever need from us?

We cannot work like God, but by obeying and walking in His Holy Spirit, we should allow His resurrecting and righteous power to be at work in us and through us continually. This can only happen through obedience to His voice and faith.

Therefore, Beloved, increase your faith. Show your gratitude for His grace through your passionate obedience.

Isn’t He worthy of this?

Day Two

Bearing Fruit through Love

"*…(as also you have understood us in part), that we are your boast as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.*" 2 Corinthians 1:14

Teach me and grow me, Lord, so that I may be able to pour Your love into others. I commit myself right now to becoming the image of Your love toward all others around me. That way I may be like Paul—able to say that my works are proven through the fruit that others bear because Your love at work through me has changed their lives.

*****

It is easy for a person to boast of his or her own works. But do you have the confidence to point to a person or group of people whose lives you have changed through God's love and truth and say, "They and their works are my fruit in Christ." How have you been spreading the seeds of His kingdom to lead others to salvation and to help those who are younger than you in Christ grow in wisdom?

Seek to grow, but be an example in word and conduct. Have such fervent love for the brethren and for the doctrine of truth that you can change lives. For this is what Christ has done—and what He calls us to do.

Day Three

Planning through the Spirit's Guidance

"*Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No? But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*" 2 Corinthians 1:17–20

Lord, teach me how to plan through Your Holy Spirit so that You may take charge of my day as I live according to Your will.

*****

Do you plan your days through the Spirit, allowing Him to lead you on a moment-by-moment basis? Do you allow Him to change your plans at the last minute, without notice?

The Lord had this scripture written so that we may see the need to live continuously for His will. Paul didn't plan through his flesh, saying, "I will go here and do this or that to honor God or to provide." Rather, he allowed God to plan and provide for him so that he could live for the will of the Lord.

When you plan in the flesh, you say, "If God wills, then I may do this or that." But when the Holy Spirit has revealed the will and plan of God, every ounce of that plan is "Yes!" and "Amen!" For everything that God says will take place shall certainly take place, and anything that is His active will and plan is righteousness for us to accomplish. Therefore, Beloved, learn to plan all things through the Holy Spirit, being fully surrendered to the will of God.

Day Four

Finding God's Open Doors

"*Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord…*" 2 Corinthians 2:12

Lord, open doors in My life through which to follow You. Give me words to speak and actions to perform so that Your work and love may be apparent through me. Teach me and guide me by Your Spirit.

*****

Are you seeking the doors of God? Many doors may open in your life, but only certain ones are from God. Have you been stepping through God's doors? Do you know this for a fact, or is there any question in your heart on the matter?

Beloved, allow your confidence to be founded in truth. If God has led you, there will not be a shadow of a doubt because you will know that the Spirit has communicated the will of God to you. So the question is this: Have you been living for the will of God?

Examine your life. Is there anything that God may not want you doing or partaking in? Do you follow your own heart and practice idleness? Or are all things done through the Holy Spirit as God guides you?

Let God guide you and open doors in your life. Pray for these doors, and pray also that He would strip you of everything that is not of Him. That way everything you are may be for God and to God.

Scripture makes evident that we must be led by Him:

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Romans 8:14

How have you been led lately?

Day Five

Writing God's Love On other's Hearts

"*…clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.*" 2 Corinthians 3:3

Again I pray that I will become the pen of Your love in order to write Your love in other's hearts. Open the doors for me to love on others. Please give me more opportunities and stretch my faith.

*****

Look for the hurting and the needy. Continue to dedicate yourself to loving them so deeply that it changes their life. For Christ came to change us through His love, and we ought to have the same heart—changing others through God's love at work in us.

You never know when God will call you home to Him. If that day is today, what legacy will you leave behind? What legacy do you want to leave behind?

If you are like Christ in this world, pouring yourself out in His love, then the legacy you leave behind is what you shall present before God in judgment. As it is written,

"Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world." 1 John 4:17

Live out God's perfect love toward all men, but especially toward your brethren, whether you know them personally or not. How do you know whether you entertain angels? And even if you haven't, then you've entertained God by practicing His love toward your brother.

Day Six

Walking by Faith

"*For we walk by faith, not by sight.*" 2 Corinthians 5:7

Lord, I commit myself to increasing my faith daily. I know You deserve all of my trust, so I'm giving it to You. It's easy for me to say this, but harder to practice it during hardships and trying experiences. Help me to remain steadfast in faith, trusting in Your trustworthiness.

*****

From where does faith come? It is written,

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17

Every time God speaks, our natural response must be with obedient faith—obedience because if we believe God, we should do something with our faith. But with that said, true faith only comes when the Lord communicates His will. Therefore, pursue the will of God and pray fervently if you do not know it. How do you know the manner in which the Lord may answer you?

And finally, Beloved, increase your faith so as to walk perfectly in it, no matter your circumstance in life. Paul had unwavering faith when he was tempest-tossed in a sinking ship. We likewise should grow to have this faith. For what has God done to merit our distrust?

Day Seven

Striving to be Well Pleasing

"*Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.*" 2 Corinthians 5:9

Lord, I give You everything I am in order to please You. With all my heart, I have no greater desire than to see You smile when I stand before You. Build in me everything that pleases You. And from my heart I ask for You to remove from me everything that doesn't please You.

*****

How have you been seeking to please God lately? Since we have two natures, both a sinful one and a righteous one, pleasing God doesn't come naturally unless we press into the Holy Spirit to walk in Him. For when we walk in the Spirit, we please God in everything. Walking in the Spirit isn't natural for us, however, since we have the old nature. This is why we must be exhorted:

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Galatians 5:25

Just because we live in the Spirit doesn't mean we are walking in Him as we ought. Since we all still sin, it would be blaspheming the Spirit to say that we always walk in the Spirit, even as we sin. To blaspheme is to speak evil of the Lord. When we walk in the Spirit, He works through us; so if we say that the Spirit is working when sin is working, we are claiming that the Spirit is capable of sin.

Therefore, Beloved, since we do not walk in the Spirit naturally, we must be intentional about walking in continual pursuit of abiding in Him. So keep your spiritual eyes fixed on the presence of God not only during a time of devotional, but always. A time of devotion is meant for a spiritual recharge. Then, after we are recharged, we ought not to be drained of that charge, but instead should carry it with us. For the glory of the New Covenant does not fade as the Old Covenant faded off of Moses' face. But if we become distracted from God, the nature of the flesh takes over, creating the need to be recharged again.

For this reason, learn to practice continual abiding by meditating on the Spirit and presence of God through constant prayer and worship. Then, when you are able to feel His presence, His voice will come more clearly and constantly.

Obedience will thus be easier—for how can you obey God if you cannot hear Him? How can you hear Him if you're distracted from His voice?

Beloved, keep your ears open and your heart fixed on Christ, that you may hear and understand His word. For there is no greater way to increase your faith than to study His word and hear His voice clearly. Then, through faith, you can become more pleasing to Him. As it is written,

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6

Day Eight

Become the Righteousness of God

"*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*" 2 Corinthians 5:21

Lord, teach me how to become Your righteousness. Save me from practicing my own "righteousnesses" and help me to be Your righteousness as Your Holy Spirit works in me and through me. Give me the wisdom in the moment to understand the difference between my righteousness and Yours, that I may practice what pleases You.

*****

It is written,

"…and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith…" Philippians 3:9 NKJV

And again,

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17 NKJV

True righteousness is from God by faith. Faith enters when God speaks; therefore, true righteousness is to walk according to the voice of God, which is the voice of the Holy Spirit. Thus, when you are led by the Spirit, you walk in righteousness naturally. In order to understand the difference between your own righteousness and God's, you must live a life fully surrendered to His will and obedient to His voice.

But you cannot even begin to understand the voice of God unless you study His word diligently. As you read your Bible, certain scriptures will speak out to you. When this happens, it is actually the Holy Spirit who is speaking. Become familiar with His voice and practice drowning out your own thoughts. Write what His voice says to you—everything it teaches you and all of the comparisons it makes. Memorize the portions of Scripture that speak out to you and search constantly for His voice and presence throughout the day. Keep a vigilant mind also, remaining circumspect to the spiritual environment around

you.

As you grow in this, you will grow in understanding His voice. Thus, by obedience, submission to His will, and pursuit of His voice, you'll grow in the practice of righteousness.

God requires each of us to grow. While grace is sufficient, if we truly love the Lord, we will desire to draw near to Him.

And do you fully understand that obedience to the voice of God is what leads us to righteousness? Remember that Abraham heard God's promise and did not waver. He left his homeland and pursued the will of God, abandoning his old life. Then, having arrived in the Promised Land, he did not waver at the word of the Lord that he would be a father, but he took up faith—and through faith the deadness of Sarah's womb was healed. As with Christ, who was born of a virgin, the impossible was made possible through the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed Sarah by faith.

As a result, Isaac was born by a miracle; he was born a spiritual child, having been conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. In this, Isaac foreshadowed Christ, but Abraham foreshadowed God's desire for the Christian. Abraham became what we must become: living examples of faith through obedience to the voice of God.

Beloved, do you not remember the parable of the wedding table? Jesus said to take a lower seat, that you may be told, "Come higher." If in this life you have not humbled yourself as much as you ought, living for the will of God, the Lord may very well say, "Go lower." Read this parable (Luke 14:7–11). Such people are indeed told to take a seat that is lower. Therefore, they still get to be saved and sit at the table with God, but they are humiliated in the process.

Humility is coming, whether now when we choose it or in judgement. If we don't desire to draw near to God in this life, what makes us think that we could sit near Him at His table?

Each of us, then, should be passionate for the Lord, that He may say, "Come higher!" If you do this, you'll have glory in the sight of God and men.

These things I have spoken figuratively to you so that you may understand. But the wedding table is the judgement seat of Christ when He is to be united to His bride, which is the Church.

Beloved, be fervent for the Lord, dedicating yourself to this fully so that you

may become the righteousness of God. For this reason Jesus was crucified and raised. Therefore, allow the cross to give you purpose as you live out the faith as you've been called to do.

Day Nine

Holding Fast the Promises of God

"*Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*" 2 Corinthians 7:1

Jesus, You know I desire and already strive for a holy, clean walk. Even so, I pray that You would strengthen me as I seek to please You.

Thank You for Your grace, and thank You also for the power Your Spirit supplies so that I may walk uprightly in You—so that I might work out godliness, which requires no grace. Though my flesh requires grace, I know that the Holy Spirit and His works in me do not. So I pray that You would help me to grow in grace and in the strength of the Spirit until You have perfected me in holiness and grace is no longer necessary, due to Your power at work in my life.

*****

It is written,

"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Galatians 5:16

And it is also written,

"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." Galatians 5:18

When we walk in the Spirit, we overcome sin naturally. Those who struggle with sin can overcome it, and all bondage, overnight, by taking it to heart to abide in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit through obedience to His voice.

Yet those who do not struggle have no excuse for complacency. Indeed, we must all be pursuing growth daily, for if we love the Lord, we will be compelled to draw nearer to Him always and throughout the day.

God is infinite. We are called to become like Him in all things. If He is infinitely good and we are not, then we have much striving to do. However, this striving is not according to law, but rather it is striving to obey the Holy Spirit. For when we walk in the Spirit, being led by Him as we sensitize ourselves to His voice through obedience, we walk justified in the faith. Thus, the law is not necessary

because we fulfill it by nature. Yet we do not fulfill the law naturally if we do not seek to be filled with the Spirit and strive to walk in the Spirit.

Beloved, if the Lord is infinitely good, shouldn't we be pressing more faithfully into the kingdom and into our relationship with Jesus? We must ask ourselves: Are we perfect as God is perfect? Certainly not! But Jesus says,

"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:48

How can we be perfect if we are naturally flawed creatures? And why would God require this of us through a commandment? Because as Jesus explained,

"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Mark 9:23

And as Jesus also said,

"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." Mark 10:27

If, therefore, you believe the word of the Lord, which says all things are possible for you through faith, then you will put your faith into motion, striving according to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. For righteousness is faith in motion. Moreover, Jesus also said,

"If you love Me, keep My commandments." John 14:15

And as it is further written,

"But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection." Colossians 3:14

So if you desire to be perfect, walk in love toward all men as well as toward God. Do not forsake a brother, but instead remain faithful to express God's perfect, redeeming, and saving love. Meet others' urgent needs; and as you do to them, so you will have done to Jesus Himself.

If you love our Lord, then this will be manifest through obedience to His commands—not through keeping the law, but rather by growing in His word and obeying His voice, that you may practice His word according to His guidance. Again I will say that your love for the Lord should compel you to obey the Holy Spirit with a fervent heart. For we sin through disobedience to the voice of God, similarly to Adam and Eve, who disobeyed. They trusted their own heart and desire over God's voice.

But having been sanctified through the Spirit, we ought to walk in the strength of

the Spirit so that we may be perfected in holiness through loving obedience. Then, through love, we will have boldness in judgement. As it is written,

“Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.” 1 John 4:17

We are as He is because our love compels us to walk in the Holy Spirit and obey His voice. Thus, we are justified, because as Christ is above the law, so are we through love and through following the Holy Spirit. Take this to heart and practice it faithfully, searching daily for the voice of the Spirit in your life so that you may obey. And finally, remember to be compelled by love.

Day Ten

Perfecting Your Love

"*For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality. As it is written, 'He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.'*" 2 Corinthians 8:13–15

Lord, teach me to walk in perfect love. Grow me in this and provide more opportunities to practice it. That way I may please You more abundantly.

*****

Be faithful to meet urgent needs. Look for opportunities to love others, and pray for open eyes. God will grant them to you. The more fervently you seek to be used as His tool, the more He will use you. The more God uses you, the closer to Him you become and the more you'll experience Him in your own life. This in turn will grow you greatly in boldness of faith. As it is written,

"For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 3:13

In the old Church, a deacon was not one who collected tithes in collection plates; rather, deacons were appointed by the Holy Spirit to distribute the money tithed to the church to the poor. Deacons today collect tithes, but deacons from the ancient Church gave away the tithes. How backwards we have become! The old Church as led by the Apostles did not collect money to beautify a physical sanctuary, but instead to beautify the lives of the poor believers through the promotion of equality.

Pray and ask God how He would like you to apply this type of perfect love. He does not mean for you to be burdened and others eased, but for everyone to walk in perfect love. Let God give you wisdom and guide you in the process so that when you meet an urgent need, you will not fall into the same pit.

But know that God will certainly test you in this at some point in your life, for He is pleased by faith. There are times when acts of love are so great that they require faith. However, if your faith is not practiced through love, then it avails nothing. As it is written,

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” Galatians 5:6

Day Eleven

Tending the Garden of Love

"*But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*" 2 Corinthians 9:6

Lord, I desire to sow deeply into our relationship. Let me have more You of and less of myself. Save me from any temptations to be distracted and choose other things. From my heart of hearts and with all my heart, I love You and desire You. So please preserve my free will and help me to have more of You throughout my day. As I seek You, strengthen me with the strength of the Spirit to continue to meditate on You, that I may have Your heart as Your Spirit teaches and guides me.

Fill me with Your Spirit for strength as I step out through faith to please You in all things.

*****

It is written,

"To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." Colossians 1:29

How have you been striving according to the work of God? Have you been listening to the Holy Spirit so that He may work through you by your obedience? Have you been humbling yourself so that the power of Christ might rest upon you?

Walk in love and walk in the Spirit, whose fruit is love. Sow deeply into love and the Spirit, and you will not regret it. For you will reap an abundantly deep relationship with Jesus that leads to everlasting life.

Day Twelve

Being the Same in Word and Deed

"*Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when we are absent, such we will also be in deed when we are present.*" 2 Corinthians 10:11

Lord, I commit myself to practicing the things I know to do and that I teach others to do. Thank You for this reminder in Your word to be as mighty in deeds and obedience as I am in my own words. Let my words and my actions alike reflect Your purity and love. If ever they don't, I pray that You would increase Your conviction in my life so that I may continue to be an example of Your love toward those around me.

*****

Though it is not always necessary, it is good to be reminded to do the things we already know to do. This helps to ensure that we ourselves are practicing whatever we are speaking or teaching in word. For example, it is easy to preach faith to the hurting and broken, but when we suffer our own trials, what we preach suddenly becomes hard to practice. And when we argue, we may speak choice words as the flesh takes over through anger. If we walk in the Spirit, however, even when pressed to do otherwise, we will be applying the love by which we must live—just as we know and preach.

We must remember to remain faithful in all things so that we can be the example of the love of God, having the faith that God deserves from us.

Day Thirteen

Boldly Living for God's Truth

"*For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!*" 2 Corinthians 11:4

Lord, open my eyes to see any improper understandings I may have of certain scriptures. Open my eyes to see incorrect doctrines around me, and give me the wisdom to know the truth. Cleanse me perfectly in Your word and give me wisdom to understand. Teach me the Scriptures through Your Spirit as I listen to His voice while reading Your word.

*****

God calls us to truth and to be fervent for His doctrine. Only the truth in His word saves. But those who contort His word turn people away from the faith and toward a false god crafted to look like Jesus. Any twists and turns in doctrine ought to be corrected lovingly, for the Scriptures tell us,

"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Corinthians 1:10

And also,

"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." Jude 3:1

How can you contend earnestly unless you know God's truth perfectly? Desire the truth of His doctrine and be fervent for it, for doctrine dictates how your faith must work. If your faith works according to a misunderstanding or a lie, will it grant you power? Certainly not. Therefore, we all must be passionate about seeking the Lord in truth. If we love Him, then we will desire to know Him for who He is and not for who we imagine or desire Him to be. As it is written,

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" John 14:6

To seek truth in your doctrine is to seek Christ, because He is truth. Beloved, do not be complacent, but rather be passionate about the truth. Pursue it with your whole heart as if your life depends on it—because it does. And there is no greater way to please God than to be founded in His perfect truth. For it is also written,

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” 3 John 4:1

But now the question remains: How do we find truth? Jesus said,

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” John 16:13

Therefore, listen carefully to the Spirit when you read your Bible and He will guide you to all truth. Let Him teach you from the pages. As the Scriptures tell us,

“These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” 1 Corinthians 2:13

Pay attention to His words alone and not to your own thoughts. Then abide in Him continually throughout the day, through ongoing prayer and worship, while listening for His voice. He will teach you through conviction and small, soft whispers how and when to apply each scripture. And if you memorize the word, He will bring it to memory when it is time to apply it:

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” John 14:26

Someone once asked me, “Doesn’t God have the power to plant the entire Bible in my mind through His Spirit? Why does He make me read it and study it? What’s the point?”

While God certainly has such authority, He chooses not to exercise it, for He would rather give us free will and be relational with us. In order for a relationship to work, two people must pursue one another and grow in their understanding of each other. If one person doesn’t do so, the relationship will not work.

Thus, don’t let your relationship with God be one-sided, but rather pursue Him with the same passion with which He pursued you. Since God has pursued you

and already knows you perfectly, now is your turn to prove your love for Him through diligent study, memorization, and sensitivity to the Spirit. In this way you may obey God through wisdom and love.

Beloved, be filled with the Spirit and pursue wisdom in truth. As it is written,

“My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding…” Proverbs 2:1–6

And finally,

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” James 1:5–8

Beloved, pray for the wisdom of truth found in God’s doctrine and He will grant it. Nonetheless, let your faith be proven through the practice of opening your Bible and studying it diligently, allowing the Spirit to teach you through the pages.

Day Fourteen

Humbly Submitting to the Spirit of God

"*And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*" 2 Corinthians 12:9

Lord, perfect Your strength in Me as I humbly submit to Your Spirit. Be My strength in My weaknesses whether I realize what they are or not, that Your power and glory may rest on my life.

*****

Beloved, be humble so that God may work through you. For pride keeps us from the works of Christ, but humility plants us in the center of His power. Seek the strength that comes from above and do not exercise your own heart. Wait for God's voice so that you may live by faith—for faith strengthens us in the Spirit, that we may walk in Him.

And finally, praise Jesus in your works and your words alike, that the fruit of your lips and hands may bring glory to God in all things. If you should boast, boast in Christ and in His love at work in your life. That way you may lead others to the love of Christ and the saving of their souls. Furthermore, the brethren may thereby be encouraged to have perfect faith. As it is written,

"Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; talk of all His wondrous works! Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD! Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His face evermore! Remember His marvelous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth," Psalm 105:1–5

If God commits all miracles for us through love, including the miracle of Jesus' death and resurrection, why should we waver or fear? If He would freely give His Son to redeem us from our own evil, then who or what can stand against us?

Beloved, strengthen your hands in perfect faith, knowing that the love of Christ overturns every curse that will ever come your way—including the grave.

The Power of Praying Galatians from Your Heart

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Introduction

Galatians is a powerful book full of incredible exhortations. If you meditate on all its main points and apply them with a fervent heart, you cannot walk away without being changed.

So I challenge you meditate on Galatians through prayer over the next twenty-one days and watch the difference it will make in your life.

Day One

Embracing the True Doctrine

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:6–9

Jesus, You are everything to me! Far be it from me to speak anything but Your truthful doctrine. I understand the importance of studying Your word diligently. Therefore, please help me as I build a firm and steady foundation in You while choosing to grow in the Scriptures today. I ask that You would give me wisdom to know Your true doctrine since not all false doctrine is obvious.

My only desire is to please You, so please save me from those who would desire to corrupt Your truth in me for their own hidden, selfish gain. I ask also that You would give me wisdom to know who they are, that I could avoid them and keep myself pure.

***

Jesus said,

“Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the

word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." Mark 4:13–20 ESV

The cares of this life choke the word. Those who are not content with the supply of God try to justify their actions, and little by little—one small, convincing lie after another—false doctrine is made. All false doctrine is created to benefit the person who crafts it. It is not always that a person tries to craft it to deceive others. However, sometimes a well-meaning believer can misinterpret the Scriptures and then live by his or her opinion rather than by a truth confirmed by the Holy Spirit. Whether God would have grace on this or not is irrelevant. Those who love the Lord will desire to know Him for who He is and not who they want Him to be. They will allow the Spirit to confirm all things to them rather than try to figure out God's word on their own.

By His word the Lord crafted the heavens and the earth. By His word the stars were born and the waters of the deep subsided to give land a dwelling place. Then, by His word, He created all manner of life: sea creatures, land animals, and every flying bird. Last of all He gave life to mankind. Because His word is living and powerful, life comes from it. When the Lord speaks, mighty and powerful things happen. For God does not use His hands; instead, He uses His mouth, and all things obey Him.

Consider that whenever Jesus healed someone, He spoke. Then, whatever He said happened. Do you know how this works? Do you know how the universe came into existence and how each star and planet exploded to life by a simple sentence? What are the hidden mechanics behind God's words that create life? Do you know how His words work to make the bones of a child grow in a mother's womb? Do you know how the mountains were raised and the valleys were lowered by mere speech? If you do not know the least of these, then how can you even begin to think you have the wisdom to interpret the word of God?

Let the Author of the word tell you plainly what He meant when He wrote it. For Jesus said,

"It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me…'" John 6:45 ESV

God desires to teach you from His word, that you may know His perfect doctrine. Are you willing to believe He is able to do this? Do you not know that this is what He desires to do to deepen the intimacy of your relationship with

Him?

Take it to heart to focus on your root, which is the Holy Spirit and the word of God. Grow down deep into the Lord and dig into the word as your tap root, which acts as an underground support beam. For that root holds up the whole structure. If you are not founded in the truth of the word, how can you walk righteously in the Lord? Righteousness comes through faith—but from where does faith come? What do we read?

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Romans 10:17

Every time God speaks, your natural response must be with faith. So focus on becoming more intimate with the Holy Spirit, that you may understand His voice more clearly. He will teach you the word and show you how it applies to your life on a moment-by-moment basis. Righteousness comes from obedience. It is faith in motion. If you misinterpret what God is telling you to do, you will do the wrong thing, and how is that obedience? How is that righteousness? All your actions must line up with the exact, intended meaning God had for you. So take your doctrine seriously, being aware that misinterpretations of the word exist. It’s a big deal to God, for if it weren’t, why would the Scriptures condemn those who teach it? Why would Jesus have said,

“‘How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? —but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’ Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Matthew 16:11–12

Misinterpretations matter, and the only remedy is to listen to the Holy Spirit.

Day Two

Be a God-Pleaser

“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.” Galatians 1:10

Lord, give me a heart that’s solely after You. I choose to live for You and not for this world. For I know that if my concerns are on this present life, I will seek to please men through fear to save myself from trials and persecution. Instead, I choose to be Your bondservant, not giving into the pressures of the world around me but, rather, walking uprightly with you—because Your love is better than this life.

***

Some teach that you should please men to save their souls. However, God teaches us to show them, through His untainted love, how far apart they are from Him, that they may understand their need for Him. He also commands us to remain unblemished, or unspotted, from the world.

Other occasions when we may please men are at the workplace. Fear of losing our jobs leads us to please the boss overly in ways that God would not call us to do. Sometimes we fear persecution and hide a little bit of the light for fear of blinding the unbeliever. Yet God calls us to trust in Him and assures us that those who do will be taken care of by Him. As we also read,

“The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.” Proverbs 29:25 ESV

So the question is this: How have you been shining your light today? Be a beacon for Jesus and commit yourself to practicing that today as God leads you. Examine yourself to see if maybe you have strayed a little from being that light you’re called to be and if you must, then, change at this time.

***

Day Three

Receiving the Ultimate Revelation

“But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Galatians 1:11–12

Reveal Your word to me. Open my mind and my eyes to perceive the Scriptures as You did for the Apostles. I commit myself to studying Your word diligently today. From this day forward, I will take my studies more seriously and make time for Your word. If I can’t go without breakfast, how can I go without Your bread and milk?

***

It is written,

“And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Luke 24:45

The Holy Spirit reveals all things. As it is also written,

“…‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” 1 Corinthians 2:9–10

God’s Spirit reveals all things to us. Without Him we cannot have the wisdom of the Father. Remember that Jesus said,

“My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.” John 7:16–17

If it is the Father’s doctrine, then assuredly the Spirit would reveal its meaning to us. As Jesus also said,

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” John 14:26 ESV

And as it is further written,

“These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” 1 Corinthians 2:13

So the question, then, becomes this: How have you been educated by God in the word lately? Is He teaching you your doctrine? Or are you relying on men for that? Grow more intimate with the Holy Spirit until you fully discern His voice. Then you will be able to hear Him clearly to learn from Him. For we all must be taught by God. As we mentioned in an earlier prayer,

“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.” John 6:45

So take to heart to be taught by the Lord regarding your doctrine. The Father’s doctrine must be revealed to you by the Spirit, whether by the Spirit speaking through men or by the Spirit speaking to you through the word in your alone time with Him. It is up to you to have the discernment to know whether the Spirit is speaking or not. And if He is speaking, then receive the words you are taught, even if from a man, as if God and not the man were teaching you—because it is the Lord.

Commit yourself from this day forward to grow in the doctrine of God. Do not embrace the doctrines around you, such as a church doctrine, but allow the Holy Spirit to lead you to the truth. As it is written,

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth…” John 16:13 ESV

***

Day Four

Committed to Sanctification

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus." Galatians 1:15–17

Lord, when You call me to a deed or change in life, I know I must obey You. Let not the counsel of men change my mind. If You have confirmed it to me, I will listen. But first I pray that You would confirm all things to me. I ask that You would teach me how to understand Your voice more clearly, that I can be led by You throughout my life.

***

Some people can offer really good advice. Certainly your pastor has plenty of wisdom to share with you. But God also calls you to learn to lean on the Spirit for everything, even as your pastor does. God's counsel is always above man's. So take to heart to confirm everything through the Spirit of God. Sometimes when we think God has called us to do something or make a change in life, we confer with men to get their opinion first. But you should first begin with prayer. Then, when God has confirmed to you what you should do, why would you ask someone for permission to do it? Likely you'll be opening a door for Satan to discourage you from obeying God, through advice founded on man's logic rather than on the Holy Spirit's voice.

Commit yourself today to learn how to depend more fully on the Holy Spirit.

***

Day Five

Do Everything to His Glory

“And they glorified God in me.” Galatians 1:24

Lord, may all people glorify You in me! May my conduct warrant Your praise from the lips of my companions. From this day forward, I commit myself to being a living worship for You.

***

Let your conduct be worthy of God’s praise. Let it bring the glory due to His name. If you do all things through love, how can God not be glorified in your works? Commit yourself today to becoming the image of His love, that others can praise Him through what you do. Let each of your actions and words point others back to Jesus.

***

Day Six

Be a Prairie Dog

“And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” Galatians 2:4–5

Lord, I will contend for Your word so my brethren will not be deceived by false doctrines that arise. Only, I pray that You would refine my doctrine first, that I may properly encourage them as I should. I ask also that You would give me wisdom to see who my true brethren are so I can fellowship with them and witness to the others who are unsaved but masquerade as believers because they do not understand. If any true wolves arise, please reveal them to me, that I may be safe from their words.

***

Prairie dogs have one of the most complex vocal systems of the natural world. Scientists have discovered their unbelievable ability to communicate “word-like” phrases through chirps, which describe an intruder’s appearance. They examine the intruder and, according to the findings, the chirps discuss the height, width, and color of the animal or person. They also chirp certain sounds to indicate whether it is in the air flying like a hawk or approaching on the ground.

There is always one that acts like a watchman and alerts the whole clan to the details, and by this communication the prairie dogs are able to keep safe from predators. Turkeys share this trait in common with prairie dogs, in that there is always one that watches out to warn the flock about predators. If unsophisticated animal cultures have enough compassion to protect each other and look out for each other’s interests, then why don’t we do the same?

Each of us should have a little watchman in us to observe a newcomer’s fruits while knowing the truth, and then to describe them in detail to one another. This is not a call to gossip but, rather, to examine others’ fruits, and if they do not appear to be what they claim to be, we should lovingly warn one another. If the other person is a brother or a sister, we should speak well of him or her, sharing the truth. However, that we should be fruit inspectors is evident. For it is written,

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.” Matthew 7:15–20 ESV

If you realize that someone isn’t what he or she claims to be, then God has revealed this to you. He has revealed this not only for your own safety but also for the safety of others. For as it is written,

“And at the end of seven days, the word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, “You shall surely die,” and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. Again, if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die. Because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul.’” Ezekiel 3:16–21 ESV

You are called both to evangelize and to unify the brethren; this is what a spiritual watchman does. So become a true watchman for the Lord! Let His spirit guide your heart in the process so that you, your family, and your brethren in Christ can walk safely together in the Spirit. If churches were to practice this as they ought, it would significantly reduce the issue of church splits and division within the body of Christ.

God does not call us to division but to unity in the truth, Spirit, and love of God. Therefore, seek to be one who unifies and protects as God leads you.

***

Day Seven

Love the Poor

“They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.” Galatians 2:10

Lord, I pray that You would open my eyes to see the needs of others around me. Please provide me with what I need to provide them with what they need. I want to be the example of Your love in every moment of my life and with everything I do. Keep me from passing any of these people by, that I may apply Your love as You call me to do. From this day forward, I commit myself to being the perfect example of Your love with those in need around me, as You call me to do. Help me to share Your love as I should.

***

Pray for open eyes and look around you. Is there anyone in need? What about the brethren in the church? Are their needs met? Maybe those among your group of friends are doing well, but are there any others, whom you only know in passing, who may need a helping hand?

Keep an open eye for these things and be eager to show the love of God. Certainly, your family has needs as well, but it doesn’t always require money to help. God can show you how to provide or how to bring the appropriate hands together to make certain the person’s needs are met. But before you do anything, pray first and allow the Lord to lead you in all your actions. He knows what a person needs most and also what will most encourage and bless the person.

***

Day Eight

Unify and Refine

“But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.” Galatians 2:11 ESV

Lord, I commit myself to lovingly refining my brothers as Paul did. I choose not to condemn but to save men from condemnation. Please give me words when I should speak, that others can be edified by You in me.

***

Jesus said after washing the disciple’s feet,

“If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” John 13:14 ESV

God calls us to serve one another and to cleanse each other’s walks humbly and lovingly. It’s not that we’re supposed to go around trying to nail ever transgression to the floor, but when someone is not repenting or is falling into bad doctrine, we are called to scoop them out of their troubles. As it is written,

“My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.” James 5:19–20 ESV

If we love each other, we will support one another in the Lord. From this day forward, look for ways to be an encouragement to your brethren. Wouldn’t love compel you to do this daily?

***

Day Nine

Grace Is Fantastic!

“I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.” Galatians 2:21 ESV

Thank You, Jesus, for Your grace! You know more than anyone how much I need it. Help me to meditate on Your grace today and to use the chance You give me to walk rightly in the Holy Spirit as I should. I choose to walk in true righteousness, which comes from obedience to Your guiding hand. Show me how to live and practice the Scriptures in the manner You desire. Please grow me in Your Spirit, that grace would become less necessary as You perfect me in Your love.

***

Isn’t His grace amazing! Praise God for endless opportunities to do rightly. But now let’s take this opportunity to grow in grace. As it is written,

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ…” 2 Peter 3:18 ESV

And how can we grow? Through hearing His voice, obeying, and applying His love. For His love justifies us, and the more perfectly we love, the more like Him we are. It is His love working in us, and not grace alone, that gives us boldness to approach Him in judgment. As we read,

“Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.” 1 John 4:17

So grow in love. It was because of His love that He chose to have grace and mercy. Spend today reflecting on How He’s loved you through His constant grace. Then go and have grace with others as well, loving them perfectly with the same love Jesus has for you.

***

Day Ten

Obey the Truth!

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?” Galatians 3:1

With all my heart, I desire Your truth, God. Show me how my ways may not be lining up with Yours, that I may make the proper adjustments to follow You as I should. I commit myself to pursue Your truthful doctrine always, no matter the cost it brings on me. For I know that to seek Your truth is to seek You for who You are—and You mean everything to me.

***

Again, the book of Galatians emphasizes the need for truth in your doctrine. This theme is repeated over and over again, to beat it into our heads that God’s truth matters and we should pursue it as if our life depends on it—because it does. And I likewise could never plead with you enough that you would take His truth to heart. If You love Him, then seek Him for who He is and pursue His truth in faith with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Remember that Jesus said,

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” John 14:6

To seek the truth is to seek the Lord. Have you been seeking to grow more intimate with Him with everything you are? Love should compel you to do so. So examine yourself in this, and if you haven’t been seeking the Lord thus, be faithful to apply your love for Him in this way. Daily His heart is begging for more of you, and yours should beg for more of Him as well. But if you’re distracted with the affairs of this life, that fire and that aching desire to be intimate with Him will fizzle out. The only way to grow that desire again is to press nearer to the Lord. You’ll have to deny your own heart, but through time God will conform your desire to His.

One final point to make is that Jesus is the truth. To seek the truth is to seek Him. So now the question remains: Have you been seeking the truth in your doctrine with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? If you haven’t, then commit your whole life to pursuing it right now. Isn’t the Lord worth it? Haven’t you

committed your life to Christ? Then commit yourself and your whole heart to growing in His truth.

***

Day Eleven

Continuing in the Spirit

“Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” Galatians 3:2–3 ESV

Lord, I understand that just because I try to apply Your words doesn’t mean I’m operating in Your Spirit while I do so. I know I must be led by You and shepherded by You. So gather me to Your side and teach me Your will so that I can live it out. I choose to finish this race how I began it: by Your Spirit’s guidance. Teach me how to apply Your word, that I may walk faithfully in it, in the manner You desire.

***

Attempting to apply the Scriptures by our own knowledge and interpretation doesn’t make us perfect, for that is legalism. However, being led by the Spirit does perfect us. Since we began in the Spirit, we must continue and finish in Him as well. Through Him, Jesus authored our life and faith; by Him, He will finish these things as well. The Spirit will show you exactly how to walk perfectly and how to apply the love of God. All you have to do is be more sensitive to His voice. Remember also that His first fruit is love. So if you are obeying the Spirit and following Him, what will be the natural outcome? Justification—because the Spirit and love of God justify us.

***

Day Twelve

Lethal Legalism

"For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.'" Galatians 3:10 ESV

Lord, save me from legalism and remind me daily that Your love and Your grace are enough. Help me to walk in Your Spirit, that I may be justified through faith. Teach me how to apply Your word instead of living it out according to my own interpretation in a religious and legal practice. Save me from this dryness, and wet my soul in the water of Your Spirit's word.

***

It's easy to fall into the legalistic practice of the word without realizing it. There are two sides most take when arguing about works: Some say they are necessary for salvation while others claim they are not. But the word tells us that the works of the law are useless and that we must be obedient to the Spirit instead. The confusion comes through an incomplete understanding of what works really are. Galatians 3:10 informs us that works condemn us because they do not perfect us, while the Book of James says,

"But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

"Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." James 2:20–26

These two parts of the Bible create quite a paradox. Either the scriptures contradict or there is a fuller meaning that some Christians are not fully grasping. The scriptures that tell us works are not necessary or are useless, such as in Ephesians or here in Galatians, are informing us that works of the law, or to

apply the Scriptures by our own understanding as the Pharisees did, is useless. But now God gave us the light of wisdom, which is the Holy Spirit. No man can be saved without Him, and no man who has Him can be saved by constantly refusing to listen to His words or obey them. As Romans informs us,

"For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so…" Romans 8:3–7 NASB

And Romans further explains,

"So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." Romans 8:12–14 NASB

If you are a child of God, then you must grow in being led by His Spirit. Notice that Romans 8:7 condemns the mind of the flesh because it doesn't fulfill the law. If the law is no longer necessary, then why would a person be condemned for not practicing it? Because those who try to practice the word on their own strength only increase sin:

"I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died…" Romans 7:9 NASB

However, those who follow the Spirit and walk in the Spirit fulfill the law naturally. So the law is not nullified by the new gift but, rather, is completed through love and obedience to the Spirit. So the question is this: Are you being led by the Spirit in everything you do? Do you know? Can you honestly say to the face of God with one-hundred-percent certainty, right now, that your decisions and actions have been directed by the Holy Spirit? If you cannot, be certain that God is testifying to you right now, so you must grow in being led.

Now, this question may remain for some: How are we led by the Spirit? Every time He speaks to you and you obey, you have been led by Him. So the key to

growing in being led is to grow your understanding of His voice. Then, when you understand with clarity what the Lord is communicating to you, you also must obey immediately. For obedience to the word of God is as essential as the word of God itself; and if you are not obedient, then you are not walking in the Spirit and, hence, are not justified. Thus, the word makes clear in James that works of obedience through faith are necessary to perfect faith—and as the Scriptures already tell us, faith is necessary for salvation:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God…" Ephesians 2:8 NASB

Working out the Scriptures by yourself has never been able to save you, yet some teach that you must do so. Do not fall into this trap; rather, be sober in the Spirit to obey His voice. Obeying Him is a work of faith, and faith justifies us. As we also read,

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.'" Romans 1:16–17 NASB

Notice that the scripture says the righteous man must "live by faith." Faith isn't a feeling; it's something you do, and what you do with your faith determines whether you are justified and righteous or not. Therefore, it is obvious that we must obey or else our faith is useless. How can we claim to believe if we aren't willing to do something with what we believe? Commit yourself today to growing in the word of God and in understanding His Spirit. Take to heart to be led by Him always and in everything.

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Day Thirteen

Become a Unifier

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:28 ESV

Thank you, Jesus, that You make us all one family in You. Help me to grasp this concept so that I may apply it with my brethren around me, treating them like family and loving them like family. Thank You that I’m no longer what I used to be but, rather, am made into something new as You sew my spiritual sinews into the church body. Please show me what my place is in the body so that, as I take it up, I can bring unity to the congregation.

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Not everyone acts as if their brothers and sisters in Christ are their family. But when the body dies, those who were your unbelieving family will be separated from you forever. Those who were your brethren in the Spirit will be your literal family forever. So why don’t we begin to act like it now? When your sister in the flesh who is not saved is suffering a trial and a sister in Christ is suffering as well, whom would you help first? If anything, you should try to figure out how to help them both. But do not forsake those who have been faithful to the Lord. Would justice truly suggest that the sinner who refuses Jesus should have a peaceful life, being taken care of by the church, while the righteous sister who has been faithful should be made to suffer?

Some might say, “Well, she has God, so let God help her. Who does the world have to help them?” The world doesn’t have God because they willfully and knowingly reject Him to embrace their sin. If He doesn’t help them, then why should you? To show them God’s love? Why can’t you show a believer His love as well? Be open to being used as the tool of God. If He tells you to help the unbeliever, then do it, but be prepared to put the church first.

Sometimes God won’t help those who are of the world because their sins, of which you may be unaware, have piled up to His ears yet they have refused to repent. Do you honestly believe that God will give a wicked man peace? Why, then, does He send them to hell? If He isn’t helping them, ask Him if you should; and if He says “no,” then don’t question Him.

If you truly are going to do the works of Christ, then do what you see Jesus doing now. If He tells you through the Spirit that He won't help one but will help another, go with the spiritual flow. Be like a leaf on a river. Let the current of God's will and His leading pull you along. If anyone named a brother or sister is suffering, pray and ask the Lord how you might help him or her. If He tells you not to help, then He is using that person's situation to teach and grow him or her and He has something planned to help the person—and you are not a part of that plan. However, if He tells you to help, then be faithful to obey. For it is written,

"So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." Galatians 6:10 NASB

If it is at all possible, help the unbelievers so that they can be convicted by the love of God, but don't forsake your family in Christ. Don't say, "God will help them," but be willing to be used as the tool of God, that He may help them through you if He is leading.

If God isn't telling you to help or not to help, then do what you already know to be right.

Some make excuses and say, "Well I don't hear God telling me to help." Seeing that they fight against helping a brother, they have had a subtle conviction already and because they didn't hear God directly tell them to do it they will do nothing. Beloved, be convicted to walk in love always. God will rarely tell you not to help your family in Christ. So if you can't hear anything, assume you're being tested and step out in love with listening ears. Sometimes when we step out He answers what we should do and how.

If we as the children of God are bricks, then God's love is the mortar. Practice that love diligently with all your brethren, and you will bring greater unity to the church.

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Day Fourteen

When God Speaks…

"…and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself." Galatians 4:14 NASB

Lord, I will be attentive to Your Spirit, that I may know when You're speaking through my elders. I know that you call me to obey Your words, and I will take them seriously, accepting them as if from you. For I know that the Galatians accepted Paul as Jesus because His words were from You. I ask also that You would help me to discern when Your words are with my brother's mouth, so that I can obey Your word.

***

We are not called to live according to the words of men. However, if God is speaking through the man, then God has spoken and not the man, so you must obey. The word of God is the word of God, and whether He speaks it through a stone, a donkey, a burning bush, or a man is irrelevant. If the Holy Spirit has confirmed to you that a person is speaking truth and teaching you in the Spirit, then you are called to cling to the person and give him or her double honor for your own good. Why? Because such a person's words will bring you to where God wants you to be.

Commit yourself from this day forward to know when God is speaking. If you struggle with understanding His inward voice, how can you know His outwardly spoken voice through men? In such a case, you cannot pick and choose when God is speaking but must grow in your personal relationship until you come to a full discernment of the Spirit's voice.

Be discerning, and if anything is not from God, throw it out. But if a man constantly speaks from the Lord, then cling to the person's heels, for God is telling you that He is using that person and his or her teachings to grow you.

***

Day Fifteen

You Were Called to Set Yourself Apart, So Be Sanctified

“And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. But what does the Scripture say? ‘CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN.’ So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.” Galatians 4:28–31 NASB

Save me from the world’s influence. I know You call me to cast out the bondwoman in my life. Reveal to me any way in which I have not done this, that I may be utterly and wholly sanctified unto You. Save me from hiding my light. Give me boldness to preach Your word so that men and women may be saved through the testimony You give me. However, if any shall not be convinced, then please save me from their persecution.

***

It is written,

“Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, ‘I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,’ says the Lord. ‘AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; and I will welcome you.’” 2 Corinthians 6:14–17 NASB

One of the most common ways in which Christians fall victim to fellowshipping with an unbeliever is through family. “Well, God is a God of family! Certainly He wouldn’t call me to leave them.” Where does the Bible say anywhere that God is a God of family? He says He is the God of the living, not of the dead. Those who have refused Jesus do not have the Lord as their God. Therefore, He is not bonding them to you. As Jesus said,

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW; and A MAN’S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.

“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.” Matthew 10:34–39 NASB

Some may argue, asking, “Wouldn’t God have me witness to them?” But the real question is this: What is God telling you to do right now? Don’t question the Lord. Ask Him what you should do, and whatever He says, do that. If He says to witness, then remain until He calls you to remove yourself from them. But if you are not preaching Jesus to them, then you are not witnessing at all. Some may say, “I show them Jesus with what I do.” Yet they do not actually say anything to them about the Lord at all. They are using this as an excuse to justify hiding the word and hiding their light.

But we should both show others God and tell them about their need for the Lord. Without words, faith is impossible because faith comes by hearing the words of God. As it is written,

“How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?” Romans 10:14 NASB

Knowing this, take to heart to preach the word. Do not become like the world to let the world in. Rather, be separate from the unbelievers and show them the distance between them and God by being the image of His love. Only when they see their need for Him and desire Him through His conviction do they receive the Lord. So cast out the bondwoman! Do not partake with her but, rather, preach to her so that maybe she’ll become your sister in Christ instead.

Regarding your family, wouldn’t it be better to receive them as family for an eternity than to lose them after you die? Look to the eternal; be a pilgrim and leave this life behind. This world is not your home.

Commit yourself today to showing unbelievers their need for Jesus, from this day forward. Be separate from them and do not become like them. They are the

enemies of God, so why would you want a friendship with them? For it is written,

“You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” James 4:4 NASB

You are either for Jesus or against Him. If you love Him more than you love your neighbor, as the law commands you, then what would your love for Him compel you to do? What would love compel you to do for unbelievers? Plead for their souls. Witness as God leads you and do not let them slip past you like dirt slipping through your fingers. Even if you have been faithfully separating yourself for the Lord, commit yourself this day to evangelizing more fervently through love.

***

Day Sixteen

Avoid the Sneaky Sin

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Galatians 5:1

Lord, I choose to flee from worldly pleasures. Save me from the affairs of this life, lest I be entangled in them and choked. Reignite my fire daily. Fill me to overflowing with Your Spirit, that I may stand fast in the liberty You have given me.

***

The cares of this world and the joys of the flesh can entangle you. Therefore, examine yourself today: Is there anything that’s been distracting you from the Lord? What do you give more attention to: TV, games, the Internet, and movies, or prayer, worship, and needful study of the word of God? Lay aside the idle entertainment of the world, for every idol begins as a small distraction. If you have a small distraction, then pluck it out before it becomes your god. Remember that whatever you give your attention to is your god. If you have truly given your life to Christ, then why would you ultimately give your life to idle things?

God doesn’t care about entertainment if it is Christ-centered and edifies you. A good indicator to know whether God is okay with the entertainment you have chosen is whether or not you feel the Holy Spirit while you partake in it. You cannot feel His presence when you’re not paying attention to Him. Thus, if your entertainment is distracting you from Him, you won’t feel Him. Also, God and sin cannot occupy the same space, so He is showing you through the absence of His presence that you cannot partake in Christ while you partake in your idle activity. You cannot operate in the Spirit and in sin at the same time. To say otherwise would be to blaspheme (speak evil of) the Holy Spirit.

But that too much play is idolatry is evident. For the scriptures say,

“Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, ‘THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY.’” 1 Corinthians 10:7 NASB

So do not be given over to too much play but, rather, be constructive in Christ. If God’s hands aren’t working through you, then whose are? Commit yourself from this day forward to abiding in the Spirit, keeping from idols, and operating in Christ.

Day Seventeen

Remove the Leaven!

“You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” Galatians 5:7–9

Lord, purge me of the leaven. I know that even a little is enough to puff me up with the wrong doctrine. Throughout Your Bible, I see that You apply great emphasis on the accurate application of faith. Verse upon verse, Your Spirit has written for me to observe true faith in Galatians. I will take this to heart, that I may be changed by Your word.

***

Again Galatians revisits the idea of needful doctrine. However, this time it says that even the smallest speck is enough to through you off. Do not allow Satan to tempt you subtly into complacency. “God has grace, what’s wrong with a little bad doctrine? It’s not like I try to have it. But if He has grace, then why do I need to work so hard to seek His truth?”

The word of God cannot be wrong. Galatians tells us that even a little bit is enough to destroy the unleavened loaf God desires. Consider that kings have been killed with 99-percent food and 1-percent poison. All it takes it a little leaven! If you love the Lord, You’ll be passionate about knowing Him for who He is. So don’t be tempted to allow a complacent heart to form in you. Press into God’s truth and seek it with all your heart, for the Holy Spirit will give it to you. As it is written,

“My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you, So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding…” Proverbs 2:1–6

And the Scriptures further say,

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, <u>He will guide you into all</u>

truth…” John 16:13

Continue to press into your relationship with the Holy Spirit. Listen intently to His voice, and He will teach you everything you need to know. All you need to do is know Him and His voice better.

Commit yourself to being an inferno for God’s truth. Don’t allow even a speck of impurity to rise up in your heart, and do not have doubts that you can obtain this perfect wisdom. For the scripture says, “He will guide you into all truth.”

***

Day Eighteen

Love Is the Answer!

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Galatians 5:14

“But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” Galatians 5:15

“Lord, I will practice Your perfect love. If there is anyone around me in need of an extra dose of Your love, please reveal them to me, that I can be a comfort to them. Teach me to be as you are, that I can bear a servant’s heart as you call me to.”

***

It’s easy to become tempted into gossip and grumbling about your family in Christ. However, as it is written,

“Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!” James 5:9

Knowing this, it would be wise to approach anyone with whom you have an issue directly. Even the most well-meaning gossip can unrightfully destroy a person’s image and break his or her heart. There is no form of gossip or backbiting that can bring about the unity and love of God. So take to heart to speak well of others always and to heal with your words.

Our actions likewise can bite and devour. If others owe us something and we force them to pay no matter how small, it will hurt them. Then they will turn around and do the same to another person, and it’s only a matter of time until the same actions of unforgiveness come back to consume you in your time of need.

So show love at all times, freely giving as God calls you to do. If you keep an eye on the future and try to plan for what you do not know, then you will operate with a tempted, self-seeking heart. But if you do what God is calling you to do today and trust that He holds your future tomorrow, love will come naturally and easily.

Remember that God loves a cheerful giver. It is easier to give cheerfully if you

aren’t hoarding for yourself, fearing what may or may not happen tomorrow. But does God know what the future holds? Certainly! So if you obey Him, you know that your future will be bright, for God would not call you to destruction. Though He may call you to leanness, He will rebuild you. Only have faith.

Do not worry about what may happen tomorrow but, rather, focus on what God calls you to do each day.

Commit yourself to a carefree life, trusting your future in God’s hands. Love your brethren freely and obey God cheerfully without question.

***

Day Nineteen

The Scriptures Are Clear: You Must Walk in the Spirit

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Galatians 5:16

“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” Galatians 5:18

“And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Galatians 5:24–25

Lord, I understand that I am justified by walking in Your Spirit. Lead me so that I may not be under the law, operating in my own fleshly wisdom. I choose to crucify myself and lose my fear to pick up faith. Simply help me to walk in Your Spirit, and save me from the enemy, who distracts me from abiding.

***

If we love the Lord, we will crucify the flesh with its desires and walk in the Spirit. But in order to walk in the Spirit, we must be led by the Spirit. In order to be led by the Spirit, we need to hear His voice. In order to hear Him clearly, we need to abide in Him and meditate on Him constantly.

This is best accomplished through continual prayer and worship. As it is written,

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.” Colossians 4:2 ESV

And it is also written,

“Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.” Hebrews 13:15 ESV

When we pray, we talk directly to Him. Prayer in itself is more of a moment of communication than it is supplication. We not only offer our requests to God during prayer but we also hear His answers through the Spirit if we listen carefully. Praying forces us to pay attention to the Lord, and if we pray while listening to the Spirit’s voice, we can pray according to how He inclines our hearts. This is praying in the Spirit.

When we worship, we communicate our joyous heart to the Lord and He replies

with an overflow of His presence. By worship we can feel Him and, thus, pay attention to Him more easily. Worship requires you to focus on Him, which by nature makes it easier to hear Him. However, it is better to be relational and sing directly to His face, and not merely sing *about* God. You will feel His presence more powerfully and hear Him more clearly if you sing toward His presence: "Lord, *You* are amazing!" versus "The Lord is amazing."

What would you prefer in a conversation: someone talking directly to you or someone talking about you without talking directly to you, even though no one else is there but you?

Even so, God desires that our praises would be directed at Him as if it were a conversation. Pour your heart out, not on the idea of worship but on God as you worship.

By doing these two things constantly throughout the day, no matter what situation you may be in, you will feel God's presence more powerfully and hear Him more clearly.

So commit to abiding in the Spirit today, all day, through continuous prayer and worship. However, know that Satan will likely try to distract you in your thoughts, so it can be a battle to focus. But if you focus, God will strengthen you; therefore, just have faith that He is able to strengthen you, and in time He will.

***

Day Twenty

The Most Fertile Field: The Holy Spirit

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” Galatians 6:7–8

Lord, I choose to abide continuously and sow all my words and actions in Him. Give me words and speak through me. Show me how to apply Your word and Your love, and I will cheerfully do it. It’s in my heart to please You always because I love You.

***

Galatians once again reemphasizes the need to do all things through the Spirit. However, this time it finishes by saying that we will reap corruption if we don’t obey. So take it to heart to sow all your words and deeds in the love of God today.

But the question is this: Have your words and actions been founded in love? Test yourself in this, and compare your heart with the word of God. Make any changes if necessary so that you can conform to God’s design.

***

Day Twenty-One

Committed to Excellence

“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Galatians 6:9–10

I believe You, Lord! Thank You that I will reap a reward for all my labors in You. Thank You that You have opened my eyes, through Galatians, so that I may walk in Your Spirit, truth, and perfect love. I will commit myself to do this from this day until forever because I want to obey Your word with all my heart.

***

No matter how much it might make you suffer or how hard it is, keep pushing forward in love, in seeking truth, and in walking in the Spirit. Remember that Jesus was crucified to love you—and was that an easy task? Be like Jesus and carry your cross. You will reap a reward, and God will strengthen you before long if you persist in faith.

Simply keep living out the love of God and do good to your brethren, loving them fervently. Meet their needs faithfully as it is written,

“And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.” Titus 3:14

Fill the need as God fills your needs. Impartial love gives a partial blessing. But full and perfect love fills a need and perfectly covers it. So commit yourself from this day forward to abound in the love of God. Let each of your words and each of your works be done in the Spirit through love. Let your love compel you to obey His words through faith, for your faith must operate through love. As it is written,

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” Galatians 5:6

Continue to pursue the truth and walk in the Spirit through love, and you will reap a sure reward in due time.

***

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Adam is a preacher, teacher and #1 internationally bestselling author of over 100 books on the Christian faith. He is a devoted husband and father of three boys. Through his travels, he’s seen the need for a new awakening and a new revival: a revival of the heart. Come join Adam on this journey of redemption and experience God like never before!

The Power of Praying Ephesians from Your Heart

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Introduction

God’s word is powerful and living. By it He made all things, and through it He created life. And now, in these last days, God has saved your soul by His word.

Nothing could be more powerful for a believer than to absorb the word of the Lord through prayer and daily meditation.

So I challenge you to take the next thirty-one days to meditate on Ephesians through prayer and with the guidance of the Spirit. After the course of these days, you will not be able to walk away without being changed.

Day One

Establishing All Things in His Will

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus…" Ephesians 1:1

Thank You for the gifts You give through Your will. Teach me what my gift is and lead me by Your will, God. I choose to chase after You, Jesus. I choose to embrace Your will. Reveal it to me daily, that I can please You through sober obedience.

***

Live for the will of God and be transformed by it. Remember that this world is not your home, and therefore do not succumb to the complacency that the affairs of this life bring. The nine-to-five grind can wear away at your walk with God. Everything in life may grasp for your attention, but don't let it corrupt your inner sanctuary. Keep your eyes fixed on the Holy Spirit and live for God's purpose. Test yourself in this to see if you may have strayed off course. While we all start well, sometimes—without realizing it—we become distracted from the main priority of life and need a re-ignition of God's perfect fire.

Establish everything you do in the will of God and seek spiritual gifts, knowing that you are both empowered and draw nearer to God through them. But each of these gifts must also be established in the will of the Lord.

Ministry, for example, is not something we can do in and of ourselves, and we must not pursue it. It must be the will of God leading us to it and the Spirit of God working through us while we minister. The same goes for sharing the gospel with unbelievers: The Lord prepares their hearts and leads you to them. He will give you the words to say and the actions to do. All you must do is surrender the moment in prayer before you evangelize. Then, if God is so leading you, He will empower you and embolden you when you step out in faith.

***

Day Two

His Grace Is Enough!

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Ephesians 1:2

Thank You, Lord, for the peace You give me through Your Spirit. And thank You for Your grace above all! Without Your grace, where would I be?

***

His grace gives peace to your heart. For you know that, regardless of your mistakes, so long as you have repented, God receives you unconditionally. He forgives you, loves you, and wants to grow you beyond the struggle.

He has the power to make you perfect instantaneously, and He will do this in a twinkling of an eye when He blesses you with a new spiritual body to go with the new heart He’s given you. But He has chosen, during this time of our life, to leave us flawed so that we can learn that all glory belongs to Him and that we must depend on Him in everything. Take this moment to reflect on this, and ask yourself how you’ve been depending on the Lord.

***

Day Three

Pursue Spiritual Gifts

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ…” Ephesians 1:3

Please show me my spiritual blessing. Reveal to me the gifts You have given me. Strengthen me in them, that I may glorify You through them. I want more of You in my life, Jesus.

***

Seek out the spiritual gifts God has for you. Do you know them? Explore them in the Holy Spirit. As it is written,

“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” 1 Corinthians 14:1

Even if you feel you do know what God has given you, God isn’t done giving to you yet. There is always more He will reveal to you as His will unfolds in your life little by little.

So pray earnestly for more of the Lord’s work in your life.

***

Day Four

You Have Been Loved Since Before Time Began

"…just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will…" Ephesians 1:4–5

Lord, Your wisdom is profound. I can't even begin to image what You know and how deep Your heart is. Who am I that You would predestine me? Before time began, You saw my form. You knew my nature and my heart, yet You loved me anyway. Before the foundation of the earth was laid, You were there and saw it all.

Before time began, You looked into my heart and saw all my sins. You saw each of my failures and all the ways I would let You down and hurt You. You knew my frame and all I would do to offend You. You knew my offenses would lead You to this earth to be hated, mocked, whipped, beaten, and murdered on a cross—and still You loved me anyway. How can I not be affected by Your love? How can I keep from rejoicing in You?

Save my heart from being distracted from You today. You deserve my attention. Help me to keep my mind steadily fixed on Your presence through prayer and worship today. Because You love me, I will give You every part of me. Every moment has belonged to You since before the moments of time began. Why should I keep another moment from You, with all You've done for me? I devote myself wholeheartedly to You now.

Lord, Your love inspires me. Thank you for everything You've done for me, Jesus. Help me to go and love my brethren likewise.

***

Before Earth spun on its axis, Jesus loved you. He already knew all the ways you would break His heart, but love compelled Him to make you anyway. He has seen it all—every sin you'd commit and every failure you'd ever have. He saw all the ways you'd skin your spiritual knees, yet rather than pushing you away for your failures, He desires to pick you up, wipe your tears away, and heal you.

Will you go and do likewise for others now, showing them the full love of God today? Make it your effort to bless someone sincerely in His love.

When everything falls apart in your life, remember that God has not made you for wrath but for love and for adoption. You were made for the Father’s arms. Now run to them and be blessed by His embrace today.

***

Day Five

Rely On The Spirit

"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." Ephesians 1:13–14

Thank You for Your Holy Spirit. Help me to rely on Him more and to listen to His voice more. I know His words are perfect and His leading is infallible. So purify my walk, Jesus, as I choose to walk in Your Spirit from this day forward.

***

The first thing to notice in these two verses is that the truth of the gospel saves you. Truth in your doctrine is essential. Make it your life's goal from this day forward to pursue perfect and complete truth in your doctrine, no matter the cost it brings on your life. To seek God's truth in the Scriptures is to seek Jesus.

But if you feel as if it isn't that necessary to seek His truth, then remember that Jesus is the way, *the truth*, and the life. If Jesus is necessary for you daily, then so is His truth. Live by it, seek it, and love it. Pursue it with your whole heart as if your life depends on it—because it does. Keep it in your heart that no matter the cost, you must find the true doctrine; God will bless you with it and support you in His full power through it. Like the supporting pillar of a temple or tower, or the foundation or main support beam of any building, the truth will hold you steady and keep you strong in any storm of life.

And the second thing we must point out in this verse is that you are sealed by the Holy Spirit. This sealing doesn't just happen and then serve no other purpose. The Spirit seals you daily by His power as He leads you step after step, decision after decision. To follow the Spirit and obey His voice is to walk in Him, and those who walk in Him are justified while those who do not walk in Him are not, unless they repent. As it is written,

"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Galatians 5:16

And also,

“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” Galatians 5:18

Why are you not under the law? Because the Spirit is above the law, having written it. If He guides your steps, you are perfectly justified in everything and won’t even sin once. A sin—when an action or a hurtful word—only happens when you take a step without the Holy Spirit. Consider the wisdom of this; take it to heart to grow in the Spirit and in a walk with Him

***

Day Six

Saving Faith

"…for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God…" Ephesians 2:8

Lord, increase my faith. I understand this is importance because by faith I'm saved; and because You had grace, I could have faith to save me. So while I pray for an increase in faith, I also ask that you would make grace less necessary in my life as You perfect my walk in Your love and Holy Spirit.

***

You are saved by faith. Therefore, faith is one of the most vital aspects of the Christian faith. If it is not accurately applied, then the results will be minimal or nonexistent. But if you accurately and appropriately apply faith, the results are beyond phenomenal, for all that God does is awe-striking and purely amazing.

With that said, it doesn't matter how great your faith is: If you aren't applying it in the manner you should, it amounts to little. Pure doctrine is therefore necessary. Doctrine dictates how faith must be applied, and if your interpretation of Scripture doesn't line up with God's true, intended meaning, it does nothing for you. Thus, it is necessary for you to grow more intimate with the Holy Spirit and more attuned to His voice. When you read your Bible, He will speak to you and compare each spiritual lesson with other lessons to broaden and magnify your wisdom.

So the question is, "Have you been taking God's doctrine seriously?" If not, then be honest with yourself and commit yourself to growing in God's perfect wisdom today. Pray for His wisdom, and He will grant it to you.

Finally, if you know how your faith must be properly applied, what good does it do if it remains small? Great faith accomplishes great feats. Little faith has little effect. Tremendous faith is beautiful in the eyes of God. And a lack of faith breaks His heart. So the question is, "How have you been diligently seeking to grow in your faith lately?"

Beloved, take to heart to grow in your faith today. Seek pure doctrine and be

diligent in growing in it from this day forward until you go home to the Lord. Remember that faith is not about your works but, rather, about how the Holy Spirit is working through you moment-by-moment by faith.

***

Day Seven

Submit to God's Predestined Works

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

Lord, I surrender to Your will, that Your works can be accomplished in me and through me. Guide me with Your hand and bless the direction You take me. Teach me to submit to Your Spirit, that He may work through me rather than I try to operate in my own wisdom and strength in my attempts to please You. Teach me what it means to walk in Your Holy Spirit moment by moment and decision after decision.

***

Before time began, God had works in mind for you. The have been predestined even as you have been predestined. But they are not performed accidentally or naturally without conscious thought. They are performed by obedience alone. Yet if you are distracted with the affairs of life and allow your mind and thoughts to wander away from meditating on the voice and presence of the Spirit, you will not hear God when He calls you to accomplish those works. If you are trying to carve your own path in life, you will not hear Him, either. You must be fully surrendered to His will and His Holy Spirit. So the question is, "How have you been surrendering to His will and sensitizing yourself to His voice?" Have you been listening to the Holy Spirit to obey Him on a moment-by-moment basis, day after day?

Commit yourself to growing in the Holy Spirit, and take to heart to both pursue and practice the works God has intended for you. Surrender your life today and let God decide the directions you should go.

***

Day Eight

Brought Near by His Blood

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:13

Thank You for everything You endured for me, Jesus. I’m sorry. I’m sorry that my sin was the cause of Your suffering. But thank You that You loved me that much! Your goodness just makes me love You all the more.

***

Reflect on all He’s done for You today. Reflect on Your shortcoming and take a moment of communion with the Lord. Then spend today showing Him gratitude by having a joyful heart in worship all day today. Try to practice constant worship today. Whether you’re sitting behind a desk, washing dishes at home, taking take of children, or resting quietly, give God the glory today through constant praise. If you can’t sing out loud, then sing in your heart. Increase in gratitude daily—He deserves it!

***

Day Nine

Growing in the Holy Spirit

"For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." Ephesians 2:18

Thank you for Your Holy Spirit! Thank You for Your saving grace! Help me to meditate on Your Spirit. Many things would like to distract me from meditating on You through prayer. My thoughts wander, but I want them to remain steadfastly on You. Help me to abide and keep my mind fixed on You as I ought. Save me from idleness and bless me with a constant overflow of Your presence today. While I know You are always with me, please help me to feel and experience it as I focus on Your presence.

***

Remember that your access comes both by the Spirit and by the blood of Jesus. So take to heart to meditate on the Spirit today through constant prayer and continual worship. Meditating on Him in these ways helps us to keep our focus on Him and abide in Him. Then, as we abide, it sensitizes us to the voice of God, making it easier to obey because we can hear Him more clearly. Now the question is this: Have you honestly been trying to pray during every moment of the day? Have you tried to pray without ceasing all day? Or do you find yourself distracted and give up? Press forward in earnest prayer! But do not just pray idly; rather, lift up true and honest issues of your heart. And if you have prayed until you can't pray anymore, then begin to practice endless worship. You'll be doing this in your heart in heaven, so why not do it now, here on the earth?

***

Day Ten

Your Pain Has Purpose

“Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man…” Ephesians 3:13–16

Lord, I understand that everything I go through must pass through Your hands first. May You use it all for Your glory, that even as Paul suffered for my sake so my sufferings would be used to strengthen others as well. Teach me through my trials, and do not let them be without purpose. Make use of them, and give me peace and strength through your Spirit while I go through them.

***

Don’t lose heart in your own tribulations, for God will use them for good—not only in your life but also in the lives of others around you—to convict, save, encourage, and strengthen. Paul, knowing this fact, found it an honor to suffer for the Lord, knowing that you and I and every believer everywhere would benefit from his personal trials. Have the same heart and glorify the Lord no matter what you go through. He deserves it not only for what He has done for you, but also for what He will do to lift you out of the situation. So thank Him and glorify His name as if that day has already come, even when you’re in the midst of suffering. Faith pleases the Lord, and worship is delightful to His ears. How much more so are praises sung through faith?

***

Day Eleven

Do All Things Through Love

"…that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love…" Ephesians 3:17

Lord, I am determined today to be rooted and grounded in Your love toward everyone I meet. I me to accomplish this that I can be the example of you and shine your light as I ought to.

***

Remember to set the example today. You were saved because of the loving-kindness of God. Show the world how far apart from God they are, by being the image of His love toward them. However, be led by the Spirit in all you do. Remember that it is written,

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day." John 6:44 ESV

Therefore, be the example and let God draw unbelievers by His love at work through you.

***

Day Twelve

Filled with the Fullness of His Love

"…to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:19

Lord, refresh me in Your love. Fill me with Your presence and wrap Your arms around me. I need more of You and less of me.

***

Seek God earnestly today and be refreshed in His love. Then go refresh others in His love as well. That way they may experience less of you and more of Him at work in you. So walk in the Spirit and His love, that they may experience God in you rather than your flesh.

***

Day Thirteen

He Can Do More for You Than You Can Ask

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” Ephesians 3:20–21

Jesus, I will give You glory in me and in my life as You receive in the church. I will train up the generation after me to walk in Your wisdom and Your Holy Spirit. May Your power be at work in my life exceedingly abundantly, above all I could imagine.

***

The Lord says He will give you the world and that all things belonging to Christ He will also render to you. When Jesus has come and finishes all things, He will create a new life you could never begin to imagine. What a precious and beautiful gift! Take care of your gift today by growing in it and drawing nearer to the Lord through His word. Study it, examine it, live it, and breathe it. And remember that when you fall into need or difficult times, God’s power is yours to have through faith. He can and will do exceedingly above anything for which you could pray—to bless you, nourish you, cherish you, and love you.

So along with reading your Bible, show Him gratitude today through worship.

***

Day Fourteen

Walk Worthy of the Lord

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:1–3 ESV

Teach me to have a heart like Yours. Make me humble, gentle, patience, and loving. Above all, help me to be unified with my brethren in the Holy Spirit and with Your holy doctrine. Fill me with Your Spirit today as I worship and pray. Keep me filled and strengthened because I know that I cannot even begin to walk in a way worthy of You unless Your Holy Spirit is walking in me and I in Him.

***

Continue every effort to walk in the Spirit. Only then can you walk worthy of the Lord. Remember to maintain a humble heart and be gentle with others around you. Especially be gentle when it is most inconvenient, such as when someone is not being gentle with you. Do not repay evil for evil, but rather repay others with love.

Furthermore, seek unity in the Holy Spirit with your brethren. Just because you’re at peace with them and have a flourishing friendship doesn’t mean you’re unified. Your doctrine may be different, and you are required to explore the Holy Spirit together, that you may hear from the Lord and have His doctrine in common. This is what it means to “have the same mind.”

***

Day Fifteen

Being Unified as One Body

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling…” Ephesians 4:4 NASB

Help me to remain as one with my brethren, not only in good fellowship but also in maintaining a unified process of judgment and thought through Your Holy Spirit. I dedicate myself from this day forward to be an encouragement and an example to my brethren in word, in purity, in doctrine, and in Your Holy Spirit. I will turn each person to You, reminding others constantly of their need to abide in You.

***

Today we will introduce a new concept: growing in fellowship. This doesn’t mean to practice it more—although we should!. This simply means to grow in the Holy Spirit with your brethren through studying, praying, and worshipping together constantly. Do this as often as possible—more than once a week with a group. While you should attend your weekly group, also try doing this with one person at a time.

Now, this won’t be possible for everyone, especially those who are married. They are busy with their family lives. So for those of you who are married, start with your marriage and then branch out to your children. This will dramatically unify your family in the Spirit, keep the bond close with husband and wife, and keep children from stumbling after they move out.

From this day forward, be an encouragement to Your brethren, that they may also learn to practice everything you have been practicing for the past two weeks. Remind them to abide. If you catch them slipping into idleness, bring it back to Jesus. Keep unity with them through the Holy Spirit and help them up when they stumble spiritually.

When a person is idle and doesn’t abide, he or she has stumbled. If you do not know doctrine, seek it first from the Lord and offer also to examine the word with your brother. But if your fellow believer seems to take control of the study, then perhaps God doesn’t have control and the other person is only unifying you

in his or her doctrine, which is not God's. It is better to remain unified with the Spirit than with a brother's sin. Convict him or her lovingly and continue your efforts on your own. But if another studies with you and you are unified in the Spirit, then why stop? Grow in fellowship as you grow in the Lord.

***

Day Sixteen

Becoming Sound in God's Doctrine

"As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming…" Ephesians 4:14 NASB

Lord, reveal to me any way in which I've been clinging to or believing a doctrine of men without realizing it. While it is not in my heart to believe anything but Your truth, I know that Satan has a sneaky way of tricking our hearts. So please reveal my own heart to me since I have undertaken a great journey of learning Your Scriptures and doctrine according to truth. Show me any way in which I am not right with You, even though I may mistakenly think I am. I humble myself to believe it is possible for me to make this mistake, since I am flesh after all. So please give me revelation, cleanse me, and teach me Your truth.

***

There is always something the devil is trying to trick you to believe. If you think for a moment that you don't have false doctrine, or could never have it, then you're deceiving yourself. False doctrine *never* comes as an obvious eyesore that you could point out and reject. Rather, it is subtle and very enticing—like sin—because Satan cleverly crafted it in the depths of a tempted heart. So search your own heart. If others believe what you believe or have come to similar conclusions, don't let their conclusions be a confirmation to you. Instead, let the Holy Spirit confirm all things since He wrote the word and authored the doctrine you should believe. Rely on the Spirit in all things to grow in your doctrine. Then, when He has taught you, do not be swayed by men but, rather, remember from whom (the Spirit) you have learned the truth.

***

Day Seventeen

Speaking Truth in Love

"…but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ…" Ephesians 4:15 NASB

Lord, I commit myself to teach Your truthful doctrine to those around me once You have taught it to me. If I cannot teach them because it is not my place, I will encourage them with the truth, speaking the truth of Your word to them. I will always point them in Your direction and teach them to rely on Your Spirit as I have done. That way we may come to a unified mind because Your Spirit, and not my flesh or my own wisdom, has done the work.

***

When you have received the truth, share the truth. Live it, breathe it, give it. When you know for certain that God has taught you something by the full wisdom of the Bible, then exhort others to believe the same. For it is written,

"Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to <u>contend for the faith</u> that was once for all delivered to the saints." Jude 3:1 ESV

Lead others to truth and set the example always.

***

Day Eighteen

Walk Not in Futility and Foolishness

“Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.” Ephesians 4:17 ESV

Lord, save me from the temptations of this world. I know the most subtle of these that creeps up on me is idleness and worldly entertainment. I know also that Satan would like me to be comfortable through the money in my bank account. However, I ask that You would increase my faith and keep my heart steadily fixed on You.

***

While you may not have an issue with sin, just remember that Satan has an issue with you. He will drive your thoughts away from constant prayer and subtly tempt you with worldly things. A little godly entertainment is never wrong. However, if you cannot feel the presence of God while entertaining yourself with something—no matter how innocent it may seem—then God is telling you to have nothing to do with it. Remember that God and sin cannot occupy the same space, so it will be difficult to feel His presence when you’re sinning. Ultimately, if you cannot focus on the Spirit and do any given task at the same time, you shouldn’t be doing the task at all—unless, of course, you just need practice. But when it comes to entertainment, you should be able to feel God’s presence without any effort at all. Why? Because you should only entertain yourself with the things that edify you in Christ. Anything else is sin.

Don’t believe me? Ask the Holy Spirit.

***

Day Nineteen

Do Not Be Wrathful But Have Righteous Anger

“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.” Ephesians 4:26–27 ESV

Lord, convict me to portray Your love and Your Holy Spirit at all times. Teach me how to unify at all times through the gentleness of Your love. From this day forward, I will commit myself to being a peaceable person in You. And if I should make a mistake and be divided, I declare that I will do everything in my power to bring my adversary to peace with me and You.

***

If you’ve struggled with anyone, be swift to unify through love. The longer a contention is allowed to exist, the wider the gap will be. Even if you may not be arguing, the division and disagreement is not over if no one has apologized. Agree swiftly with your adversary, that you may both walk in the fullness of the love of God.

***

Day Twenty

Do Not Grieve the Spirit

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Ephesians 4:30 ESV

Lord, I'm sorry for all the ways I've grieved You. If ever there has been any way I have grieved You, even without knowing it, I pray You would forgive me and reveal it to me, that I can change my heart and please You always.

***

Our decisions can be a grievance to the Lord, but repentance is always sweet to His Spirit. If you walk in the Spirit at all times, you'll never grieve Him at any time. Remember that and continue to practice what you know is right.

***

Day Twenty-One

Forgive as Jesus Forgave You

“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” Ephesians 4:32 ESV

Lord, I commit myself to showing Your kindness and forgiveness always. I choose to have a tender heart with everyone, even if they are not being tender with me. While I know that some people may need a firm rebuke, I choose to do it in love and not in wrath.

***

Remember to look for people in need of kindness. Dedicate your day today to being as kind as you can be, as the Spirit leads you. Do this not only today but always. Put on the tender heart of Jesus and be loving in everything you do. Above all, forgive others as quickly and completely as God forgives you. This may not always be easy, especially after a heated fight. So go cool down if you need to do so, but be diligent to portray the heart of Christ. Know that the moment you said to God in your heart, “I’m sorry,” He forgave you. Even so, you *must* do likewise for others, no matter how much they previously offended you. If God forgives them, then why shouldn’t you?

***

Day Twenty-Two

Imitate the Lord in Everything

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.” Ephesians 5:1 ESV

Lord, I choose to imitate You in everything I say and do. Thank You that I can be Your child. Who am I that You would love me? I feel so blessed that I can even have the capacity to imitate You. You’re so wonderful, Lord! Thank You for Your Holy Spirit, who gives me everything I need to be like you.

***

As with every day, imitate God today toward everyone you know. Be the image of Jesus and His love, allowing His Holy Spirit to express Himself through you and your conduct.

***

Day Twenty-Three

Walk in Love

"…and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma." Ephesians 5:2 NASB

Lord, I choose to walk in love today. Show me others who are in need of love, that I can be the image of You toward them. I offer my day today to be the example of who You are. Open up my heart to do this always. I choose to provide for others' needs as You lead me through faith. No matter how great my brother's need is, I know that You have called me to fill it. Therefore, I commit myself to doing this.

***

Jesus gave Himself to love you. How have you been bearing your cross for others? How have you been giving of yourself for them? The Lord never said this life would be easy, and when it isn't for others, you are called to love them with perfect love. Do not feed the homeless brother and leave him without a home. Rather, completely and utterly fill the need so that his heart is full of joy and every corner of his being is compelled to praise God.

Do as the Newsboys' song "Shine" says: "Shine, make 'em wonder what you've got, make 'em wish that they were not on the outside looking bored. Shine, let it shine before all men, let 'em see good works, and then let 'em glorify the Lord."

True good works are done through perfect love. Give the homeless a home, and the hungry food that will last them until they can provide for themselves. Look into others' true need and help them fill it as the love of God would compel you. Whatever you would do for yourself if you were personally in their situation, do for them. Do not say to yourself, "I would not expect others to help me if I were in their shoes. I would do it for myself," because in this you were testifying against yourself. If you are to love your neighbor as yourself and you would help yourself if you were in that situation, then help them. Seeing that they cannot help themselves, it is on your shoulders to help them as Christ commands you to do.

Be love, just as Jesus loves you. This is such a simple statement, yet so profound.

***

Day Twenty-Four

Choose Words that Heal

“But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.” Ephesians 5:3–4 NASB

Lord, purify my words. Teach me to have a holy tongue as You have, that I may point everyone back to You. Show me how to have words that heal and not words that break down. While I know that not all of my words break a person's heart, I know that some of my words can turn their thoughts away from You. Keep me from an idle heart and an idle mouth. Teach me to be like You, and be my strength, that no immorality or impurity would even be found in me.

***

How have your words been pointing others to Jesus lately? How have your conversations been keeping to godliness? Have they been straying from the Lord? Remain rooted and grounded in Christ through the Spirit. Let everything you say and do bring glory to His name. If your conversations stray from godliness, then be diligent to bring them back quickly. For Jesus said,

“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” Matthew 12:36–37

Take His warning to heart. Jesus never would have never had said it if He didn’t mean it. Therefore, in loving fear of the Lord, keep your mouth pure. But a pure mouth begins with a pure heart. So let your eyes seek nothing but God. As it is written,

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” 1 John 2:15–17

A pure heart is made through pure love. Therefore, love God with purity, being content with the things He gives you. Before you add more to your life, be anxious for nothing, but pray first, that the Spirit may lead you—lest you have ungodly excess in your life and fatten your heart against the will of God. I can never express this enough! *Do not covet*, for this is idolatry. As it is further written,

"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Colossians 3:5

Coveting does not always require you to desire something that belongs to someone else. Every time you walk into the grocery store, you could covet; so guard your heart, that greed and filthiness would be kept far from you. Remain pure, just as Jesus is pure

***

Day Twenty-Five

Be a Convicter Not a Convict

“Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.” Ephesians 5:11–13 NASB

Lord, I dedicate myself to Your purity, remembering that You set me apart for deeds of holiness. I will lovingly confront my brothers and sisters when they stray from You. I will keep our conversations fixed on Your Spirit rather than partaking in idle chatter.

***

The word ‘expose’ in the original Greek is *elegchō*, which means to “reprove, convict, or rebuke.” Speak against sin, that others may repent of it. Sin most commonly happens during idle chatter. As it is written,

“In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.” Proverbs 10:19

Hence, it is also written,

“But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.” 2 Timothy 2:16

Keep from idle conversations and turn your brother back to the Lord. Don’t partake in any sin but, rather, recognize it, no matter how small it may be, and lovingly convict the sinner while pointing him or her back to Jesus. As we also read,

“Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” Proverbs 27:5–6

***

Day Twenty-Six

Walk in the Wisdom of the Spirit

"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:15–16 NASB

Lord, increase me in Your wisdom. I know that the days are evil, so keep me sanctified. I choose to set myself apart rather than cling to the affairs of this life. I will put You first in everything, loving You above all. Help me to continue in Your Spirit today, for I know that He is my light, who keeps me from stumbling. That way, through Him, I can be careful to walk as You exhort me so that I can walk in your wisdom.

***

The Holy Spirit teaches you the way you should go. Therefore, sensitize yourself to His voice and obey Him. Pray, worship, and keep your eyes steadfastly fixed on Him. That way you will know what the Lord would call you to do and will not stumble in doing it. Did you know that righteousness is obedience to the voice of God? How can you be righteous if you cannot hear God? How can you walk in wisdom if God's Holy Spirit isn't guiding your heart with His wisdom? While He may try to guide your heart, if you do not pay attention to His voice, you will not walk in the wisdom of the Spirit. Take this to heart and practice meditating on the presence of God today.

***

Day Twenty-Seven

Understand the Will of God and Live it

“So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” Ephesians 5:17 NASB

Lord, help me to understand Your voice clearly. Show me Your daily will, that I can live according to it and please You in it as You command me.

***

Seek the will of God with all your heart. Do not stop until you know it. Moment after moment, God is communicating it to you. But are you listening? This verse says that we are foolish if we act when we do not understand the will of God. So take to heart to pray until God gives you wisdom. If you sensitize yourself to the Spirit continually, His voice will always come to you clearly and understanding His will shall also come to you naturally. So as we have said before, take it to heart to abide in the Spirit, that you can hear His voice.

***

Day Twenty-Eight

Continually Worship and Practice the Presence of God

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;" Ephesians 5:18–19 NASB

Lord, fill me to overflowing in Your Spirit. I will praise You always! Give me words that glorify You and songs to share with my brethren so that we can worship and fellowship daily in Your word. I commit myself today to Your constant praise. Please save me from distractions, that I can continue to abide in Your Spirit as I ought to do.

***

Commit to continual worship today. Give God the glory He deserves! Make melody quietly in your heart when you're working, and sing aloud when driving your car. Be filled in the Spirit today and practice His presence. This should be a daily practice so that you can always walk in all godliness.

***

Day Twenty-Nine

Have Continual Gratitude

"…giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ…" Ephesians 5:20 ESV

Thank You for all the ways You love me. I choose to reflect on those today. Please remind me of all Your kindnesses that I can praise You for each of them. I commit myself to being more grateful for all You do from this day forward.

***

Always show God gratitude. Practice a grateful heart and grow in it abundantly. Doesn't He deserve this? Reflect today on all the ways He's loved you and taken care of you. Then worship Him for each and every one of those deeds He's done.

***

Day Thirty

Have Integrity At Work and Serve the Lord

“Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man…” Ephesians 6:5–7 ESV

Help me to portray Your godly integrity. Whether at work or at home, I choose to be found doing the right thing when no one is looking. And at work, when my boss isn’t looking, I’ll keep my nose to what needs to be done. So please, put Your hands in mine, that You can work in me and through me as well. That way my boss and coworkers may respect me and be won over to receive the gospel from my mouth. For I know that everything I do, whether at work or elsewhere, I do as Your servant and for Your kingdom.

Please save me from being distracted from the priority of sharing Your gospel while I work. For I know that my actions must be the example of the gospel first, before I can even speak about it.

***

Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord. With every word you speak and every action you fulfill, let it bring glory to the name of Jesus. Have integrity at your job and work as Jesus would. If working a little harder or being a little more serious about your work would save a soul, would Jesus do it? So should you!

***

Day Thirty-One

Proclaim the Gospel Boldly

"…and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak." Ephesians 6:19–20 ESV

Lord, give me words to speak and the boldness necessary to proclaim Your gospel. I know that men must be drawn by You, so please draw them through me. Supply me everything I should say and do that will draw them to You. No matter the cost, I ask that You would use me to save souls through Your testimony in me. Spreading Your gospel is more important than my life. I'm not here in this world to live my life; rather, I am here to build Your kingdom. Help me to keep my priorities straight, that I may walk soberly in Your will as I ought to do.

***

Remember that you are a pilgrim. Accordingly, act as one and live as one. This world is not your home. Save this world, evangelize it, and support your brethren who do the same. If fellow believers should fall into a pit financially or emotionally, be faithful to pull them out so that you can work as a body, saving souls together in the love of Christ.

Pray constantly for words to speak. Do not have a canned witness to share with others. Each individual is different and requires a different approach. God knows this and knows which actions and words are best. Therefore, surrender your efforts to the Lord and let His Holy Spirit guide your mouth. Listen carefully to His inward voice, and He will show you what to say. Then pray for boldness, and the Holy Spirit will fill you with it to whatever extent is necessary.

From this day forward, commit your life to building the kingdom and making disciples as Jesus has commanded you. Even as it is written,

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit…" Matthew 28:19

Whether at work or with your unsaved family, convict and proclaim the word to

every person the Lord has put in your life.

***

I’d Love to Hear from You!

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The Power of Praying Philippians From Your Heart

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Faith Makes Everything Possible

Introduction

Every believer must take diligent study of the word seriously. But when we pray through the scriptures while we study them they take on a whole new meaning for us. As we prayerfully reflect on each verse it helps us to both discover and absorb its true meaning, as well as understand how it applies to our lives. How can you practice the word unless you reflect on its meaning and let it sink into your heart?

Therefore, consider taking the next 14 days to reflect on Philippians. Take the time to absorb God’s words that they can change your life.

Day One

Abound in the Affection of Jesus

“For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment…” Philippians 1:8–9

Lord, teach me to love my brethren with the affection of Jesus. I commit myself to abound more and more in Your love, that I may be the example of who You are. Yet Lord, I pray that You would teach me above all how to love with knowledge and discernment.

*****

I once met a group of Christians who enjoyed portraying the heart of Jesus. As a church they gave to the poor, helped each member, and formed a deeply knit community to a slightly greater extent than most other churches do. While they did all these things right, they had one fatal flaw. They did not love with discernment. They thought that love was showing kindness, so they gave cheerfully at all times without question.

This later became an issue because there a few people in the church had need but were in deep sin. Rather than rebuking these people, the other church members tried to help them financially and wanted to move on.

True love doesn’t hide sincerity. While God calls us not to judge, He does call us to come shoulder to shoulder with one another to convict and lovingly rebuke.

As it is written,

“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:1–2 ESV

And what is the law of Christ? What did Jesus say?

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have

loved you, that you also love one another. ‘By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.’” John 13:34–35 NASB

The law of Christ is love. True love suggests that we should bear one another’s burdens through gentle rebukes and turn each other back to the Lord. As the proverb says,

“Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed.” Proverbs 27:5 NASB

Convicting others of sin isn’t condemning them, and you don’t have to nip every transgression in the bottom. However, if anyone is overtaken in a transgression, then restore him or her lovingly as Galatians exhorts you. Be willing to serve your brethren in everything. If their feet get dirty with sin, then wash them lovingly. If they have need, then alleviate it. Love with discernment, determining through the Holy Spirit, and not through your own wisdom, what is best for a person’s walk. Led God show you what you should do and when. Stay your attention on His voice, and His words will show you how to apply love wisely.

Put on a servant’s heart.

As Jesus also said,

“So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.’” John 13:12–17 NASB

If your brother’s or sister’s feet have become a little soiled with sin in their walk, then wash his or her feet through conviction. But if others’ walks are clean, be willing to put the towel of a servant around your waist and serve them in other ways as well. Be led by God in all things because He knows what will be most impactful and what will bless a brother or sister in the greatest way.

Remember that Jesus told us the least will be called the greatest. So the question is this: How have you been making yourself the least, lately, through bearing a servant’s heart? Have you had a servant’s heart lately? A servant’s heart does not serve just one or two people, but in lowliness such a heart puts all others first before himself or herself and heals, blesses, and serves them.

Examine yourself in this. Commit yourself from this day forward to serving your brethren in the affection of Jesus. With that said, do not merely scratch the surface of a person's need. Be willing to enter into their trials as God may lead you to do.

Do not say in your heart, "They have God to help them." Instead, be willing to be used as the tool of God to deliver others from their seasons of need.

Day Two

How to Have Conduct Which is Worthy of the Gospel

"Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel…" Philippians 1:27

From this day forward, I commit myself to having all my conduct worthy of you Lord. Show me how to do this because I know that You have works planned for me. I know that I must be obedient to Your voice if I want to walk worthily of You. So please teach me how to be more sensitive to the Spirit. Help me through Your Spirit to unify with the brethren, that we can have the same mind and doctrine in You.

*****

There is only one way to salvation. Yet we all believe different things. We interpret the word and try to apply it to our lives the way we see fit. But God teaches us to be unified with the same mind. How can we do this if we all have differing opinions? God's opinion is all that matters. He knows what He meant when He wrote the word. Therefore, the only way to be unified with the same mind, doctrine, and judgment is to be submissive to the Holy Spirit.

He will teach you what He meant when He wrote the Scriptures. These things He will teach to your brethren who submit likewise to the Spirit. This is why this Scripture says that we must "Stand fast in one spirit"— that is to say, be unified together in your spirit through the Holy Spirit.

If you submit to the Spirit's voice, your conduct will always be worthy of the Lord. However, sometimes you have to open your eyes to see the works He may be calling you to do around you. Sometimes He subtly points them out to you, and if you aren't paying attention to surrounding circumstances, you'll miss out on His plans for you. It's easy to be distracted by the affairs of life when you work a job, go to school, take care of a family, or any combination of those. But force your heart and your thoughts back on the Spirit and listen eagerly to His voice.

Look for ways to practice love, and pray for opportunities. In time God will give

them to you, and by your obedience He will be glorified. Commit yourself from this day forward to listening more intently to the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit works through you, how will you be wrong for what you do? Hence, you will be worthy. Exhort others, especially your family, to do likewise. In time, God's unity will come naturally as you seek God together and obey the Spirit.

Day Three

Suffering for Jesus

"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake…" Philippians 1:29

Help me through my heartaches, Jesus. But help me also to remember that when I suffer a trial, I do so because I follow You and not my own heart or wisdom. Be my strength in my weakness during my hardships. Teach me through them, that I may walk away a wiser person. Above all, I pray that You would comfort me during, and deliver me from, every hard moment of life.

*****

Sometimes we think that we will experience victory when God leads us. When God speaks, we step out in faith; but then, sometimes, something seems to go wrong. After everything falls apart, we question whether we really heard God or why God would tell us to step out in faith only to allow us to be struck down.

However, we will not experience comfort and blessings every time we step out. Remember that Jesus was led to the cross. If God tells you to do something and everything falls apart, worship Him for the opportunity to suffer for being obedient. For great is your reward! But do not be angry in your heart, nor question the Lord. Carry your cross for God, even as your Lord and savior Jesus Christ did for you.

When trials happen after stepping out, however, it isn't wrong to test yourself to see if you really heard God. For if you didn't, the moment you get back on track with Him, all the broken pieces will start coming back together again.

Yet if God confirms that you took the right steps, then prepare to learn something from your experiences. For God said,

"He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD." Deuteronomy 8:3 NASB

Notice that it says to "live by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the

Lord.” This doesn’t just mean trying to apply your Bible how you think is right. Rather, it means to follow God through the voice of the Spirit. If you have followed him and suffered, He is both testing you and teaching you obedience. As it is also written,

“Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.” Hebrews 5:8 NASB

Take this time to examine yourself. Have you been following the voice of God as you ought? Commit yourself to doing it from this day forward. Do not be afraid of bearing your cross if God leads you to it, for you know that the resurrection is on the other side of the cross. God will lift you up to strengthen and establish you in due and proper time, after you have learned from your experiences. As it is written,

“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.” 1 Peter 5:10

God will establish you, and when you have learned from your trials, He may deliver you from them all and settle you.

“But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” 2 Timothy 3:10–12

Day Four

Becoming Likeminded Through Love

“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” Philippians 2:1–2

Lord, I choose today to be likeminded with my brethren and those of my household who love You. Build us together in the same mind through Your Spirit. Grow us in Your love, that we may be a real family in You. Help me to remember that those who are not my physical family are more than friends; they are a real family in you.

*****

Be bonded in kinship with your brethren. If you have believing members in your family, then be more diligent to be unified with them in love and in the Spirit. Look for ways to serve one another as Jesus would call you to do. Fellowship, too, by reading, praying, and worshipping frequently. Where two or more are gathered in His name, He will be as well. So treat your family like a mini-church every day, and the Lord will infinitely tighten the bonds of love with them.

Regarding those who are your family in Christ but not in the flesh, remember that they are not friends but family. Treat them as family. Love them as family and take care of them as family. If they have need, show them mercy and save them from it as God leads you. Unify with them daily by keeping your tongue seasoned with salt. Turn everyone you know to the Lord with the things you say. If your conversations derail into idleness, know that a sinful spirit is right around the corner. As it is written,

“When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.” Proverbs 10:19 ESV

And the Scriptures also admonish,

“But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness…” 2 Timothy 2:16 NASB

So turn your words back to the Lord. Edify your brethren and be unified in the Holy Spirit through constant fellowship with them. Remember that every moment spent with a brother or sister is time for fellowship, not only during Bible study nights. Therefore, deepen those bonds of kinship by practicing love through a servant's heart and by fellowship. Be attentive to the Spirit's voice, as we mentioned yesterday, and exhort your brethren to do likewise so that you can be unified together in the Spirit, with the same mind.

Day Five

Esteem Others More Highly Than Yourself

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Philippians 2:3–4

Teach me, Jesus, to have a gentle and humble heart, putting others above myself. I choose from this day forward to look for others’ needs, no matter how great or how small, and to fill them. I choose to look out for their best interests and not only mine.

*****

How have you been serving and esteeming others higher than yourself lately? Remember, Jesus said that those who make themselves the least shall be the greatest. Therefore, humble yourself, that God may be glorified through everything you do.

Time and again, Philippians makes clear that we must serve one another, so use this day to remind yourself to keep a servant’s heart. Look at everyone around you and determine how you can be a better servant. Listen to the Spirit and let Him guide you to the best things to do. He won’t always tell you what to do, however, until you have first taken the proper steps in that direction. So step out to serve others. If you put on kindness and humility, you’ll be putting on Christ.

As it is written,

“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering…” Colossians 3:12

Day Six

Put on the Humility of Christ

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:5–8

Jesus, teach me to have true humility as You did. If I need a lesson in humility, then please give it to me. I don’t ask for harsh or harmful circumstances to happen in order for me to gain this humility. Rather, I pray that You would sustain me by providing me with what I need as I learn to rely on You—both for earthly things and heavenly. Therefore, I ask that You would help me to abide in Your Spirit, that I may be humble through the Spirit and not only learn due to trials. I desire real humility whether I abase or abound. May I not always have to be abased financially, in my health, or in any other way to have this humility.

*****

Real humility doesn’t come from humble circumstances. There are some believers who rarely struggle financially or in any other way. God has blessed them with what He has given them. How, then, shall they find humility? Through putting on Jesus by abiding in the Spirit. When you abide in the Spirit and are attentive to His work in your heart, you will become humble like God without suffering. Sometimes that lesson we need is only found through suffering a trial. However, it is better to pray against having trials, saying, “May I not have them if they are not necessary.” By this you are recognizing in your heart that, if they are necessary, you will be willing to receive them to grow through them and glorify God in the process.

But in all things be humble. Live humbly as God leads you, doing all things for Christ. Furthermore, show humility to your brethren, serving them always with kindness. Be kind always! Kindness gives you a reputation.

There are some people whom I have only met once in my life even though, due to their exceeding kindness, I have never forgotten them. Instead, I am still

encouraged by them to this day to go and do as they did. Can you think of anyone like that in your life? Let their conduct remind you to be the image of Jesus always.

If you lower yourself, God will raise you. If you take the lowest seat, God will say, “Come higher!” And if you humble yourself, the Lord will say, “Well done, my faithful servant! Come and enter your Master’s happiness.” For Jesus was first humbled to the point of death, and then He received the promise of the resurrection. The promises were made to Abraham and his “seed,” which is not plural because that seed is Christ. But when we put on Christ by abiding in the Spirit, and humble ourselves to bear our crosses and lovingly serve others, we become partakers of that promise.

As it is written,

“And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.” 2 Corinthians 1:7

And as it is further written,

“…and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” Romans 8:17

Partake in the humility and you’ll receive a great blessing. For Jesus was exalted because He was the worthy Lord and served as the example for us so that we, likewise, will obtain a blessing if we remain obedient. As we read in the Scriptures,

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:9–11

Reflect on the promises today. You will be praised if you humble yourself.

Day Seven

Allowing God to Work in You and Through You

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." Philippians 2:12–13

Lord, I surrender to Your Spirit. Work in me and through me as I submit to Your Will. I choose to obey Your voice always, taking my salvation seriously with fear, trembling, and thanksgiving—thanksgiving that I am named a child of God. Yet I have fear and trembling lest I try to work my own works and believe I am justified by them. Yes, Lord, I know that You want an obedient servant, not one who tries to honor You in the way they think best. Let me not be one who works religiously, but one who obeys faithfully.

*****

Let your works be works of faith through obedience. For these are the works James was talking about when he said,

"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." James 2:24

Legalistic and religious work that we try to perform to make God happy are worthless. We cannot earn brownie points. There is no extra credit with God's homework. Instead, we simply need to do the homework assigned, listening to the Holy Spirit, who is telling us all the answers. You will have straight A's if you obey the Spirit.

So work out your own salvation through submission to the Holy Spirit's guiding hand. Look for ways to honor God through love with the people He has given you. However, do not do it of yourself; let Him guide you through the process of giving, serving, and showing mercy. Being the Lord, He gives the best gifts and serves us in a way no one else can—through mercy on our sin. So if you want to be like Christ, then let Christ work through you. Even as it is written,

"To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me

mightily.” Colossians 1:29

Day Eight

Be Confident in the Holy Spirit

"For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh…" Philippians 3:3

Lord, give me Your wisdom today. Lead me by Your Spirit, that I may worship You in Him through my conduct and my words. Today I commit myself to rejoicing in You. I choose also to reject fleshly knowledge and the works of the flesh to honor You in all things.

*****

There is a difference between works of the Spirit and works of the flesh. The works of the flesh are always sin, but not every work of the flesh is obvious. Some are subtler than others—such as trying to honor God our own way rather than praying and being led by the Spirit. Pray your way through every decision in life and let God lead you. A work of the Spirit is obedience to the Spirit. When He speaks and you obey, you have done a work of the Spirit.

So choose today to be more sensitive to His voice and to obey always. Operate in the Spirit in all you do. Let your words be spoken with love through Him. Let your conduct take place in Him, with regard to His conviction.

Listen to His conviction always, and no matter how subtle it may be, obey it. Be confident in Him and reject your own wisdom. He will tell you to do things that don't make sense. However, just remember that the Lord invented the laws of nature and life. So if it doesn't make sense, He may intend to invent a new thing through a miracle.

Day Nine

Do Not Live for This Present Life

“Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ” Philippians 3:8

Lord, I lay aside this life to pick up Your purpose for me. Show me Your daily will, that I may live by it always. Remind me that I’m a pilgrim, lest I cling to this life. There are many things that would like to distract me from You. Please save me from each of these as I chose to chase after You, lay this life behind, and pick up Your love.

*****

It is written,

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.” Hebrews 11:13–14

Remember that you are a pilgrim. It is easy to be distracted from this mindset through the affairs of life. But keep a steady eye fixed on the prize, counting this life as rubbish.

Now the question is this: Do you really count this current life as rubbish? How have you been doing this? Your life with Christ is not about this place. What you do and what you have mean nothing when you die. The only thing that means anything is that you can go home to the Lord. If, then, this is the field you work in, and the Lord’s side is your home where you will rest, then keep your mind focused on these things.

When you’re at work, do you think about going home to be with your family? Everyone does, and you should keep that mindset about this present life. Your home is with the Lord. Keep your heart fixed on Him through constant prayer and worship. Abide in the Spirit and follow the Lord. Do not live for this life but, rather, seek direction from God always because He’s leading you to your real life. Yes. He will give you a life with an enduring hope.

Reflect on that today. Commit yourself to pilgrimage from this day forward, for as it is written,

“Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage.” Psalm 84:5

Day Ten

Having True Righteousness

"…and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith…" Philippians 3:9

Lord, save me from having my own righteousness. Deliver me from my works, which I commit to You to honor You, and give to me Your word through Your Spirit so that I may live according to it through obedience. Help me to hear You more clearly, that I may embrace Your word and live by it daily.

*****

Everyone knows that we can't be saved through practicing the law. However, not everyone understands how Christians accidentally apply legalism today. They look for good works and try to get involved with them. They read their Bibles and try to apply them how they believe they should be applied. They show kindness and do the good "Christian thing" but do not seek the direction of the Holy Spirit in all they do. Any who act in such ways are likely unaware that they need to do each of these things through the leading of the Spirit. They may not even know how to apply God's leading to each of these situations.

For those who do not know: Be sensitive to God's voice in everything. One way to grow in understanding His voice is to listen to the Spirit while you read your Bible. When you read and the pages come alive, God is speaking to you through them. Pay attention to these scriptures and meditate on them. They will pertain to your life and the lessons the Spirit is currently teaching you.

Every time the Scriptures pop out and the Spirit speaks to you while you read, write down the words He said in your Bible. Always take notes in your Bible. It is a study guide, so there should be much written in it. However, do not write your own thoughts. Write only what the Spirit says to you, and this will train your ears to listen to God only. By this method you'll be able to discern your own heart from God's with greater clarity. This clarity will carry over into every other area of life as well.

When the pages of the word come alive, then the Spirit is teaching you and building upon other lessons you've learned. So stick to the lesson at hand, and

remember that God, not you, is your teacher. Don’t memorize what you think you should but, rather, what the Holy Spirit is teaching you from the word. It will be immediately practical for everyday use. Whatever you use, you remember, but whatever is not used tends to be forgotten. If the Spirit is teaching that lesson to you, He will build more upon it each day, giving you a chance to remember each verse.

He will bring the verses you memorized to mind and compare them with scriptures you are currently reading. By this method of memorization and comparison, He will give you a broader understanding of the word of God and how each verse fits together to create a bigger picture.

Not everyone takes memorizing the word as seriously as they should. While we may be excited to memorize and to learn new techniques, the need for memorizing tends to fall to the wayside as priorities of life and work rise to the top. However, if you set aside time every day for memorizing, it will become a force of habit to sit down, go over what you read earlier that day, and memorize it.

When you memorize through the Spirit, He will bring to mind the Scriptures when it is time to apply them. You won’t have to do it how you think is best, but God will tell you when and show you how when it is time.

Also, regarding memorizing, if you do it in the flesh it will be hard to retain more than a few verses. But if you pray and ask the Lord to help you retain the word, and then have faith while memorizing that He will, you will memorize more than you ever thought possible. As it is written,

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” John 14:26

And it is also written,

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” James 1:5–8

Notice that the key here is to have all faith that God will provide, for if you don’t have faith, He won’t. I have learned that the more faith I have, the more I can memorize. Some teach that you can memorize a book in three months by

memorizing a verse a day and brushing up on old verses each day. However, I have found that through the power of the Holy Spirit, I have been able to go from remembering a handful of verses to memorizing entire books of the Bible in a single day.

If you would like to know more about the simple method I use to do this, I discuss it in greater detail in my bestselling book *How to Memorize the Bible Fast and Easy*.

When it comes time to apply these concepts, the Spirit will show you everything you need to do. Let God guide your heart through conviction to every act of kindness you should do. Don't just show kindness for a reward or to be a good Christian but, instead, love others with sincerity.

For true righteousness is found only through practicing love with sincerity and obeying the Holy Spirit as He convicts and leads you.

Day Eleven

Rejoice!

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” Philippians 4:4

How can I keep from singing Your praise? Lord You’re wonderful in all you do! Today I commit myself to worship you continually.

*****

It is written,

“I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.” Psalm 34:1 ESV

Can you do this? Can you worship and rejoice in the Lord always? What about in heartache and hardship? Take to heart to worship God always, in every situation and in every circumstance. More than this, try to worship God all day, every day. In addition to ongoing and continuous prayer, worship without ceasing.

However, when you worship, aim your praises directly at God. Don’t merely sing about Him but, rather, worship Him to His face. Let Your praise be as intimate and relational as your prayers.

When you worship continuously, it sensitizes you to the Spirit because you’re focusing on the presence of God. By nature you abide in the Spirit through worship, for when you worship from your heart, you do it through the Spirit.

In order to walk in the Spirit, you must abide in the Spirit. Constant prayer and worship help to make continuous abiding and walking possible. So take to heart to practice this today.

Commit yourself to worship continuously in every moment and in every situation in life.

When at work, if you can’t worship out loud, then do it quietly, inwardly. When we’re stuck in the middle of the crudeness of the world because of the workplace, it is good to reflect on the inward purity of the Spirit through prayer and worship. This will also help you to reflect Jesus rightly to everyone around you as you ought to do.

Day Twelve

Put on a Gentle Heart

“Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.” Philippians 4:5

Today I commit myself to putting on Your gentleness toward everyone around me. I especially choose to be gentle with those who aren’t gentle with me. I know that being Your image isn’t always convenient. So please help me to portray Your gentleness even during the hardest of times.

*****

How have you been practicing the gentleness of Christ lately? Reflect on all the ways He’s been gentle with you and apply the same toward others. Is He short-tempered with you when you offend Him? Certainly not. Go and do likewise with your enemies.

Does the Lord revile? If others revile you, do not revile them in return, for true love is gentle by nature. Therefore, be a naturally gentle person by abiding in and reflecting the love of Jesus today.

It is easy to be gentle with those who are gentle with you. However, be diligent to practice the gentleness of Christ toward those who offend you, annoy you, or bother you in any way.

Do not reflect on what bothers you but, rather, let love blot that out as you act and speak with conviction through your gentleness. In this way an offender may repent and become a brother.

Day Thirteen

Do All Things Through Jesus and Be Content with His Supply

“I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” Philippians 4:12

Lord, teach me how to abase properly with contentment when I suffer need. I do not ask for need, but when or if that time should come, help me to be content with the things You have given me. I pray also that You would teach me how to abound properly, reminding me not to trust in what the bank account says but in You.

*****

Be content with the supply of God and do not lust for the things that He hasn’t given you. For your Lord knows your needs, and in due and proper time He will take care of each of them. Simply bear patiently with God as you wait. What sin has He committed, that you should not be patient? If every way of God is right, then follow Him even when it doesn’t feel right. As we said on an earlier day, God teaches us through the things we suffer. Therefore, be glad that God is teaching you eternal wisdom to prepare you for eternal life.

In your sufferings, God has testified this: that if you partake in the cross, you will partake in the resurrection. So rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for the reward of eternal life is yours.

Until that time comes, learn to live a godly life in contentment. If God wants to bless you with more than you need, then be grateful, willing to give and share with those who have need. If Jesus were rich, would He have given to you if you were poor? If you needed a home, would he have given it to you? If you were hungry, would He have fed you for a day, or would He have fed you while He helped you find the food you needed to suffer hunger no longer?

If you really want to do as Jesus would do, then fill others’ needs as Jesus would do for you.

Day Fourteen

Faith Makes Everything Possible

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13

Lord, I believe! Strengthen me to do the things I can’t today. Give me the humility to accept that I can do nothing without You and the peace I need while I wait for Your victories to unfold in my life.

*****

Having the faith to do all things through Christ requires you to remember that you can do nothing without Him. Faith begins with humility because by having faith you are declaring that God can do above anything you could ask or think. For faith must always be blind. If a situation requires possibility before you will trust God, then you must examine your heart. Nothing is impossible for God, and if you really believe this, then let it show through your conduct and your walk.

Learn to depend on God in everything. Commit yourself to this today. For it is written,

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5–6 NASB

Be content with the Lord’s supply and live every step of life according to His Spirit’s lead. Doesn’t He know what’s best? Let Him choose it for you! He know the best career you should have and the best person for you to marry. He knows everything. While He may allow you to choose these things, if you allow Him to choose for you, you’ll receive what is perfect. And aren’t God’s gifts and blessings greater than the things we can contrive?

So are His paths and plans. Therefore, submit to them.

Do not seek to fill your own needs but, rather, allow God to lead you to providence. If you worry about money and choose your careers, then you’ll be living according to your own wisdom. You are a child of God, and don’t parents take care of their children so that they can be carefree? So be carefree in Christ since the Father intends to take care of you.

The world would call you a fool for not planning for the future. But how can one plan for what one does not know? Yet God knows your future, so let Him plan for you. Even men of the world go to financial planners to plan their retirement for them. Why would they then consider you a fool for going to the Master of spirits to have your fate planned?

Take no confidence in your excess, nor seek abundance. For God knows you have needs and will provide for you according to them. As it is written,

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

“For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

“So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Matthew 6:24–34 NASB

God has always intended for you to take one day at a time. Don’t plan for the future unless God tells you to do so—for it doesn’t matter what your future holds if you know that God holds your future.

The Power of Praying Colossians From Your Heart

Praying Colossians from Your Heart™

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Introduction

We know that God answers our prayers when we pray according to His will. If you pray according to His word and absorb its meaning, He will answer each of your prayers and transform you through them.

So I challenge you to take the next twenty-one days to pray the Scriptures from your heart. If you take the next three weeks seriously, practicing the Scriptures diligently, you will not even be able to walk away without being changed.

Day One

Growing in Gratitude and Prayer

"We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you…" Colossians 1:3

Lord, I choose to have a heart of gratitude, giving thanks always. Help me to see the things I should be thankful for during the hardest moments of life, for I know that there is always reason to praise You. I also choose from this day forward to remember to lift up in prayer constantly those You've put in my life. There are many forces that would like to pull them down, so please help me to keep my head in prayer as a true prayer warrior.

*****

Remember to have gratitude today. It's something in which we should always be growing. So take this time to remember all the ways God has been faithful to you. Reflect on His faithfulness and the hope He's laid up for you. Praise Him for these things and share them with someone else today. As it is written,

"Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; talk of all His wondrous works! Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD!" Psalm 105:1–3

Glorify God with the things you say. Speak of His works in your life, being careful not to toss your pearls to swine. You don't need to share spiritual or heady matters with an unbeliever; those are for the brethren. However, if you should speak to an unbeliever today, share your testimony and the works God has done in regard to your salvation. Be a faithful witness, remembering to pray always.

Pray for the unbelievers in your life, that God would open their hearts to receive Him and so that He would give them whatever they need to receive Him as Lord. Pray for the brethren in your life, knowing that Satan is lurking around every corner to tear down and beat up those who love the Lord. So stand fast in the faith and continue steadfastly in your prayers for your brethren.

If you have any family members who are saved, then test yourself right now: How often do you honestly pray for them? Commit yourself right now to praying constantly as God leads your heart. Because if we forget to pray for those nearest to us, how much more will we forget to pray for others as the Scriptures exhort us?

Maintain a faithful heart. Keep your head in prayer today.

Day Two

Reflect on Your Hope and Pursue His Truth Daily

"…because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel…" Colossians 1:5

Thank You for the hope I have! Help me to keep my heart set on pilgrimage, for there are many things in life that pull at me and would like me to forget that fact. I know life isn't about this world and that this world isn't my home. Yet please help me to keep this truth in my heart always so that I can have a free heart in You. Help me also to reflect on Your truths always. Grow me in Your good doctrine and reveal it to me daily.

*****

It is written,

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage." Psalm 84:5

Remember the hope that is laid up for you, and that your life is not about this world. Keep your heart on pilgrimage. Let God lead you in each of your decisions so that you can live for His will. If you continue to follow Him, you'll remain founded in the truth of the gospel.

The enemy subtly adds twists to our doctrine, for which reason there are ten thousand different beliefs about any one point regarding Scripture. How can we claim there is only one way to heaven yet have so many different variations of how the truth should look? The only way to be rooted and grounded in the truth is through the Holy Spirit. Sensitize yourself to His voice, and continually abide and reflect on His presence. By so doing, you'll hear Him more clearly, which is necessary to be led to the truth. For we are led by the Spirit when we hear His voice and obey. Therefore, commit yourself to being more intimate with the Spirit today through prayer and worship. He will guide you to pure doctrine and truth and establish you in it. As it written,

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth…" John 16:13 ESV

So focus on the Spirit, that you may be perfect in your doctrine. Now, one may

ask, “Why is doctrine important, anyway?” We are saved by grace through faith. Faith saves us, and doctrine dictates how faith must be applied. If it is not applied accurately, it has no effect.

You can have all the faith in the world that a nickel will turn into gold, but will it? Will your faith make a difference? Not in this case because God did not say the nickel would turn. All faith must be in the exact words of God, or else it has no power. The power of our faith is the word of God—not an inaccurate depiction of that word, but the word of God in truth. Thus, doctrine is important in every way. It’s necessary for salvation and an effective walk in Christ. So commit yourself to knowing your doctrine better from this day forward. Commit to studying your Bible today and every day. When you study, allow the Spirit to speak to you and show you the hidden meaning behind the Scripture. Do not meditate on your own thoughts while you read. Instead, pray that God would read His word to you and make it come alive. Then, when it does come alive for you, the Holy Spirit is speaking to you and wants you to mediate on that scripture. Listen to His voice and stick to the lesson at hand. Write down anything He says to you. This will help train your heart to be more sensitive to God’s voice, thus helping you to understand Him with greater clarity in the long run.

Day Three

Keeping in Constant Prayer

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God…” Colossians 1:9–10

Today I commit myself again to praying continuously for the needs of those around me—both their physical and their spiritual needs. In my prayers I ask, now and continuously, that you would fill me with the knowledge of Your will in wisdom and spiritual understanding, that I may live by it daily. For I know that I must walk in Your will as Your Holy Spirit leads me in order to be fruitful in every good work and in order to grow in my relationship with you.

*****

Again Colossians brings a sober reminder to pray unceasingly for those around us. So remember to commit to doing so today, meanwhile praying also that you would understand the Lord’s will. Being led By Him requires us to understand His will both daily and seasonally. The Lord has tasks He wants you doing each day. Sometimes it may be as simple as praying continually, worshipping without ceasing, and abiding. Other times it may be an actual work of love, whether simple or great. However, if you are not attentive to His voice, you’ll never hear those subtle convictions you should be listening to and obeying. Without them you’ll never know His daily will. Moreover, if you aren’t obedient in the little steps, you won’t be able to walk with God rightly from season to season.

So commit yourself to growing in understanding God’s will from this day forward.

Day Four

The Freedom of Forgiveness

“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:13–14

Thank You for Your forgiveness, Lord! Thank You that I don’t have to worry about being condemned for my stumbles but that You wait with open arms for me to run to you. Help me to be the same toward those around me so that I can love and forgive them even as You do for me.

*****

Consider everyone around you. Is there anyone who offends you? Be patient with him or her even as God is patient with you. Can you do this? Can you commit yourself to having the true and honest heart of Christ? Do any of your brethren in the Lord offend you? Go to them and make peace immediately. Even if they are the ones at fault, do not wait for them to come to you but, rather, go to them. Did God wait for you to come? No, but He has been reaching for you since before you were born.

So do not hold a grudge against anyone. If an offender is an unbeliever, then love him or her as God does, by leading him or her to the mercy of Christ through conviction.

Reflect on all the ways you’ve transgressed and offended the Lord lately. Confess them, repent, and be grateful for His forgiveness. Then, in that gratitude and in memory of His great mercy toward you, be affected by His kindness to go and do the same for others, bearing patiently with them in love.

Day Five

You Were Created by God for God

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.” Colossians 1:15–16

Lord, thank You for reminding me today that I was not made to live for myself but that I was created for You and for Your purpose. Help me to live this out daily as I commit myself wholeheartedly to it.

*****

Jesus made all things. Before time began He was seated on heaven’s throne, and now He remains seated, having also mastered death and corruption, as we wait for the redemption. Let God also reign in your heart as the master of your life. He authored it. He’s the reason you’re here and the reason you’re saved. So submit to His purpose and live for the One who created you for Himself. Let Him be glorified in your conduct as you humbly submit to His Holy Spirit’s voice daily.

Your Lord and Master deserves an obedient servant. Therefore, be well-pleasing to Him in this by surrendering to the One who has had a purpose for you since before time began. And that purpose is to love Him and to be loved by Him.

Day Six

Carry Your Cross

“I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church…” Colossians 1:24

Lord, teach me how to rejoice in my suffering. Show me how to have joy when joy seems impossible. Lift me up in Your Spirit and strengthen me to love others even when it isn’t convenient for me. I know that true love doesn’t wait for the perfect moment and isn’t afraid to sacrifice. Instead, real love is worked out immediately when another needs it. Help me to be mindful of this, not reflecting on my needs or wants but having a sober and willing heart to carry my cross for You. Because I know that if I have loved the least of these and borne my cross for them, then I have loved You and carried my cross for You.

*****

How have you been carrying your cross for others lately? When we think of carrying a cross, sometimes we imagine laying our own desires down to honor the Lord. But God also calls us to bear our crosses for one another as we bear each other’s burdens. If any are hurting, comfort them; if any are sick, visit them and help them heal. If any are poor, provide for their needs until the needs are completely filled. Show compassion to each of these and prepare to bear your cross for them. For when you love another, you put on Christ.

Learn also to rejoice in these things because the Lord has given you an opportunity to love with sincerity and receive a reward.

Day Seven

Know Your Bible

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.” Colossians 2:8

I commit myself to the doctrine of Your word Lord. Save me from the empty principles of the world that enter the church by the deceitfulness of our own hearts. Cleanse me of this. I chose to cleanse my faith, and my relationship with you from the foolishness of the American dream.

*****

This world is a deceitful place, but our own hearts can be equally deceitful. As it is written,

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” Jeremiah 17:9 ESV

Knowing this, be careful not to fall into the trap of the American dream. Don’t live for your own purpose and don’t build up your life here. Rather, build your treasures in heaven. For where your wealth and pleasure are, there your heart will be also. As Jesus said,

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:19–21 ESV

And as He further said,

“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Luke 12:32–34 ESV

Therefore, take pleasure in Christ. Keep your eyes fixed on the prize. Press forward. Learn the Father’s doctrine through constant study. How have you been reading Your Bible lately?

Day Eight

Embracing the New Creation

“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” Colossians 2:11–12

Lord, I choose to put off the fleshly desires of my heart to live for Your will. Work in my heart and increase my desire to walk in Your Holy Spirit. Save me from day-to-day struggles that distract me from needful prayer and abiding.

*****

It is written,

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20 ESV

The works of the flesh do not always appear as obvious sins. They can be as simple as acting on impulsive desire or fear. Out of fear for loss, sometimes we guard our bank accounts and prepare a future and retirement for ourselves and our families. But then we neglect to give to the hurting brethren around us while attempting to justify ourselves by saying, “I put in the tithe basket every week.”

Do not live any longer for this present life but, rather, live for Christ and the prize to come. This requires you to do more than “the Christian thing.” It mandates that you be much more than religious. For God commands that you must walk according to His Spirit. Therefore, listen carefully to His voice and obey it since without the Spirit, you have no salvation at all. The Holy Spirit is your deposit for eternal life. He is your eternal security. So cling to Him and obey Him and you will be very secure indeed.

You’ll experience the peace His security brings and His comfort in every moment of trouble. You will move briskly in power as the Lord paves the way of salvation for you. He will prepare every work for you and give you all the strength you need to accomplish it. He will also give you all the strength you

require to overcome sin.

If you have ever felt a battle in attempting to overcome sin, know that the battle could have been overflowed with infinite power and victory if you had chosen to run into the arms of Jesus through prayer and worship in order to abide. By abiding you'll have the strength to overcome all things, for it is the Spirit who works through you when you walk in Him through faith and obedience.

Day Nine

Grace Is Better

"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." Colossians 2:13–14

Lord, I dedicate myself from this day forward to growing in a deeper and more intimate relationship with You. I choose to flee from the emptiness of vain religion and hollow legalism. Fill me with more of You. Yes, Jesus, I pray You'll give me more of You and less of me. Thank You for saving me from such a difficult burden and nailing it to your cross.

****

We all know the need to forsake legalism. However, we aren't all aware of how sneakily it enters our lives. It doesn't always take the form of trying needlessly to apply the statutes and laws of the Scriptures. Sometime it comes through trying to apply the Scriptures how we see fit rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to teach us when to apply them. When we try to apply the word, we memorize a verse and then, for as long as we remember it, we try to apply it. After a long time, though, we forget the verse, having moved on to a different one. So we learn but never come to the knowledge of how to apply the truth.

But if you learn to listen to the Holy Spirit, He will show you how and when to apply the passage. If for any reason you feel inclined to apply what you have read, then by all means do so, while keeping your ears open to the Lord's leading. Sometimes we need to step out to do what we know is right before God guides us and shows us how to apply it. We can't always wait on the sidelines.

Yet do not fall into the trap of trying to apply something while waiting for God's voice, only to accomplish it before He speaks. If you step out to apply something and God hasn't spoken to you, then you have operated in the flesh and not in the leading of the Spirit. All operations of the flesh are sin, no matter how noble their intentions can appear.

Die to your former self and your former wisdom. Commit to walking by the leading and wisdom of God from this point forward.

Day Ten

A More Excellent Way

“If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, ‘Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!’ (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?” Colossians 2:20–22 NASB

Teach me Your Doctrine. I choose to abstain from worthless teachings and practices that won’t help my walk or increase my relationship with You. I commit myself today to growing closer to You through your word.

*****

Read Your Bible today. Embrace it and grow in it. Let the Spirit teach you from it. There are many teachings in the church today that don’t profit our walks or our relationship with the Lord. They seem wise and make sense logically, as well as biblically, by those who try to fit them into the word. However, these teachings are not the truth of Christ. No measure of fasting, self-imposed restrictions, or religious behavior can grow you. All things you do, whether fasting or refraining, must be done through the Holy Spirit. He will guide you into every proper step you must take and every work that pleases God. So submit to Him today!

Day Eleven

Stopping the Indulgences of the Flesh

“These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.” Colossians 2:23 ESV

Lord, teach me to walk soberly in the Spirit. I know that sobering myself by restraining my flesh isn’t the answer to a godly walk; rather, resisting the will of the flesh to submit to Your will is. Knowing this, I choose to commit to Your guiding hand, fleeing fleshly desire and embracing the Holy Spirit through abiding.

*****

It is written,

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Galatians 5:16

No measure of self-made religion or refraining from bodily desires can save you from sin. Could you refrain from desire and be holy before you had Jesus? No. But it is certain that, as you have needed Christ, so you will always need Christ. So rely on His Spirit for strength in times of temptation.

Now, some do not take sin as seriously as they ought. They do not have bondage, nor do they commit any of the serious sins. However, they do not take to heart to cleanse the little ones properly. “God has grace. It’s not a big deal,” they’ll say. And yet they testify against themselves by saying to an unbeliever, “Even the smallest sin could separate you from God. You need Him as Savior!”

You have always needed Jesus, and self-imposed restrictions can never help you. Learn to be holy without the restrictions, and then you will be holy always. But refusing to have restrictions doesn’t mean that you have no boundaries when it comes to sin. It’s just that some people do not know how to place those boundaries properly. They place restrictions on the flesh to keep themselves from temptation, rather than placing them on their heart to keep from idleness so that they can walk in the Spirit continually.

When temptation comes, you are called to refrain. Yet your refraining should not be a fight or battle against the flesh or Satan. Some think that they need to resist the temptation by force, while forgetting that God, the greatest force of all has given you victory through the Holy Spirit. If only they would walk in Him, they would know this. We only sin when we stray idly off-course from abiding. If, however, we continue in the Spirit as we ought, then temptation will be less severe and easier to walk away from.

So when You're tempted to speak those choice words, or engage in that wrongful activity, what should you do to secure victory? First we read,

"Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." 2 Timothy 2:22 NASB

When you're tempted, therefore, you must flee the tempting situation. While you may need to flee physically, this is also a call to flee spiritually. Merely running away from the temptation isn't enough. Rather, it's the destination to which you run that matters. And to where do you run? The farthest possible place from sin —which is the Lord.

Run straight into God's arms. Literally walk away from the situation if you must, but once you have fled, seek the Lord. You have become tempted because you were not abiding in that moment. So now, go and pray, for this is how Jesus told us to conquer sin:

"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one..." Matthew 6:13

Some translations say "deliver us from evil" rather than "the evil one," which is Satan. You cannot pray to be saved merely from evil. Instead, you need to pinpoint where that evil is coming from and repel it through meaningful prayer. Pray against the working of Satan, and the Lord will tear down his stronghold in a flash. But above all, you must have faith.

Your temptations are not just the work of Satan, however. You can't pray against Satan and expect sudden victory over your sin. You must emphasize, "Lead me not into temptation." For you, not Satan, are the cause of your own sins. Your sins are your fault. Although he may entice you, you are the one who makes the choice to fall into them or not. As it is written,

"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed." James 1:14

How do you rightly resist sin? Through reflecting on the Holy Spirit rather than on the desires of the flesh. For the flesh sins through its desires once enticed, yet if instead you abide in the Spirit by meditating on His presence through constant prayer and worship, temptations will be significantly reduced in your life and, certainly, they will be easier to resist.

But when you are tempted, you can overcome by walking away from the situation. Force yourself to hate the sin, because unless you hate it, you cannot commit to the right thing. Then force yourself to pray and ask for Jesus to intervene for you. As you pray, you must have faith that He will intervene. If you don’t, then your prayer will do nothing, no matter how earnest it may be, and you will succumb to sin. But if you pray in faith, Jesus will strengthen you through His Spirit.

When you feel strengthened, praying about the temptation could remind you of it, causing you to reflect on it and fall. If prayer seems no longer necessary, therefore, worship God instead. Let your mind forget about the tempting situation. Flee from the thoughts of youthful lusts; then you will have true and honest victory. Then, from that point forward, commit yourself to abiding in the Spirit, and you’ll be strengthened to brush off sin in the future.

This is the method outlined in the word to overcome sin. There is no other way to experience victory and have it always than through connecting with the Holy Spirit, abiding in Him, and walking with Him.

Day Twelve

Keep Your Eyes Fixed on Jesus

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” Colossians 3:1 ESV

Lord, I set my face toward You, to seek You and all that You are. Save me from the cares of this life so that I can be free to live for You always. For I know that my life and my home are at Your side and not here. Yet having family and living life can make it feel otherwise. So help me to retain a sober heart through all life’s demands.

*****

Set your mind on God’s plan for you. Seek the Lord and live for His purpose. You have died to this life and have been made alive in Christ. So dwell on this fact through keeping a steady eye fixed on the prize and your heart set on pilgrimage.

Day Thirteen

Keep Your Mind Fixed on Jesus

“Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Colossians 3:2–3 ESV

Again I devote myself to Your purpose. I refuse to life for this life, and with all my heart I dedicate my life to embracing You and chasing after You, Jesus. You’re all that matters to me! You’re my life, my love, and my peace. So give me more of You now, Lord, and less of me.

*****

Time and again Colossians reminds us to keep our eyes fixed on God’s goal for us. While it may seem repetitive, God wants to beat it into our heads that the only way out of this life is up. So keep your hands raised in praise and your eyes fixed on your prize. If truly you are Christ’s, then you have been crucified with Him and this life is no longer yours to life. You have been paid for with a price, so live for and obey your Master.

Day Fourteen

Appearing with Jesus in Glory

“When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” Colossians 3:4 ESV

How can I keep from praising You in this, God? Thank You for the awesome gift and hope You give me. I choose to reflect on this today: that my home is at Your side. From You my new nature came, and to You I shall return. Praise You, God!

*****

While they may tarry for now, before long heaven and earth will pass away in a moment. Then your Savior will come riding on the wind and clouds of heaven, bringing your reward with Him. This is literal: If you are alive and remain, you will be taken up and transformed and meet your loved ones who have passed away.

Isn’t this incredible? Reflect on it today and praise God for His faithfulness.

Day Fifteen

Put to Death the Old Nature

“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming.” Colossians 3:5–6 ESV

Lord, I know the reward of sin, and I choose to glorify You in all my conduct. I love You! So I’ll allow my love for You to compel me into holiness and into following You. I choose to be sanctified, set apart from the desires and will of the flesh, to live for Your will and Holy Spirit.

*****

Once more Colossians reminds us to abstain from fleshly desire and sin, while giving us a sober warning that those who live in sin abide in wrath. Instead, through love we shed the stain of sin in the blood of Christ. Through that same love, moreover, we shed the fear of judgment because Christ has suffered the punishment for us and we choose to live holy, godly lives according to the voice and leading of the Holy Spirit.

So praise God for freedom while being careful not to be ensnared again—especially not by the desires of this life, lest you bear no fruit to maturity. As Jesus said.

“And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.” Luke 8:14 ESV

Do not allow the cares of this life to choke you. Do not let them choke your doctrine or the voice of the Spirit because you live for your own heart. Rather, abstain from these things. Flee! Let Christ be the One to whom you run, and rest your head on Him—for His arms are open wide.

Day Sixteen

Purify Your Words

“But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.” Colossians 3:8 ESV

Lord, I commit myself to acting with a pure heart. I choose to have a clean mouth that only brings You glory. From this day forward, I will turn every conversation back to You to edify and encourage everyone who hears me.

*****

Every word you speak begins with your heart. As Jesus said,

“…out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” Matthew 12:34 ESV

If anger, wrath, or malice is bottled up in your heart, hurtful and regrettable words will follow. If any manner of evil is in your heart, your mouth will speak it. The world teaches, “If you don’t have anything good to say, then don’t say anything at all.” However, the Lord teaches us not to hold back wicked words and retain them in our heart. Instead, He commands that we purify out hearts so that wickedness will not even come to mind. We must cleanse the inside of the vessel for it to hold clean water.

If you abide in the Spirit constantly, then His loving and edifying words will bubble up from your heart, giving you godly speech. Therefore, dedicate yourself to having a holy mouth today. Turn everyone you know back to the Lord. If your mouth isn’t guided by God’s love, then by what is it guided? Consider this and be the image of His love.

Day Seventeen

Let the Word Dwell in Your Richly

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Colossians 3:16 ESV

Meet with me in Your word. Read me Your book and make the pages come alive. Teach me from it. I choose to listen carefully to Your voice so that I can submit to it. Show me the intended meaning of the word, that I may both live it out and encourage my brethren through it. Help me Lord also to have a more thankful heart for all You do.

*****

If you want the word of Christ to dwell in you, then you need to dwell upon His word. So the question is this: How have you been dwelling upon the word of God lately? This scripture is also informing us to meditate on the voice of God so that we can be led thereby. Therefore, take today to read and study the word as well as to listen intently to the voice of God.

Reading should be something you do every day. However, there is a difference between reading the Bible and studying it. Do not merely read the stories. Once you are familiar with them, then dedicate yourself to needful study so that you may know how to apply the Scriptures in your life. Look for the scriptures that speak out to you and start with those. Then, as the Spirit leads you, find every relevant scripture so that you can expand your knowledge of the doctrine. This is where a concordance and Greek and Hebrew lexicon come in handy. If any word or concept is in question, refer back to the original Greek. Compare the scriptures to the Textus Receptus and the Majority Greek Text, which are the most reliable and longest-used forms of Greek text. The Alexandrian Greek is not as reliable in that it has been translated into the Westcott and Hort Greek, from which the Jehovah Witnesses translate their Bibles.

Remember that a tree becomes tall and fruitful by digging its roots deep in the soil. I would therefore like to encourage you to dig deep into the word, that you may be transformed by it.

Then, when you have been influenced by the word, you can turn around and encourage others also through the word. Look for someone today who needs encouragement and pray for words. If the Lord supplies you words, then share them diligently in the joy of fellowship.

Day Eighteen

Integrity in the Workplace

“Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.” Colossians 3:22 ESV

Give me a heart of integrity at my workplace. I choose to be the image of You toward my boss and coworkers. Save me from the temptation of working hard for better pay, for I know that I should work hard only to win the people over for the gospel’s sake. There is so much more to my field of work than a paycheck. Please remind me of this, that I may continue in the mission—the reason why You put me at my job in the first place.

*****

Have you been the example of Christ at your workplace lately? Be the image of Jesus in everything you do. Share Christ with those who will listen, and be Christ toward those who will not. Then, when your kind actions have opened their hearts, maybe they will hear you.

Your workplace is a field, and the gospel is the seed. Everywhere you go, you should be evangelizing as God leads you. Now, I have heard some say, “I don’t think God is leading me to witness at my job.” Yet they have never laid it before the Lord and sensitized their hearts to His direction. It’s almost as if some people are afraid to share the gospel as they ought to do.

Instead they make friends with their worldly coworkers and hide their light. They claim to share the light in that they confess they are Christian, but they don’t take it to heart to preach the word. Beloved, no one can be saved without hearing the gospel. How have you been sharing it lately? These people are going to hell in a handbasket. Will you let this happen on your watch? For the Lord said,

“But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman’s hand.

“So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.” Ezekiel 33:6–9 ESV

The sword is the judgment of God, and He will slay the unbeliever in your presence in the Day of Judgment. How are you showing them the love of God by withholding words? Preach the gospel! And be Jesus to them in all you say and do. Did Jesus withhold any words? Certainly not! So have integrity at your workplace and remember to be an evangelist as God leads you.

Day Nineteen

Make Disciples

“At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.” Colossians 4:3–4 ESV

God, I fully dedicate myself to making disciples. Use me, Lord, as Your tool. Open my eyes to see those with whom You want me to share Your Gospel. Let me not do this in the flesh but, rather, give me words. Please send me the easy ones—the people who will receive you quickly. Yet give me the strength also to till up the soil of the hardhearted so that their hearts may be made pliable through Your love at work in me and they may receive Your word.

*****

It is written,

“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” Romans 10:14 ESV

Every Christian needs to be an evangelist. How have you been evangelizing lately? Do you have any worldly family or friends? Have you been talking to them about God lately? Do you love them? You know where they will go without Jesus. Don’t be their friend, allowing them to suffer hell. Instead, show the love and mercy of God by making them aware of their need for Jesus. If they resist the Lord, then don’t be friends with them. Pray for words and let God guide your heart. Commit yourself to creating disciples from this day forward. For Jesus said,

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:18–20 NASB

And He furthermore said,

“You are my friends if you do what I command you.” John 15:14 ESV

So the question is this: How have you been fulfilling this command lately? If you love the Lord, you will take it to heart to evangelize. If you love the unbelievers, moreover, you will plead for their souls, knowing they will burn for eternity if you don’t. If you haven’t been sharing, then remember that your life isn’t about this present world. Therefore, don’t live complacently in it. Share the gospel and save souls!

Yet pray everything through, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you. He knows what each person needs to see and hear most. Therefore, if you remain submissive to Him, you will have the most effective witness.

Day Twenty

Having Well-Seasoned Words

“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” Colossians 4:6 ESV

Give me a holy mouth, God. Show me how to bridle my tongue with an upright heart. I choose to turn every conversation back to You, that my words may always be seasoned in the Spirit.

*****

Have your words been reflecting the love of God lately? Or have you been caught up in idle chatter? Try to keep God in your conversations a bit more consistently. For as Jesus warned,

“But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.” Matthew 12:36

If we allow our words to stray from godly talk, they will get sucked down in the gutter before long. As it is also written,

“But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness…” 2 Timothy 2:16 NASB

Test yourself in this. Have you engaged in worldly chatter lately? Jesus says you’ll give an account of this—so keep a pure mouth!

Day Twenty-One

Fulfill Your Ministry

“And say to Archippus, ‘See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.’” Colossians 4:17 ESV

Show me how You want me to minister You to those around me. What is my place in Your body? Please reveal it to me and prepare me for it, that I may live it out daily.

*****

God has a place for you in the body of Christ. Do you know what your place is? Do you know what your gifts are? If not, then pray earnestly that He would prepare you for the ministry He has for you. Pray also for spiritual gifts so that you can experience a deeper and more intimate walk with the Lord.

I knew a man who never really experienced spiritual gifts. Then He prayed one day for the gift of dreams, and within a month he had some of the most encouraging and prophetic dreams I’ve ever heard. If God is willing, He will broaden your gift basket as well. So pray for spiritual gifts and for God to use you as a tool to increase His kingdom.

For it is written,

“Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” 1 Corinthians 14:1 NASB

How have you earnestly been desiring and praying for spiritual gifts? Grow in them, that you may be encouraged by them and encourage others through them.

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About the Author

Adam is a preacher, teacher and #1 internationally bestselling author of over 100 books on the Christian faith. He is a devoted husband and father of three boys. Through his travels, he’s seen the need for a new awakening and a new revival: a revival of the heart. Come join Adam on this journey of redemption and experience God like never before!

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