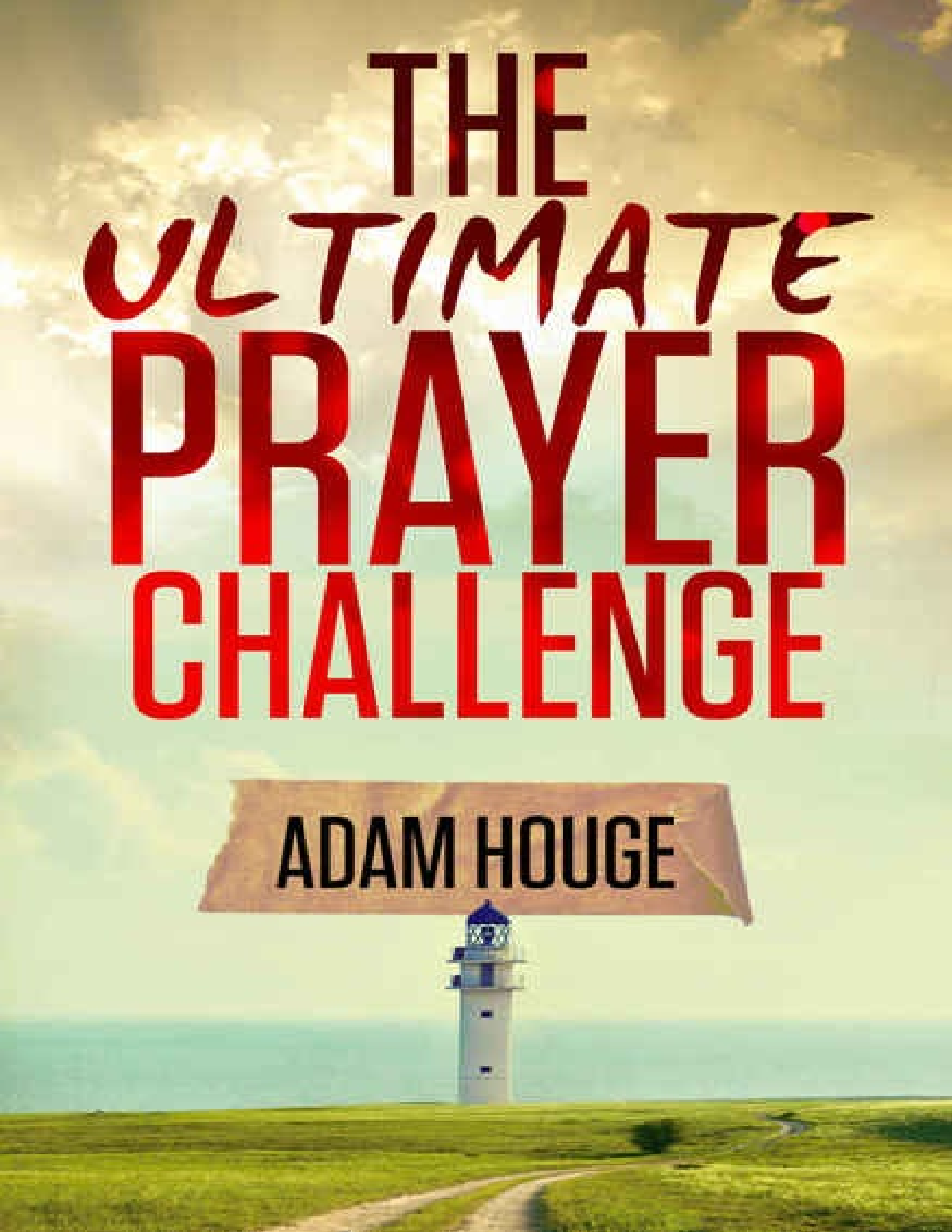
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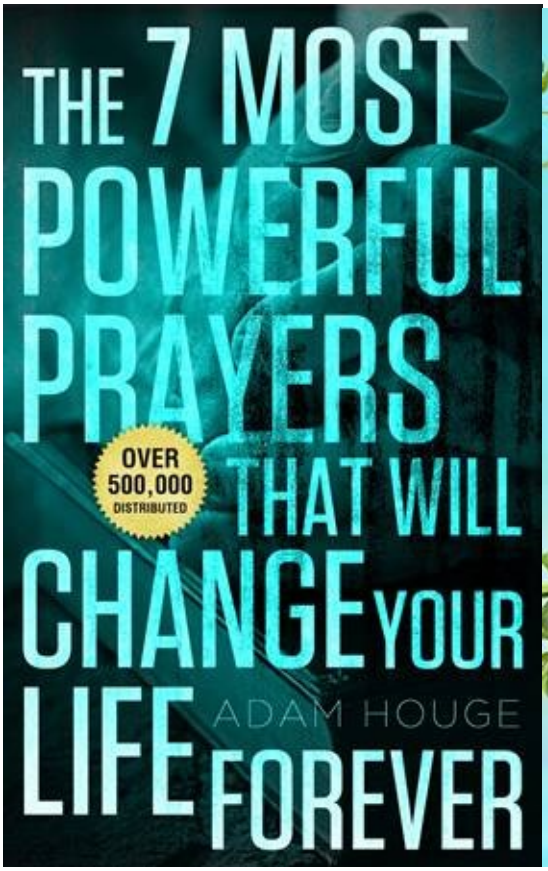

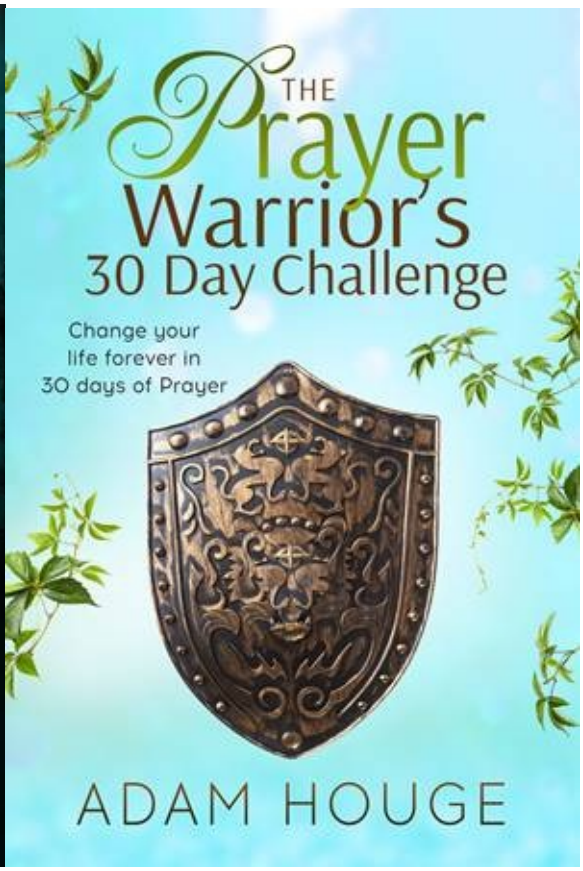

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The 7 Most Powerful Prayers That Will Change Your Life Forever

The Prayer Warrior’s 30 Day Challenge

The 7 Most Powerful Prayers That Will Change Your life Forever

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Introduction

God wants to connect with you. He is an intimate and loving God who seeks you fervently, daily. He is always looking for an opportunity to be a part of your life and a part of your day. He wants to know you perfectly and intimately.

Although God reaches for us, He calls us to reach back to Him. He has given us many spiritual tools for seeking Him. But one of the greatest is prayer. Prayer enters us into the throne room of the living God. By prayer, we can come boldly before His throne and make requests, lay down burdens, and find rest.

But out of all the prayers we could pray some are more significant than others. God doesn't always answer every prayer, but there are some things He will always answer. This book contains seven of the most powerful prayers you could ever pray. Each of these God will certainly answer. They will set you on the right course in life, and teach you how to please God. Each prayer is both a study and a devotion.

When praying the given prayer, pray how you're convicted to pray, and devote yourself to continuing in what you just studied. These prayers may not be for everyone. If you already know these steps, then they have already changed your life, and you can attest to that. Also if you are not willing to pray them in faith, they will do nothing for you. God requires us to have a heart of faith, and answers our prayers according to our faith.

In these pages you will find excerpts from the *7 Powerful Prayers For Spiritual Growth* series, which is a sequel to this book. With the excerpts we will discuss some of the seven most important aspects of having a walk that spiritually prospers in Christ.

Prayer One

The Most Powerful Prayer You'll Ever Pray

It is written,

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3:16-17

When understood in the proper light this scripture has a truly profound impact on our lives. One that will transform our hearts and change our lives forever. But in order to understand it, we need to understand the most powerful and life-changing prayer you could ever pray.

This prayer we are about to discuss is so important that it will always be the first in several of my prayer books. I can't express enough the need for us to pray this. Without seeking and praying for God's saving grace, there is no grace for us at all.

God desires a relationship with us at a personal level. He is a very intimate and relational Person Who loves each and every one of us. He knows everything about us, but treasures us so much that He still wants to know us more.

There is a difference between knowing things about someone, and knowing him personally and intimately. I'm sure you could think of a famous actor and say, "oh I know about him!" But then someone who is a personal friend with that actor would brag, "yeah, but I know him personally!" The person who is a good friend of the actor will know the truth about him: whether the rumors the magazines publish are true, or just made up to get readers. They'll know everything about that person's life, and enjoy every moment with him. Why? Because they're friends!

God works the same way. There are many things said about God, but there is only one way to know the truth about Him –through an intimate relationship with Him. God desires that friendship with you, and wants to enjoy every minute of it. He loves you!

No matter where you've been and no matter what you've done, God loves you. A few of you reading this may have done something so terrible that it would lead

you to think that God can't possibly love you. But God says He still does. Can you believe Him? Can you believe that God is better than you and can love you even when you wouldn't love yourself? Can you believe He will forgive you even when you can't forgive yourself? You already know that a relationship with Him requires faith, and this is one of those times you need faith. Have faith that God is better than you and can love you even when you can't love yourself.

Now God does love us, but He does ***NOT*** love our sin. In order for you to be saved, God had to come down as a man and suffer a horrible and gruesome death. We read in the Bible that He was "Pierced for our transgressions." So because we sinned He needed to be crucified. If He was not mocked, beaten, tortured, whipped, stripped naked, and crucified, neither you nor I could be saved.

There would be no hope for us ***AT ALL***! Due to our sins against God, His wrath would still abide upon us. But God is a loving God and doesn't want to have wrath. He, as a Judge, has perfect justice. So His heart dictated that He needed to have justice on our sins, and our sins require wrath. Because God loved us, He decided to give us a way out of judgment, and yet still have justice on our sin. He chose to have that wrath laid on His own shoulders for our salvation.

You need to understand how much He loves you! Even though we deserve Hell for sinning against Him, He can't stand the thought of sending us there. He's not a vengeful wrathful God, but perfectly loving.

He made you. He formed you in your mother's womb and sewed all your sinews. He connected all your bones and brought you forth in life. He gave you your life to love you, not to condemn you. We read in the Bible that God knows all things. He knows your heart, your frame (remember He made it), everything you'll ever need, and everything you'll ever aspire to be.

He hasn't only known you now that you're alive, He's known you since before time. Before He ever created time, He thought of you. You are not an accident! You are a purposeful well-thought, out creation of God. He's been spending thousands of years thinking of you. How you will look, and act. How you will respond to life, and how life will respond to you. He's been thinking of these things before the world ever spun on its axis. Before He created anything He's been cherishing you in His heart and in His thoughts.

He planned you and has always had a plan for you. God has spent so much time thinking about you and cherishing you that He treats you like His own child in His heart. If your child does something wrong, don't you want to turn them around again? If your child committed a crime deserving of death, wouldn't you try to save them from it? “Maybe if they’re sorry and change their life, they won't have to die,” you might think. What would you do if you were told someone had to die, and were given the choice to die for them? What if that person sinned against you or your children? Would you die for them? Would you give your child’s life for them? But God is so loving that even though we sin against Him, He chose to give His Son’s life to save us.

He doesn't want vengeance. He wants to give you life. Your life was His plan to begin with and it's the reason you were born! But perfect justice must be served. Any sin we commit is deserving of death. It is an act of rebellion against God who gave us life. God knows what we deserve, and must administer perfect justice for our crimes.

Even the smallest sin separates us from Him. He’s an all holy and perfect God who knows no sin. He declared from creation that anyone who sins in any way, no matter how small, is worthy of death.

But He has loved you so much that He couldn't stand the thought of living in eternity without you. Nothing would break His heart more than being without you. So He, like any loving parent, chose to stand in your place. He came down and was born as a man, and named Himself Jesus, which means “deliverer” or “savior.” He called Himself this because He wanted to save you from the penalties of your sin. Perfect justice needed to be met, and someone needed to die for your sin, so He like any loving parent chose to stand in your place. Even though we were wicked against Him, He still chose to die out of love for you.

He chose to die to save you, in the hope that His death would convict you of your sins. He hopes that you might repent and live for Him as you were created to do. Remember what we said, “Maybe if they’re sorry, they won't have to die.” This was His mindset when He sacrificed Himself for you. He wants us to be sorry for our sins, and repent. Repent means to do a complete 180 in life –to turn and go the opposite direction from the way we're going.

And this is His heart toward you. God doesn't want you to go to Hell, He loves you! He cares so much about you! He has shown you by His sacrifice that He

would rather be beaten, whipped, tortured, completely humiliated, stripped naked, and murdered on a cross than spend another moment in eternity without you. You're so precious to Him!

Don't turn Him away, and don't turn Him down. He has loved you, even when no one else has. How could you pass up this kind of love?

No matter what your decision is now, God will always love you. Even if you hate Him, He'll still love you. He's perfect and can't help but be perfectly loving. But He has perfect justice too. He doesn't want to have wrath on us, but if we can't be sorry for the things we've done and change our lives, He can't save us. It is our own decision and not His. He gave us that decision and gave us freewill. He gave us a way out, and if we don't take it, there is no other way to be saved from condemnation. There is no other name by which we ***must*** be saved than Jesus Christ.

If we don't take His gift, then in Judgment, God with tears in His eyes, will guide you down the path you wanted. He will love you and guide you all the way to the gates of Hell. It's never what He wanted, but if you pass Him up today, that's what ***you*** wanted. He wants to give you a way out and chose to die for you so you could have one. Don't pass up this opportunity. There will never be another one. I want to encourage you to take this opportunity for grace, right now, and ask Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior.

Please Pray With Me,

"Lord, I know I've sinned and I'm sorry. I'm sorry for every way I've ever hurt You or anyone else. God, I repent! I want to change my life! I want to be better for You. Please forgive me. God I can't do this myself. I failed at this life You gave me the first time I tried. Please help me God. Please help me to do this right. Please give me your Holy Spirit now that I may be alive in You. Give me Your Spirit, Lord, that I can have strength to please You in all things. Create in me a new heart. I devote my life to You now. Please, Jesus, be my Lord and Savior forever. Amen."

The Lord's Answer,

"Oh Beloved! Oh My precious baby! I'm so happy with you! I'm so proud of you! I've never been happier with you than right now! I am telling you the truth, there are tens of thousands of angels rejoicing before Me because of you! You

have set a fire in their hearts, and they can't help but sing and dance that I have my baby back!

“This is all I ever wanted –for you to be sorry, and give your life to Me. I created you to have a relationship with you. I made heaven and earth for this reason, that I may have a place to meet with you and connect with you: My new friend. How could you not think that I love you? I've done all these things for you, because you mean so much to me! Now let Me mean much to you, and devote yourself wholeheartedly to Me.

“Let Me be the center of your life. Let Me live in you and with you. Let Me guide you and take you by the hand. Let Me choose your path in life, because I know what will lead you to perfection. Let Me take care of you. I will take care of you! You are My baby after all!

“Surrender to Me, and let Me be your Lord in everything. I will take care of you and I will save you from everything that comes your way. I promise! But be good to follow Me now, and listen to My convictions. I will speak into your heart through My Holy Spirit, so incline your ear to Him. Listen to My convictions and do the right thing. Obey His conviction! I know what is best always. So always follow Me and obey Me.

“Grow in Me and grow close to Me. Serve Me and where I am you will be also. You are not serving Me if you don't listen to Me. Be diligent to obey Me, and not your own heart. If you're making Me your Lord, then deny your life and let Me rule over you. I have a use for you. I have a plan for you. Let me take you by the hand to fulfill it. Let Me lead you in your walk with Me. Besides, I know the way to where we’re going, not you!

“I'm going to give you eternal life so you can be with Me, where I am, forever. I will do this so long as you continue in Me, and obey Me as I have commanded you.”

Prayer Two

Abiding In Spirit

It is written,

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” Joh 15:4

Abide in original Greek is the word, “Meno” meaning “to continue.” This word is far more substantial than just “dwelling.” It also means to continue along the course of.

This concept of abiding is even used at an earlier date in Hebrew tradition in a statement given by Job. As we read,

"There are those who rebel against the light; they do not know its ways nor abide in its paths.” Job 24:13

To abide in a path suggests that we walk along the path without straying from it. This concept of “abiding” has long since been laid out in the Old Testament, and is revisited in the New Testament. The scriptures are telling us that to “abide in Christ,” we need to “continue in His presence” and “to continue to walk in Him.”

More specifically we are called to “continue in His daily abiding presence.” Although God is present with us always, we are not always meditating on His presence. We may become idle and distracted with other things. Also, when we’re sinning, we’re not meditating on the presence of God, but on the desire of the flesh.

In John15:4 Jesus begins to lay out the necessity of continuing to reflect on His daily abiding presence. Much like Peter on the water, we need our gaze steadily fixed on Him. When temptation comes our way, we have to look away from Him in order to fall into sin. This situation is similar to when Peter walked on the water. He, having been distracted by the wind, fell in.

This scripture with Peter may also be reflective of any circumstance in which we are required to step out in faith. Such situations may include trials, spiritual growth, and personal growth, among other things. But in this prayer we will discuss more particularly the need for continuing daily in the Holy Spirit.

If we choose to be distracted by the scores of things around us we may find

ourselves either backsliding in our walks, or remaining stationary without ever growing. A plant that doesn't grow cannot bear fruit. We are called by God to always be growing and bearing fruit.

Continuing daily in the Spirit helps us to bear fruit and remain holy. There are three general ways to abide, and usually God calls you to be doing one of the three at all times during the day.

1) Worshipping
2) Praying
3) Reading and Meditating on the Scriptures

When we worship we aim our praise directly at God. He responds to our adoration by announcing His presence. He makes Himself apparent and we "feel" His presence while we worship.

God has always been there, so why do we feel Him when we worship and don't feel Him at other times? Because God makes His presence known along the paths that He abides in. He wants us to be thanking Him and glorifying Him with our worship, and calls us to "abide" in the path of praiseful gratitude. Also we read,

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:24

Therefore when we lift up praises, the Holy Spirit "comes upon us" that we may worship through the Holy Spirit.

When we pray, it puts us directly in the throne room of God, and He listens to our requests and weighs them in His heart. By praying we are automatically "continuing" in His Spirit, for two reasons. The first is that when we pray we pray in the Spirit and the Spirit intercedes for us. As we read,

"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Rom 8:26

And secondly, by constantly praying we feel His presence because of obedience. As it is written,

"pray without ceasing" 1Th 5:17

The third way of abiding is through reading and meditating on the Scriptures. As

we study the word of God, we are building ourselves in the faith. By faith we are saved, and by faith we received the Holy Spirit in the first place. As we read,

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

And again,

“For by grace you have been saved through faith.” Eph 2:8

By listening to the still small voice within you and obeying Him, you will be abiding in the paths of light. Listen carefully for the pull of the Holy Spirit and be careful to obey Him. By so doing you will please the Lord and “abide” continually. If you become distracted with day to day activities, take a step back to sit in the presence of God and be refreshed. If you do not do so then those distractions will keep you from hearing the Holy Spirit and result in sin. Walk by faith as you follow His voice, and persist in His presence. If you sit in His presence, temptation will grow weaker and you will grow stronger.

Abiding is one of the core fundamentals of being a Christian. If we do not seek to abide every moment of the day then we will become worn out and weak. As Christians we operate more like glow sticks than light bulbs. When we sit in the presence of God we become refreshed and strengthened. But when we abstain from His presence, our spiritual strength leaves us and we feel worn and dried out.

This is why we end up refreshed after a Bible study or Sunday service. When we worship on Sunday we feel refreshed and ready to start the week. But by Friday we’re worn out and ready for Sunday again.

By continuously abiding we will have strength and joy all week long. In doing this we are making every day of our life a Sunday.

I would like to encourage you at this time to devote yourself to praying always and to continue in it. Worship constantly and read to grow in the word daily. Make it your aim to “feel” the presence of God with you all day. This will make you more sensitive to His voice and conviction that you may be holy. By this you will more clearly understand His desires for you, and His leading. In so doing you will bear much fruit and please the Lord.

The Prayer,

“Lord I dedicate myself to Your Holy Spirit. I seek Your truthful words laid out in the scriptures. I commit myself to becoming a house of prayer for You. I

devote myself to continual worship, to praying and reading Your word. Lord strengthen me in these things that I may always continue in Your daily abiding presence."

The Lord's Answer,

"Beloved, come close to Me. Sit close by My side. I want to be near to you. Will you be near to Me?

"Take the time to be with Me today. Give Me the attention that I deserve. My eyes are always steadily fixed on you. Fix yours steadily upon Me. I love peering deep into your eyes, I'm captivated by your beauty! You have Me head over heels. I'm so in love with you!

"Show Me that you care for Me. Don't leave Me in anticipation. My heart swells within Me when you wake. "This morning is My chance to be with My Beloved!" Do not ignore Me. Give Me your day! If you don't you'll break My heart!

"How can we grow in our relationship if you aren't spending more time with Me? I'm always pursuing you. All day long I'm reaching for you! I long to take you into My arms, hide away somewhere, and hold you.

"Look for Me in the secret place. I'm waiting for you there to be with you. Look for Me by your side while you work. I'm with you even when your thoughts aren't with Me. Remember My love for you, and let your passion grow for Me. I deserve your continuous attention! Be with Me and I will lift you up. I will edify you, and your heart shall rejoice in the abundance of My love.

"If you do not sit with Me, you cannot experience My daily love. If you do not experience My daily love you will never go forward to produce the fruits of My love. You won't know what My love looks like, so then how can you show My love to anyone? Sit by My side and let Me hold you now. Let Me captivate you with My passion. Then go and captivate others with My love."

Prayer Three

Being Led By The Spirit

It is written,

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” Rom 8:14

God considers His sons to be those who are led by His Spirit. Therefore we must take this to heart and seek to be led by Him daily. We are led by Him when we hear His voice and obey. We must put His will before ours, and live according to it. For those who are led by the Spirit and do His will He considers to be His mothers, sisters, and brothers. As it is written,

“And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.’” Mat 12:49-50

In this Jesus was proclaiming that those who do His will He considers the sons of God. If then you want to be considered a child of God, do His will. For those who are not His children, do not do His will. Although we may make periodic mistakes in our walks, we should make it our aim to continuously live according to the Lord’s will. Consider that the world doesn’t do His will, nor are they saved. Why then should we mirror the world, and not Christ? Did not our Lord Jesus submit Himself to the Father’s will? Seeing that He set the example, how much more should we be subject to the Father of spirits and live?

But those who are led by Him must walk by faith. How can we have faith unless we hear and obey His will through His word? For it is written,

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

Also, we are saved by the faith which we listen for. As it is written,

“by grace you have been saved through faith.” Eph2:8

If we aren’t listening to and obeying God we aren’t walking in salvation. Even as Jesus said,

“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." Mat 7:26-27

The rain and floods are His judgment. If we're too busy living our own lives and not occupied with the things of grace, we will be building our lives on the sand. If we don't take the word of His mercy seriously how can we expect to receive it? The world doesn't take it seriously and are they saved? Jesus isn't fire insurance to justify following our own paths in life. He isn't a "get out of jail free" card. We need to take His grace seriously and walk by faith. For by grace we are saved through faith. Are we saved by not walking in faith? Certainly not! For we receive salvation through faith. If we refuse the word of God we are no different than the world. Now there is a difference between struggling with faith when having a desire to apply it, and skidding by in life without regard for the voice of the Holy Spirit. We didn't get this life right the first time, which is why we need a Savior. How then can we expect to get it right again without His guidance?

We need to hear His word to live by it. We need to sit forward in our relationship with Him, and listen intently to His voice. If we take our relationship seriously then we will incline our ears to Him, to live by faith. Righteousness is faith in motion. It is the work of faith. The faith we have is expressed by the things we do. When we make ourselves pliable in God's hands He is able to work through us more powerfully.

To make ourselves pliable suggests that we will have a willingness to follow God in all things. Even as Jesus said to the disciples, "Follow Me." Following Him is a call to die: To die to everything in this world, that we can live for Him and Him alone.

When we prepare our hearts in this, it makes us pliable and teachable. God speaks to those who are listening. He never wastes a word and nothing is ever spoken in vain. Every word is for eternal life, so the more we hear Him and the more we obey, the better. He is always speaking, but if you aren't hearing the Lord, the question is, "are you really listening?"

He has much to say to you always, in everything you do. When you go to the store, while you're at work, when you eat, when you wake up, and when you go to bed. He's always speaking, but you need to be listening. He speaks to lead you in a daily walk, and if you're not walking with Him you're not being led by Him.

If you aren't led by Him, you aren't following Him. The word "Christian" literally means: "Follower of Christ."

God calls those who follow Him and are led by His Spirit His sons. How can we call ourselves Christian if we don't take His voice seriously and obey it? You must make it your life's priority to be led by God in everything. That way you will be justified in everything you do, because the Lord told you to do it and He has worked through you in it.

Now, learning surrender comes before learning to be led. You need to lay down your life and surrender, that you can be led by the Spirit. Seeing that God is always speaking, I'd like to exhort you to get acquainted with the voice of God. Learn to know what the Holy Spirit is speaking to you at all times, that you may always obey Him. If you struggle with understanding the voice of God, I write about it more in depth in my book How To Hear The Voice Of God And Understand It.

When we read that faith comes by hearing the word, we need to remember two things. The first thing is that the Bible is the written word of God. Indeed, faith must be applied in the gospel message. Secondly, there is the word of God spoken through the Holy Spirit, which is applicable for today. Listening to His convictions justifies you. This is the active word of God which teaches how to rightly apply the written word of God on a moment-by-moment basis.

The written word is the foundation of our faith and is essential for the principles of everyday life. The active word, or the voice of the Spirit, explains how to apply the written word day by day. Without the active word of God spoken to us through the Holy Spirit we cannot be justified. We can't live every moment of life by faith, following His word the way He calls us to if we aren't led by the Spirit. This is why we receive the deposit of the Spirit. We need His voice and conviction to lead us and guide us in the discernment of the Gospel.

Not only do we need Him to understand how to apply the word but we also need the Spirit for empowerment. Empowerment to obey the words He speaks to us. He is the deposit of our salvation, and without Him we aren't saved at all.

As it is written,

"…Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." Rom 8:9

Being led by the Spirit is simple. We learn what His voice sounds like, then obey it. Have you ever thought you heard from God about something and then later it turned out that it wasn't Him? Sometimes our own hearts like to deceive us. Sometimes Satan does. But we need to grow in wisdom and discernment to know the voice of the Lord that we may grow in obedience. In this we must have humility to admit when we were wrong about His voice that we may grow in understanding it.

The first aspect of being led by Him is to learn His voice. If you thought you heard God and it turned out it wasn't, have the humility to admit it to yourself and the Lord, then grow from that experience. Take it to heart to learn what God's voice is and what it isn't.

Now one may ask, why isn't God's direction always so clear? How come His word for my life is as clear as mud at times? The Lord is relational. In these circumstances, He is providing opportunity for you to grow closer to Him by seeking Him through prayer. These situations also test your heart. If it's hard to hear God and easy to hear your own heart, what are you going to do? Which are you going to obey, your heart or God's? Will you wait patiently until God's not-so-clear word is more easily understood, or will you fret and act out of fear?

This is similar to Saul, who fretted. Rather than waiting for Samuel to bless and lead the sacrifice, he took it upon himself to sacrifice; going above and beyond the word of God. This he did through fear when Samuel didn't arrive at the agreed time. As we read,

"And some of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

"Then he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

"So Saul said, 'Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me.' And he offered the burnt offering.

"Now it happened, as soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him. And Samuel said, 'What have you done?'

"Saul said, 'When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at

Michmash, then I said, ‘The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord.’ Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering.’

“And Samuel said to Saul, ‘You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you. For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.

“But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.’” 1Sa 13:7-14

What happened to Saul when he feared? He certainly did not receive the blessing of God. We are called not to fear but to faith. Therefore let’s be eager to walk by it, pleasing the Lord our God in all our conduct.

When trials come upon you do not fear. Satan is tempting you to fret, and discouraging you. Do not give in to the enemy, but stand strong in the faith. God is testing you to see if you will deny yourself, and lay down your desires to seek Him and obey Him. He wants an obedient servant not a sacrificial one.

If we are trying to do something to please Him of our own accord without being led by the Spirit, we are acting like Saul who sought to sacrifice to the Lord. God also commanded Saul to destroy the Amalekites, but he only half-heartedly obeyed. He left the animals alive to sacrifice them to the Lord later. But God counted the animals as an abomination, along with the people, which is why He wanted them killed in their own land. If then they are an abomination why would He respect such an offering on His altar?

Saul thought he could please Him with his own ideas. When we do this in our walks it’s as if we think we know better than God! Saul thought his ideas were better and so made much effort to carry all those animals back for a sacrifice. But just as the Lord spoke through Samuel when Saul worked his own work,

“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.” 1Sa 15:22

And as for the curse Saul received, He went on to say:

“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and

idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king." 1Sa 15:23

God counts it as rebellion when we don't obey His Spirit, and there is a curse for it. He sees no difference between an idolatrous witch and a constantly disobedient believer. We are saved by obedience to the faith found in the words of God, not our own hearts. We must take that to heart lest we be rejected. If we work our own works and think God will be pleased, we'll be broken on the day He rejects us.

Yet there is a difference between the occasional stumbling, and intentionally walking contrary to the Lord. We must obey Him and cannot justify our own thoughts and ideas. God's plan is greater than our own and we ought to submit to it.

If you seek to please God with your own ideas, He will count it as an abomination. Even as it is written,

"But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" Isa 64:6

Notice that we read "our righteousnesses" are filthy rags? These filthy rags, according to the original Hebrew, are the used undergarments of a woman's menstruation. In ancient Hebrew this word was used figuratively at times to describe our sins. So what does this mean? Our own righteousnesses which we devise are filthy sins. They are considered by the Lord like a sinful garment in need of disposal.

True righteousness is found through obedience to the word of God. Therefore we must be diligent to obey God; being found in the righteousness which comes through faith and obedience to His word. Even as Paul said that he wanted to

"…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*; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." Php 3:9-11

Can our works truly justify us? They never could before, why could they now? The only works required of us are not those we devise in self-imposed legalism or religion, but that which comes from the voice of the Holy Spirit. For all the

written words of God were once the voice of the Spirit. At the time the Scriptures were written holy men of God, having been inclined by the Spirit, wrote what He laid in their hearts.

His word is above all things and must be obeyed. For by His word all things were made and life was created. How than can our own works attain to His? How can we expect Him to respect the works of our hands, when it is due to our works that we need a Savior?

We ought to learn to be humble and to commit to those things which make for our salvation. We ought to obey His word and follow His Spirit. Can your works truly attain to His?

Look at creation for a moment and consider His greatness. Do you know how the sun works? For lack of better words, it's a massive eternally burning hydrogen bomb. It's so hot that the heat can be felt for millions and millions of miles. Just think of a summer day!

For that matter the sun is 93 million miles from the earth: just imagine all the frequent flyer miles you could get from that! The distance to the sun is so far it takes 8 minutes for light to travel from the sun to earth. And that's a small skip compared to the distance to the nearest star.

The moon is about ¼ the size of the earth. Its gravity is so powerful that it can change the depth of the ocean by almost 38 feet in some places. If one cubic foot of water weighs 62lbs, how much force does it take to change the depth of an entire shore line by 38 feet? The power it has is incredible!

Now imagine the size of the solar system. The edge of the solar system is proven to be 17.6 billion miles away from the sun (the edge is called the heliopause). That makes the width of the solar system 35.2 billion miles wide. That means that if you travel at the speed of light it would take you two days and four hours to cross it. And the size of the universe is so massive that it can't even be measured. Yet God holds all of these things in the palm of His hand. As it is written,

"Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured heaven with a span and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?" Isa 40:12

Look also at the earth. All the creatures that cover the face of the earth are innumerable. God gave Adam a commission to name the animals of the earth.

Yet here we are nearly five and a half thousand years after creation and we are still finding new creatures every year to name.

And think of it, how does life exist? How does it work? Why do we live and breathe and have motion and thoughts? With all the knowledge in this world, still no one knows the exact science of that.

Look at babies. How exactly do the bones grow in the mother's womb? Scientists say today that it has to do with stem cells, but they still don't have a clue how it all works together for life; beginning with the egg and finishing with a living breathing being. How do the enzymes activate? Why do they? Where does the life come from? Who initiated the need for birth? What is the meaning and purpose of life? God knows all these things. As it is written,

"As you do not know what is the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who makes everything." Ecc 11:5

That wind is the Holy Spirit and His leading. Even as Jesus said:

"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." John 3:8

The blowing wind is the leading of the Spirit. The world neither understands the word of the Spirit (sound) because the word is spiritually discerned, nor the way of the Spirit (where He leads us and to where we go). So that leaves us with a final thought. As we read in Proverbs,

"A man's steps are of the Lord; how then can a man understand his own way?" Pro 20:24

Our steps need to be of the Lord, and it is evident that we will not understand our own way. For the Lord's way is above our own. As we also read,

"'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the LORD.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give

seed to the sower And bread to the eater,

“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.’” Isa 55:8-11

Therefore, Beloved, be led by His word and not your own heart. Listen carefully to the Spirit and follow Him. God understands all things and we need to lean on Him in everything that we may know the way we should walk. As we read in Proverbs,

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.” Pro 3:5-6

If we learn to wait for His voice we can walk by faith. If we walk by faith He will direct our paths. In the end it all boils down to being led by Him on a day to day basis.

As we said before, the first aspect of learning to be led is learning His voice. The second is waiting to hear it and the third is submitting to it no matter the cost it brings on your life. And why? Because your love for God compels you to do so!

There is no other way to please Him, and we could never understand our own way. This is why we addressed in the previous prayer the need for surrender. By being pliable we can be led. Then by being led we can be justified, because it is God who works in us and through us both to will and to do. As we read,

“For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” Php 2:13

The Prayer,

“Lord show me Your way, and light my path. Teach me to walk with You, Your way. I want to follow after You to please You. I want to draw near to You. Teach me how to be led, and give me the strength to obey. I know that without Your leading I cannot even be saved. I fear You, and I love You, so please lead me by the Spirit, I submit to Your guiding hand.”

The Lord’s Answer,

“Beloved, I must lead you. I have said to you that you do not know the way we are going. Stop trying to take the lead, and let Me lead you. Wait on Me and wait for My word. I will speak in My own due and proper time. If you obey Me I will

justify you. I seek a servant who obeys, not one who walks off while I'm talking and does his own thing.

"I do love you, and I want to justify you. Your works cannot attain to Mine, unless you let Me work through you. Only then can you see My power moving and working daily in your life. Only then can you be blessed by Me.

"What do you have to offer Me that isn't already Mine? Stop trying to bless Me. You can't bless Me! The greater blesses the lessor. Let Me bless you. Only be submissive and let Me lead you daily."

Prayer Four

Seeking Truth

The greatest stumbling point of the church is in the department of doctrine. No one can agree on the same thing. There are thousands of versions of truth but we claim there is only one way to be saved. What an oxymoron!

If we seek God with a pure heart we should learn to know Him for Who He is. We need to stop interpreting scripture, and forming our own opinions. God's opinion is all the matters.

When seeking an answer in regard to a doctrinal issue, learn to hear God's voice in the word. Be sober-minded, and listen carefully to the Spirit. Sometimes we lean toward a basic theology or opinion of interpretation. We ought not to do this but rather with an unbiased mind we ought to look at the scriptures in its entirety.

There are different arguments on various doctrines, such as falling away. One camp says you can never fall away, God holds you in His hand and works are evidence of salvation. Others argue that although God holds you in His hand, you have free will and can crawl out of His hand. Both sides use scripture. But if the word of God is infallible, then what is truth? Does it matter what you believe? If faith saves you then yes! If your faith is in truth you will be saved, but if it is not in the doctrine of Christ you will not be saved. And so we read about those who preach a different gospel like this,

"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." Gal 1:8

If anyone preaches any other Gospel than the one true Gospel he is accursed. What kind of cursing is this?

We read in Thayer Definitions that the original Greek word for accursed is:

G331

ἀνάθεμα

anathema

Thayer Definition:

1) a thing set up or laid by in order to be kept

1a) specifically, an offering resulting from a vow, which after being consecrated to a god was hung upon the walls or columns of the temple, or put in some other conspicuous place

2) a thing devoted to God without hope of being redeemed, and if an animal, to be slain; therefore a person or thing doomed to destruction

2a) a curse

2b) a man accursed, devoted to the direst of woes

Part of Speech: noun neuter

A Related Word by Thayer's/Strong's Number: from G394

Citing in TDNT: 1:354, 57

A man who is devoted to the direst of woes! What is the direst of woes but the Eternal Fire? In fact some translations of the Bible, translate it as saying, "…let him be eternally condemned."

As the Bible says, if anyone preaches any other Gospel than the one true Gospel, he is condemned to eternal death. We read that a novice in the faith must not become a bishop lest he fall into condemnation. As it is written,

"Not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil." 1Ti 3:6

Why would this be? Because he doesn't know the doctrine, yet having pride he claims his words are truth and so sways the faith of many. God is truth and to preach anything other than His one truth is to preach Satan, seeing that Satan is the father of all lies. But that people believe the doctrines of demons is evident. As we read,

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" 1Ti 4:1

Indeed any form of false doctrine is Satan's doctrine. Can we be saved living out Satan's doctrine? We know that God has grace but if we refuse to seek the truth then we aren't serious about our relationship with Jesus. When we seek the truth we seek Jesus. For Jesus is the truth! As we read,

"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

No one comes to the Father except through the truth, and that truth is found in Jesus Christ. We know that faith saves us, but what does faith comes from, the word of Satan or the word of God?

How then can we be saved if we don't live out the Gospel? We aren't living it out if we're practicing things contrary to truth. We can't be saved unless we put our faith in the exact words of Jesus Christ. But that we aren't saved unless we continue in truth is evident. For it is written,

"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." Jas 5:19-20

The word of God cannot be argued with. It is God spoken and immaculate. As we just read, those who wander from the truth abide in death and are committing a multitude of sins. Jesus is the truth and we must abide in Him. As we discussed in a previous habit,

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned." John 15:4-6

If we do not abide in Jesus, or that is to say 'continue,' we are cast out as a branch and thrown into the fire. What fire do you suppose that is? Obviously the Eternal Fire. Similarly we must continue in the truth. Jesus is the truth and to continue in it is also to continue in Him.

God commands us to be seekers of the truth. Jesus is the truth, and to seek Him is to seek the truth. We need to take these things to heart. This cannot be taken

lightly. We must take it with the utmost fear for God and become partakers of the truth. But can we find all truth in this life or is a search for the truth a lifelong process? What do we read?

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

The Holy Spirit guides us into *all* truth. Not half-truths, not partial truths, but *all* truth. If then we are led by the Spirit then we will find the truth and come to know it perfectly. God cannot lie. Therefore when He speaks to us through the Holy Spirit, He is leading us in the truth.

Knowing this we must learn to be led by the Spirit in all things. If we learn to be led by Him and to grow in discernment of His voice then we shall find the truth in all things. Also when we read the scriptures the Holy Spirit will read them to us and speak to us through them if we listen for His voice.

It is always good to pray before you read the word and to ask the Lord to read it to you. Ask Him to guide you to where He wants you to read, and ask Him to bring the words to life. Pray that He will breathe life into the pages, and you will begin to hear God like never before. The pages will jump out at you with a newness of life.

When the pages seem to come alive, this is the Holy Spirit talking. Get acquainted with His voice, and learn what it sounds like. Grow in discernment of His voice and God will grow you in the truth.

If you have an issue understanding a doctrine then sit down and seek the Lord in the word. Have a Bible study with Jesus and He will lead you to truth. As you read the word, pray and ask the Lord to guide you through the pages. Pray that He would reveal the truth to you. You know what His voice sounds like, so don’t stop seeking Him until He gives you an answer. It could take a daily study for months to get the answer you’re looking for, but if that’s the case then at least you’re spending that time in the Lord’s presence and growing in Him.

Beloved, it’s a beautiful thing to spend your whole day seeking Him. It wakes you up in the Spirit and gives you joy daily. If you’re going through a hard time, seek Him! His presence will bring you joy and strengthen you in the hardest of times!

I’ve been through so many trials, and I’ve learned that the greatest way to get through them is with a smile on your face. And how can you get that smile? By being with Jesus all day. Nothing could make you happier than to spend your day with Him!

I’ve had many people say to me, “Adam, if I were going through what you were going through I couldn’t handle it. I probably would want to take my life! But you just bounce right back from everything. How do you do it?”

Do you see how that can encourage a brother or a sister? Do you see how that gives an awesome witnessing opportunity for an unbeliever? The joy of the Lord in you makes them see the difference between them and God. This difference makes them see their need for Him. When they see the joy and the goodness of Christ in you they are drawn to Him. There is no greater way to lead them to salvation than through being the image of both His love and His joy.

When things get hard, turn to the Lord. And when you’re hurting, run to Jesus. He will hold you in His arms and comfort you until He makes everything better.

When my second son was a two-year-old he was a very top heavy child. His cute oversized toddler head found its way into every hard thing. Then to make matters worse for him, his massive feet would get tangled in just about everything. So needless to say, in his awkwardness he was always getting bumps and bruises.

Many were the times that he tripped and hit his poor little head, then with tears in his eyes he turned and ran to me. I couldn’t help but to stretch out my hands and say, “Oh come here my baby, daddy will make it all better!” And I’d hug him, kiss him, snuggle him, and make it all better.

I’m sure that plenty of you parents can relate to this. This is how the Lord looks at us. But if we don’t run to Him when we’re hurting, it breaks His heart. When we’re comforted by Him it grows our relationship with Him. We should seek Him not only in our pleasures but in our pains as well.

How would that make you feel, especially you mothers, if your baby would rather run and cry in a dark corner, than come to mommy for comfort and kisses? Wouldn’t your heart just sink?

How do you think that makes the Lord feel when you don’t release the issues of

your heart to Him? He loves you and wants to cherish you! So let Him!

I would like to encourage you to spend every moment of your days with the Lord, and when things are hard, spend even more time with Him. He will be your strength to overcome every trial that comes your way.

We know that His company will create good morals in us. The more time we spend sitting in His presence the more we will become like Him. Similar to how we read,

“Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’” 1Co 15:33

How much more will the company of God create good habits which lead to life? The more we listen to Him the clearer His voice will become. His voice will be easier to discern and His commands easier to obey. We are saved through faith in His word. So the easier it is to understand Him the better.

We are in the middle of a war with Satan and his angels. Seeing that you are a soldier of God, wouldn’t you like to know what God commands you? If we are in the middle of an intense gun fight, would you ignore the Commander’s shouts, and do your own thing? Or would you listen to the One who knows what He’s doing and how to save your life? While bullets are flying, it would be a bad time to form your own interpretation of His command. You will lose your life.

Even so, this is what is happening to the church ***NOW***. We’re in the middle of an intense battle with Satan until we go home to the Lord. We ***MUST*** ***NOT*** interpret our Lord and General’s commands. He is the only one who has what it takes to defeat this host of enemies.

But everyone still forms their own opinion! Bullets are flying and people are jumping up to walk around. We need to take our own walks more seriously than this. We ***MUST*** take our relationship more seriously than this.

We must not interpret the Scriptures, but allow the Holy Spirit to explain them to us. We must be more fervent for the truth! We must be more fervent for the Lord!

Look at King Josiah. He was very righteous and poured his whole heart out to obey the Lord and cleanse the land of false doctrine. He had tremendous zeal and a heart of fire. Even his name means, “The fire of the Lord.” We need to

have hearts more like his!

Although he always had a heart for the Lord when did he become most zealous for Him? When the word of God entered his heart. As we read,

“Then Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, ‘Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.’ And Shaphan read it before the king. Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes.

“Then the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Michaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, ‘Go, inquire of the Lord for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.’” 2Ki 22:10-13

Up until this time people were not living by the word of God in truth. They sought to please the Lord of their own works. The priests of the temple should have known all about the book! But what did the scriptures say? “We found a book,” which suggests that it was previously lost and unaccounted for. Thus people worshipped God in the manner they felt was best. But what do we read in regard to this?

“…For great is the wrath of the Lord that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.” 2Ki 22:13

The word of God must enter our heart. We must live it out in truth. We must honor the Lord according to His word. After reading the word of God, Josiah was so zealous and convicted that he stood up and forced the nation to make an oath to God. As we read,

“Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. And he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take a stand. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.” 2Ch 34:31-32

When we gave our lives to Christ we made an oath with Him to follow Him and obey His commandments and testimonies. How are we fulfilling this covenant by having so many different doctrines? What is truth anymore? It seems that it is merely an opinion, and is no longer our singular and solid foundation. We need truth and we need it now! Never has there been a more dire need for it.

False doctrine is everywhere. It's as plentiful as water, and every drop is poisoned. In every church everywhere one person or another is sharing this poison water with others and bringing people to a dance of death. False doctrine isn't treated the way it should be: as a nasty poison that must be eradicated.

Those of you who are pastors should make your church take a stand for the Lord, and make an agreement before Him to search after truth and true doctrine with all their hearts, souls, minds, and strength. To seek the truth is to seek Jesus and we are commanded to love Him with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength.

If we obey the commandment to love the Lord our God, seeing that Jesus is the truth, we will seek truth with all our heart. We must make it our priority and passion to live according to it, and to walk in it daily. In this He will be well pleased in us. As it is written,

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

It is sin to live according to your opinions about Christ. There is only one doctrine, and we are called to seek it and live according to it. But many act as if it's okay to think what you want to and have whatever opinion you want. Our opinions aren't truth, God's word is.

But it's part of the 'new age.' "You do your thing and I'll do mine, I'll accept you the way you are and you accept me the way I am."

That's not what Christ calls us to. He calls us to be unified in the same doctrine. Even as it is written,

"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." 1Co 1:10

We are called to speak the same thing, but no one is and nobody cares. How

horrible is that!? This prayer is a wakeup call. A wakeup to seek pure and perfect doctrine in Jesus Christ. It can be found! The Lord tells us that the Holy Spirit leads us into ALL truth.

But we have contentions among the churches. One church has one set of core beliefs, and the other has a different set of beliefs. Then some of the church goers act as if their own congregation is the best place to be, and if you're from a different church then you're not as much of a Christian as they.

These are the contentions the scriptures are talking about. But God calls us to unity, and Satan is the author of division. Contention is formed by a difference of opinion. What is happening today is the same thing that was happening in the church of Corinth. As the scripture goes on to say,

"For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. 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.'" 1Co 1:11-12

We are all doing this! "I am of this church" or "I am of that church." We teach with words like, "As so and so who wrote a book once said." Rather than saying, "as it is written in the word of God." Our unity is found in Jesus Christ, not authors or preachers or pastors. Preachers, pastors, and teachers need to be pointing everyone to Jesus, by Whom they can unify the churches. We as teachers need to be living arrows, always pointing the church back to God. All teachings need to be brought back to the word *always*. By His word we are saved and by His word we are unified.

Also we ought to be of the same body, but in different buildings. So what if your church is called "Willow" and their church is "Calvary?" We must act as brothers and family. Too many people act as if their church is the best. What we should be doing is going where God calls us, and treat each other like family. We are a family, a real family, but we're horribly divided.

So God called you to "Willow" and God called them to "Calvary." Does this then make anyone superior than the other? Is one brother better than the other? What did the Lord say to the Apostles when they argued who would be the greatest in heaven? He told them to give glory to God because there is no one greater than the Father. Why then are we stuck on the premise of comparing ourselves and our churches to one another? But as it is written,

“For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” 2Co 10:12

So are you better than the other for going to a certain church? No, but both of you are obedient to God in where you are led and fed. Treat each other with dignity, and save each other from trials. Act as a loving body, although you come from different buildings. Who cares where they go, just love them as God commanded you. Then you will fulfill the commandments. Thus you will be like Josiah in making your oath.

Josiah more or less was telling God, “I don’t know if anyone else will obey you and be fervent for you.” Then as he raised his hand to God he cried out, “But at least I know there is this one who will be!”

Let us go and do likewise. If no one else will do rightly and seek truth at least you will. Be fervent to love God and each other, and be fervent to know His doctrine. It will save you and all those who hear you. As 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.” 1Ti 4:16

But because we squabble amongst ourselves as to what the truth is and to what the best church is, we are not acting spiritual but fleshly. As the scripture went on to say in Corinthians,

“For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?” 1Co 3:3-5

God gave each teacher and each church to meet the believer where they’re at. These are God’s chosen instruments and God’s chosen tools. But nevertheless God is still the Master Craftsman. Let Him shape your heart. Let Him form His mind in you. Let Him lead you to truth.

Besides if you’re the one doing the loving, they will see God in you and more likely be drawn to your church anyway. Yes, one church may have a more solid teaching than the other, due to the pastor’s decisions, but having superior

wisdom doesn't make us superior people. We ***should*** be where there is superior wisdom, but without love wisdom means nothing. We are called to humble ourselves and wash each other's feet with the water of the word. Jesus came to serve not to be served. If we love according to truth and lead others to it, they will naturally be drawn to the right church. If you want more people to come to your church, then focus on filling the people and not the pews. Afterward, the people will come naturally, and God will bless it.

At this time I would like to call you to devote yourself to God in seeking pure doctrine. There is only one truth, and it is the only way to salvation. We need to be fervent for it, and fervent to seek it. We need to teach our churches to be fervent for it. We must teach these things to our children, and everyone we disciple.

We must seek perfect and complete truth in Jesus Christ, no matter the cost. This will unify us all, near and abroad. We will come to unity over doctrine just by listening to the Holy Spirit. He leads and guides us all the same way. By seeking Him for truth we will find unity. We will be of the same mind and the same judgment. Take this time to devote yourself to seeking pure and perfect doctrine for the rest of your life.

The Prayer,

"God, I commit myself to You to find Your truth in everything. Lord I fear You and know that those who don't live according Your gospel can't be saved. I love Your truth. I commit my life to seeking Your pure and perfect doctrine. I also commit my life to teach others to do the same."

The Lord's Answer,

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth! You have no idea how much you delighted Me with that prayer! I love you, and it ***is*** My will for you to have truth. It is My ***immediate*** will and I will lead you to it, and you shall know it! Only seek it with all your heart and have faith in Me that I can deliver it to you perfectly through My Holy Spirit."

Prayer Five

Walking In Love

When we grow in love we also learn to grow in kindness. Love and kindness go hand in hand. To show kindness requires us to see need, and fulfill it. It requires us to be hospitable. Hospitality and kindness give a person a reputation. It's not often that we see someone fully grown in having a servant's heart.

I had a friend many years ago who invited me to his father's house, which was on the other side of the state. We were going to spend the night, and just as we were arriving this man said to me, "I can't wait for you to meet my father's wife; she's so virtuous!" Now this was not his mother but His father was remarried to another woman. I asked him what he meant by virtuous, and he said, "Just wait until you meet her!" That's all he said and he wouldn't tell me an ounce more.

When I arrived at their house, within seconds after meeting her and shaking her hand she immediately helped me out of my coat and pulled up a chair for me. She offered me something to drink, and made sure I was fed. The next morning she woke up very early to set breakfast. We were in a hurry so she lined up boxes of cereal, and a gallon of milk. She had spoons and bowls all washed, ready and waiting for us. As we left for church she helped me with my coat and everyone else's as we left.

Now this may sound like anyone being a good hostess of a guest but she wasn't acting like a hostess. This wasn't an act at all. This was her normal practice every day for everyone she encountered. She never complained about it, but grew to have joy in it. She served everyone happily, especially her husband. She always took her walk with Christ seriously and served her husband constantly. This was such an encouragement to him that he also became a serving giving person.

When I made my way to the living room, he sat me down in his best chair, and said, "Here, put your feet up!" He pulled his lever and kicked me back in style. Then he looked down at my feet and noticed a hole in my sock. So He ran up the stairs without a word. To my dismay this man came waltzing down to me armed with a pair of expensive and very comfortable socks.

"Oh you don't have to do that!" I said.

"Nonsense," he replied as he knelt down and peeled off my socks.

“These are comfortable and you should wear them!”

And he put his own socks on me.

Again, you could think that these people were just trying to be good hosts, but according to their son’s testimony it wasn’t the case. They were always caring, kind, and giving. Their actions greatly encouraged my friend. He always *LOVED* visiting his dad. He felt closer to His father through the kindness he saw. It deeply encouraged him and made him want to do the same in his life. His father was able to use kindness to draw his son close to him. Then through his closeness he was able to firmly admonish his son according to his need. And in all of this his son deeply respected him.

Kindness is something we should always be growing in. A little bit of kindness can go a long way. It refreshes a weary soul, and encourages a person to go and do likewise. Kindness sparks a fire in a person’s heart. It inspires them to do good and not evil. By showing kindness we can turn others to righteousness. This is exactly what Jesus did. As we hear in the song “kindness” performed by Chris Tomlin: “It’s your kindness Lord that leads us to repentance, your favor Lord is our desire.” (This is coming from Romans 2:4)

It’s the goodness and kindness of Jesus Christ that leads us to salvation. This is because His kindness convicts us. Without kindness we could never be saved. But even as we said before, hospitality and kindness give a person a reputation.

At the time of this writing, I have met thousands of people over the past seven years since that happened. But I only met this couple once and I still remember their kindness after spending only one day with them. I can’t even remember their names, but I remember their kindness.

I was very weary at the time, and they refreshed and encouraged me. So much so, that I am still encouraged by them seven years later.

Take the time to grow in loving kindness. Love covers a multitude of sins and kindness leads us to repentance. It can save the unbeliever, and encourage the believer.

The Prayer,

“Lord I commit myself to having a servant’s heart. Make my heart like Yours. Please open my eyes to see those in need around me, and give me what is necessary to deliver them. Work in me and through me that You may be

glorified. I surrender to Your guiding hand in my life, and devote myself to this forever. Teach me how to love like You. I want to honor You in all things."

The Lord's Answer,

"Love is the substance of who I AM. Without love you can never know Me. I AM love, and because I have loved you, you are saved. Nothing could please Me more than for you to love your brethren. So take care of them and nurture them. Not just the ones you know, but love everyone and tend to their needs.

"Love your enemies. Didn't you see Me pray for My enemies when I was crucified by them? Remember that I was crucified for you while you were yet My enemy. While you still walked in sin I loved you! I loved you but rebuked you that you could repent and become My child. Go and do likewise, and you will find that I am with you. My heart and My hand are yours."

Prayer Six

Seasoning Our Words With Salt

"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one." Col 4:6

Jesus tells us,

"…For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the Day of Judgment." Mat 12:34-36

If we seek to have a pure heart, then we also need to have pure words. Words that heal, words that bring peace and truth. Words that are devoted to goodness.

When we speak negatively it can discourage, break down, and destroy. But when we choose words that heal, they can edify build up and strengthen.

Be a person dedicated to healing words. Look for those who have downcast souls and life them up in the love of God. Remember that Jesus is a healer and not a destroyer. Sometimes our words can break down and already broken person. There are times that we may speak hurtful words without even realizing it. But if we are loving the other person as we should then we will be attentive to their state of heart and choose words that heal.

Sometimes healing words need to be firmly spoken in love. One such example would be when a brother or sister is caught in a pattern of sin. Some people don't lovingly rebuke as they should. "Well, I don't want to be one who judges," some may say. But we aren't judging these situation, merely discerning. Also, we aren't condemning, but turning to the Lord for spiritual healing.

Loving discernment would be one that points a brother or sister to the Lord. If they aren't honoring the Lord, nothing could be more loving than to come behind them and encourage them to do rightly. Yet in a few cases some people may need a truly firm rebuke.

For those few who fall wildly in love with their sin, having known better, they need firmer admonishment. Also for anyone who is insubordinate to the Lord, and refusing to do rightly after being rebuked, they may need some firmness. As

we read,

“For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” This testimony is true. *Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith*” Titus 1:10-13

Such a person knows the truth, but seeks to benefit only their flesh. They remain insubordinate to the Holy Spirit and thus must be rebuked sharply, yet in all wisdom and with all love. God will give you discernment as to how you should approach anyone’s situation. Remain attentive to the Holy Spirit, and always be looking for opportunities for words that heal, and draw others near to Christ.

Sometimes struggling with kind or healing words toward others isn’t the only issue. There are times that in brokenness and self-defeat we speak poorly of ourselves. When we allow our souls to be “down cast” (as David put it) we create more harm than good.

For example, when we sin we start to beat ourselves up over our failures. God doesn’t call us to negative self-speech, but to glorify Him. In repentance God has grace. When we make the decision to do rightly, it’s time to lift up our heads and glorify the Lord. When we look down at ourselves, we aren’t looking up at the goodness of God.

A discouraged heart can lead to a downcast soul. A downcast soul can lead to self-condemnation and negative self-speech. If we want our words to be seasoned with salt then we need to turn our tears of defeat into songs of praise because of God’s triumph. He has overcome our sin, and overwhelmed us in forgiveness and love.

When we can’t get it right, it’s because we’ve been approaching victory incorrectly –whether in sin or in other issues of life. We have to remember that it’s God who works in us for victory. When we submit to our flesh, or work things out in our own strength, we fail. But when we lean on Christ we find the strength to stand. By remembering these things, we find good reason to lift up our heads in praise.

If we are giving glory to the Lord in everything we say, our speech will reflect it. Our tongues should always be seasoned with salt. Sometimes it’s good to ask ourselves before we talk, “Is this going to glorify the Lord, and turn this person

to Jesus?” If not then we shouldn’t be saying it.

Negative speech toward others can be damaging. Hurtful speech is easy to categorize as harmful. But sometimes we overlook the importance of abstaining from coarse joking, and idle speech.

Even 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." Mat 12:36-37

Knowing then that we can be condemned for our speech this should lead us to fear. But anyone who pursues a righteous walk will also pursue holy speech which edifies not only themselves but others. If we love one another we will want to edify one another.

The hardest time to say something that turns another back to the Lord is during an argument. We get heated and easily tempted to say something we don’t mean. Perhaps in our anger for the moment we mean what we say. But when we start thinking more rationally, we realize that’s not our heart at all. So we end up regretting our words.

In this example we see that the words start with the heart. We need to learn to back down and cool off a minute. If we aren’t meditating on the Lord, in our anger we will let something slip. It’s good to remember to cool off and spend some time with God. Think about the situation, then go back and speak when your heart is sober.

In the drunkenness of anger we speak like fools. By learning to temper our hearts and curb our anger, proper convicting words will come out instead. In this we can lead one another to Christ, and thus we can find peace and unity through Him.

But we also need to remember to recognize when others are struggling. If they need to sit back, cool off, and be with God, then we need to stop pressing our side of the argument. Let them return to a proper and sober mind in Christ. If you push them, they’ll explode. It’s like squeezing a balloon filled with rotten milk to the point of bursting. On whom will the milk spill? If then you want the pure milk of God from their mouth, encourage them to spend some time with God, and agree together that you both need to cool off. Agree to come back immediately afterward and work out the issue.

We need to temper our hearts to be holy and loving in everything. Satan loves to seize the moments of our wrath and bring in further division. Lost friendships and broken relationships are not worth the few costly words we speak. If we change our hearts and lips, those relationships would be built up rather than broken down.

Learning to back down and be meek is vital. If you or the other person are too angry or disagreeable then you need to have a few moments with the Lord. Blow off some steam to God, pray with an upright heart. Ask the Lord Who sees everything, “Am I wrong in anything?” Then have an open heart to hear from Him. Time and time again, there was always a little something God pointed out that I didn’t realize I was doing. Then I would go and immediately apologize.

Seeking unity needs to be the priority when arguing, not expressing opinions. If we have a heart to seek unity we will find it. Even Jesus said, “Seek and you shall find.”

Sometimes it’s good to say sorry right away. Even if you feel only a little wrong, say sorry right away. It will break the tension and bring everyone back to a sober mind. Then after you think about it, you may realize that you were more than a little wrong. By saying sorry you avoided a bad fight turning into a worse one.

Don’t worry about what the other person is doing, always be the first to bring unity. Let the responsibility begin with us as we seek to grow in the Lord and please Him. If our hearts are right before God, our words will be right.

Ultimately, whether in arguments or in unholy speech, seeking mouths of grace must be our priority. By words we can build up and draw near to Christ, and by words we can break down and turn one away from the Lord. Like an industrial wrecking ball through a house, our words can ruin a home.

Take this time to devote yourself to wholesome speech. Words that turn others to Jesus. Seek sound godly speech which cannot be condemned. As it is written,

“In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.” Tit 2:7-8

Ultimately Jesus said that our words come from our heart. If we have sound speech our heart will be well trained as well. Even as we read,

“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” Luk 6:45

And also,

“For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.” Jas 3:2

Knowing this we should make our aim to have holy mouths with everything we say. Let’s dedicate ourselves to building one another up. Let’s have holy words that edify and heal. By changing our words it will change our hearts. By changing our hearts and the way we act in and respond to life it will change our lives forever.

The Prayer,

“Lord I dedicate myself from this time forward to having words that edify and heal. I know Your judgment and fear You. Bring holiness to my mouth. Give me words that heal, and bring peace. Be my strength in my weaknesses as I commit myself to You.”

The Lord’s Answer,

“Beloved, every word of Mine is Holy. My words always lead you back to Me. They bring salvation and life. Therefore My words never return to Me void.

“Let not your words return to you void. Let them produce life in others, as I have produced life in you. I will judge you according to your words, and if you brought healing and life, how can I not bless you?

“Grow in Me, and turn others to Me with the things that come from your mouth. Listen to My conviction. My Spirit will be with you and teach you the things you should say and do.”

Prayer Seven

Continual Devotion

Our day to day activities can be overwhelming. They can distract us from the Lord and tear us down. It is vital for us to give our days to Him. Every morning, every day and every evening needs to be the Lord's. When our days wear us down, God will breathe new life in us.

But spending the day with Him doesn't negate the need for a genuine time of devotion. We need to remember to take the time to set aside all distractions and find God in the secret place. The secret place is where we find our greatest renewal and growth. God communicates His heart to us, and refreshes us in His Spirit. As we sit on Daddy's lap, He reads His word to us, and explains its meaning to us. If you've been worn out by the stresses of life, remember to spend time in devotion to the Lord every day.

Be rejuvenated by His Spirit and strengthened by His presence. If you've been occupied with the busy-ness of life, take this time to rededicate yourself to daily devotion. Remember to be strengthened by Him and be edified by His presence.

The Prayer,

"Lord strengthen me through my day. Give me strength to sit daily in Your presence. From this point forward I will continue in a daily devotion, spending time with You alone, every day."

The Lord's Answer,

"I can't wait! Will you spend a little time with Me tonight? I want to be with you! You're so precious to Me!

"Come away from the world around you. Even if for a little bit, and spend some time with Me. It would mean so much to Me, and it will strengthen you.

"I will refresh and rejuvenate you. I will bless you in the abundance of My peace. Beloved, come and find rest in My arms, tonight."

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Prepare for War!

There is a spiritual war going on, and we are called to enter the battle. Without total surrender to Christ, there is no way for victory. Therefore, we must cast aside our cares for this life and take up our crosses. Even as it is written,

“No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.” 2 Timothy 2:4

So prepare yourself for war! If you take the next thirty days seriously, it will radically change your life. But expect to be challenged. You have a real enemy who will stop at nothing to stop you.

You have no power in yourself to stop him. But your God has all the power to do all things, and because He loves you, He will grant you victory. So the only way to defeat the innumerable forces of invisible enemies is through persistent faith in Jesus. As it is written,

“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

So keep the faith, march on, and enter God’s war for love!

Prepare Your Armor!

No warrior can survive the constant onslaught of an enemy’s attacks without a proper defense. You need your armor as thick and durable as possible and your sword as sharp as you can make it. Over the next six days, you must dedicate your energies to wearing your armor properly and increasing the skill of your blade.

But do not expect to be a master of the art of war after this period. The next six days will teach you a formula you must follow and practice for the rest of your life. Then, after much practice with your implements, and much study of the martial art of the sword, you will become a true master—able to repel any attack swiftly.

Understanding Your Implements

It is written,

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints…” Ephesians 6:10–18

The equipment of a Roman soldier consisted of several components. For instance, soldiers carried a shield for blocking arrows and putting out flaming missiles. They also carried a sword, which was used to parry another sword while heading off an attack. Additionally, in a day and age when people normally wore sandals, the soldiers wore shoes. Their shoes were tightly fastened around their feet and ankles so that they could run unhindered into battle and cross terrain with ease. The meaning of the scripture here is to carry the gospel far and wide. Soldiers also wore a helmet to protect against blows to the head and a breastplate to protect their vital organs. Finally, they wore a belt. The belt bound everything together, served as the foundation of the breastplate, held the dagger, and protected against slashing attacks.

Lastly, in spiritual warfare, we are called not only to wear the armor of God but also to pray always in the Spirit. Hence, we see the biblical call in Ephesians 6:18 for every believer to become a prayer warrior.

Day One

The Helmet of Salvation

Remember that all your strength is from the Lord. No measure of striving will help you obtain any victories. But through Jesus all things are possible for you. Meditate today on the foundation of your salvation—which is faith in Christ. Build trust upon trust in the Lord, and let Him accomplish all things through you. When a battle arises, never fear, for the love God has for you will compel Him to save you.

Truly strong believers have the ability, through humility, to admit their weaknesses and allow the Spirit to empower them into victory. Thus, strong Christians aren't strong at all. Rather, they are weak. But because they have God as their strength, they appear to be strong.

Remember this, and do not charge out into the battle. Instead, plant your mind firmly in faith in your Savior, as you would place your head in a helmet. Let God show you the way to victory; simply be patient as you wait for Him to reveal it.

Today, take up the challenge of having a life completely sold out to faith. Resolve to rely on God for everything—for every victory, for your finances, and for every path you take in life. Let your General lead the charge while you follow your Master from the rear. Be obedient to the voice of the Commander, who is the Holy Spirit, and He shall obtain the victory for you.

The Prayer

Lord, I dedicate myself to a life of faith. From this day forward, I will trust in You for everything, and I will surrender to Your headship. Take me by the hand and lead me to victory. Conquer my battles for me and save me from all harm. I choose to strive, not according to my works, but according to Your works as Your Spirit leads me.

Scripture for Thought

"To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." Colossians 1:29

“Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD’s, and He will give you into our hands.” 1 Samuel 17:47

“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

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5–6

“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.” Matthew 6:31–33

Day Two

The Belt of Truth

It is written,

“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with **truth**, having put on the breastplate of righteousness.” Ephesians 6:13–14

The original Greek word for ‘girding your waist’ is *perizōnnumi*, which can literally mean “to put a belt on.”

This armor belt in Roman tradition was used for three primary reasons: The first was that it held a dagger, whereas the sword was sheathed in a scabbard slung around the shoulder. The dagger could be used to protect the soldier if the sword were lost. Thus, the belt (of truth) complemented the sword (which is the word of God). Hence, the truth complements the word of God. To sum it up, if you’re in any situation in which you can’t hear God to know His word, then you have the biblical truths to lean on. Remember that the sword isn’t merely the Bible but the “sword of the Spirit” or, that is to say, the word of God—both the Bible and the inwardly spoken voice of the Spirit.

The second reason for the belt was that the belt was a symbol of the soldier’s honor. Roman soldiers wore decorative metal plates of brass, bronze, or silver around the belt with other decorative metal plates that hung down at the groin. The plates on the belt protected it from slashing, thus keeping the soldier from losing his dagger. Furthermore, the various plates served as symbols of the soldier’s wealth.

The soldiers kept these decorations on their belt to serve as symbols of both societal status and honor. When a soldier finished his service to his country, he would pass the belt down to a youth who was training for the military, thus perpetuating the honor.

The third reason the belt was used was for supporting the breastplate. The belt itself served as the foundation for the breastplate, without which the breastplate would be too heavy of a burden to bear. The belt fastened the breastplate to the hips so that the weight was evenly distributed on the hips and the shoulders, thus

making it easier to carry and maneuver in battle.

The breastplate was righteousness, and the belt was truth. By this we learn that the foundation of righteousness is the truth in doctrine, and without the truth, we cannot carry righteousness. Thus, if we do not walk in the truth of the gospel, we will not walk in righteousness. For God's word is in truth and must be practiced according to the original meaning that God intended when He spoke it.

Also, the truth of the gospel—the true doctrine found in Jesus Christ—should be the wealth and honor of the church. It should always be on full display, like the Roman's decorations.

In Roman tradition, when an officer wanted to discipline a soldier, he would force him to wear a scarf around his belt to hide his honor. It was a greatly humiliating act in that the soldier was forced to stand before all men without honor.

Likewise, we should be humiliated when the truth is not present with us. If we don't know whether we have the truth or not, we should be humiliated and seek it lest we walk in a lie and not in the heart of Jesus, whom we love.

We should rightly display the truth in doctrine while contending for the faith. The truth is our high honor and should be searched out by the believer until it is fully realized in his or her life. But the scarf that wraps it is false doctrine. For when the truth is shrouded in a lie, it is to the humiliation of both the believer and the entire church.

But can a believer truly come to the full knowledge of the truth? What do we read, and from where does truth come?

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into <u>all</u> truth…" John 16:13

The Holy Spirit and His leading are the center of all our truth. For when we are led by Him, He leads us into *all* truth—not partial truth, not half-truths, but all the truth in its entirety.

It doesn't take a lifetime to find truth, nor is truth granted to us little by little, generation after generation, until the church fully realizes it. Rather, the Spirit of God leads each individual to the truth in his or her lifetime, reasonably, for salvation. Therefore, we should take His voice seriously, for God cannot lie. Whenever He opens His mouth, all His words are truth, life, and perfection.

If, then, we seek to honor the Lord, we ought to pursue the truth in our doctrine with our whole heart by the leading of the Holy Spirit. And how are we led by the Spirit? By His voice. When He speaks, He guides us with His words. God cannot lie. When He speaks, therefore, He leads us into all truth. The more sensitive to His voice you become and the more you obey Him, the more you'll walk in truth.

Also, it is by His truth that we are purified, and through the truth we are set free. As it is written,

"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'" John 8:31–32

And again,

"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

If, then, you want to be pure in Christ, you must seek the truth. For what does the word say? "You have purified your souls through obeying the truth." So obey the truth and walk in it, for by the truth you will purify your soul. Seek it with all your heart. Make it your habit to live by pure doctrine and not your own opinion or that of others. In order to know the true doctrine of God, you must surrender your life to follow the will of God. Even as it is written,

"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

If you live for His will, you will know through hearing and submitting to the Holy Spirit's voice what doctrine is from God and what doctrine isn't. So be careful not to pursue opinions, because God's opinion is all that matters. Let the Lord speak for Himself and let Him communicate His truth to you. Every relationship requires a solid foundation of good communication. Therefore, grow as a listener so that God can communicate His heart with you more effectively.

In today's challenge, you must sensitize yourself to the Holy Spirit's voice and let Him lead you to all truth. Seek His opinion and no one else's regarding Scripture and the direction you should take in life. Grow in understanding His voice. For a true teacher of the word has no one else but the Holy Spirit to rely

on. A teacher is commanded to be the ultimate example of what a Christian must become and do. So whether or not you are a teacher of the word doesn't matter. As a child of God, you must learn to be led by God. As it is written,

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

This is a challenge not only for today, but also for every day from this time forward.

The Prayer

Lord, establish me in Your truth. I thank You that You give me a way to understand it fully, here and now. Help me to become more sensitive to Your voice as Your Spirit leads me to all truth. I dedicate my life from this day forward to pursuing Your true doctrine, that I can live Your word out the way You intended me to.

Scripture for Thought

"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

Day Three

Feet Shod with the Gospel of Peace

In an era when most people wore sandals, the Roman soldiers wore shoes to allow them greater agility during a fight and to run unhindered into a battle over uneven terrain. Paul uses this analogy to remind us of the need to carry the gospel speedily, far and wide. One must share the gospel with tactile Christian agility. That is to say, we must share the gospel with the unbeliever through the wisdom of the Spirit of God. Let God guide your mouth when it comes time to witness.

In order to take up the whole armor of God, you must join the battle for lost souls. Every Christian is commanded to evangelize. Some may have more of an evangelical gift than others do, but everyone must possess the same skill level. The gift of evangelism is really just the Lord bringing unbelievers who are prepared to receive the gospel more frequently to those with the gift. It is not that they craft words more magically than others do. Rather, it is that the Lord has prepared a heart and appointed the time, place, and person to share the gospel. If you turn down an opportunity to witness, then you have turned down a divine appointment from God.

The Lord has works prepared for you, and you must be diligent to live them out —not the works of the law but the works God has planned as a part of your walk in Christ since before time began. If you do not obey the Lord, then you'll be rejecting His plan for you.

So charge into the battle. Satan is trying to steal away the seeds of the gospel. He's sending the whole world to hell in a hand-basket, and the Lord commands you not to sit idly by but to make a difference through sharing the love of God and preaching the gospel to make new disciples. As 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

And as it is also written,

"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?" Romans 10:14

Let the love of God compel you to fight for souls. Become the image of Jesus' love toward the unbeliever both in your words and in your conduct. Don't just tell them about Jesus but show them Jesus, that they may be convicted by your conduct.

The Prayer

From this day forward, I will spread Your gospel, Jesus. Show me how to do so through Your love and with the guidance of Your Spirit. I choose to ready my feet and make myself available for Your work. Please send me out to the harvest.

Scripture for Thought

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear…" 1 Peter 3:15

"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

"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'" Mark 16:15–16

"But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." 2 Timothy 4:5

Day Four

Shield of Faith

The shield was used to stop the fiery arrows of the enemy. Likewise, we are called to resist Satan through faith in God's power. The fiery arrows or darts the devil uses take the form of temptation. Now, some may say, "I don't struggle with temptation! I don't commit any of the big sins." But those same people say, when witnessing to an unbeliever, "Even the smallest sin separates you from the Lord because all sin is the same in His eyes."

Remember your foundation. The smallest things you do God sees as big issues. If your little sins were not a serious issue, then Jesus would never have had to die. But because He did, it is obvious that those offenses that seem minor to us are a big deal to the Lord.

So take it to heart never to stop growing. There should be no plateaus in your walk. God is infinite, and seeing that you are called to be perfect just as your Father in heaven is perfect, you should be growing until you are indeed perfect. So when you hit a plateau, all it means is that you've stopped growing. Don't allow the complacency of life to take hold of you at that time but, rather, press forward to grow in your walk.

The Lord will always put you through seasons of growth and testing of your faith. He desires to perfect and purify your faith. 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

Expect trials when you seek to walk in a godly manner, for we all must suffer them. As it is also written,

"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12

God will use these situations for good, to grow you and teach you. He allows you to suffer need so that you can learn to obey His voice. As it is further 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

And as Jesus learned obedience through suffering, so must we:

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

Ask the Lord to increase your faith. When you do, expect both good and bad things to happen as God lovingly and gently breaks you of all that is unnecessary in life. Sometimes we put our trust in things we oughtn't, and we don't even realize it. This may be a secure job, a person we love, or the money in the bank. Each of these things can make us feel safe, and God sees when our hearts have grown to trust them more than Him. So He will shake up our world to remove the chaff. But when our world falls apart, God will come to the threshing floor and pick up each of the pieces of wheat to gather them into His home. Even though trials may abound, in due time God will pick up the pieces and make something beautiful from them in the end.

Yet we shouldn't always assume trials are on their way. Sometimes God gives us extended seasons of peace after we have passed the test and grown in faith. The end result of faith will always be a blessing, even though it won't come right away. Sometimes the first thing to greet you at the door of faith is a trial, but after passing through the cold, dark, narrow corridors, you'll find a warm, open room with a table set for a king. There God will call you to feast on His faithfulness with gladness of heart.

But before we can grow in faith, first we must understand where it comes from. It is written,

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

Every time we hear God's voice, the natural response must be with faith. We also know that the written word was spoken into existence by the Holy Spirit. So in order to grow in understanding the voice of God, first we must grow in understanding the nature of God. We cannot begin to understand His nature apart from the Scriptures.

And this leads us into tomorrow's discussion, regarding the need for diligent study of your sword.

The Prayer

Lord, increase my faith. Help me to rely on Your word and Your voice as You taught Israel to do through their desert experience. Give me what I need for growth and strip me of all the things that don't glorify You. I know it may be hard to be stripped of these things, but I love You more than them. So I give them willingly to You now. Simply cherish me, God, and deliver me from every evil thing that may come my way. I choose not to lean on my own understanding, but to follow You and Your voice every step of the way.

Scripture for Thought

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

"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine." Exodus 19:5

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God…" Deuteronomy 28:1–2

Day Five

Breastplate of Righteousness

The breastplate was used to protect the vital organs and was held up by the belt so that the weight of the plate could be distributed evenly across the hips. This made it easier to move with agility in battle, instead of the plate proving an encumbrance to the soldier.

Likewise, the first thing a prayer warrior must realize is that all righteousness is founded on the belt of truth. Without truth, righteousness is weighty and difficult to bear. Yet remember that Jesus says His yoke is easy and His burden is light. In order to experience the light-weight nature of righteousness, we must fulfill it according to the leading of Jesus.

Righteousness in itself is faith in motion. Faith comes by the word of God. The truth applies to this in that your faith must be in God's interpretation of His own word and you must obey the word the way He intended you to do. So be diligent to understand the Lord both in His written word and in the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Do not interpret the Scriptures but allow the Spirit to communicate their meaning and how to apply them daily. True righteousness is obtained through obedience to the voice of God. As it is written,

"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" Romans 6:16

Obedience leads to righteousness. If we claim to believe, then we must act on our faith. True faith isn't a concept that is portrayed inwardly, but outwardly through obedience. Without obedient faith, a man cannot even be justified. As it is written,

"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." James 2:22–24

These works are not the works of the law but the works of faith, which is

obedience to the voice of God. How the works of the law are practiced in the church is by reading the Bible and applying it how the readers think God wants them to. This legal application of the word is not accomplished through the inward direction of the Holy Spirit but through works of unintended self-righteousness. Such people may not realize that they are doing this, but by deciding on their own how the word should be applied, they are becoming God's voice for themselves and trying to obtain righteousness by their own efforts.

This needs to change in that they must learn to become more sensitive to the Holy Spirit's voice. He will explain to them on a moment-by-moment basis how to apply the word. Then, by obeying the Spirit, who interprets the Father's will, they will be found righteous. True righteousness is faith in motion, which is actually obedience to the Spirit's voice. By the works of the law, no one is justified; yet in being obedient to the Lord by faith through love, a man is saved. As we read,

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

And that we must obey God is evident. For it is also written,

"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine." Exodus 19:5

Likewise, as Jesus Himself taught us,

"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

The law is nothing, but faith working through love is everything. For when faith operates through love, the law is naturally fulfilled.

From this point forward, resolve to obey the Holy Spirit's voice every time you hear Him, no matter how loud or how softly spoken that voice may be. Let your

faith be the outward expression of obedience. But let your obedience be according to truth. If you think God has told you to do something but He hasn't directly confirmed it, then pray for clarity. As the Scriptures also tell us,

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God…" Philippians 4:6

The Prayer

Lord, I choose to bring my faith to life. I will step forward to Your call for an obedient heart. I do love You and want to show You love by practicing the righteousness You require of me.

I also understand that righteousness does not come through legalism. So I pray that You will teach me how to apply your word on a moment-by-moment basis, that I may please You in all my decisions. For I know that obedience must be according to truth—not according to how I interpret Your will, lest I become my own god, but according to how You truly intend for me to obey You.

Scripture for Thought

"And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions…" Hebrews 11:32–33

Day Six

Sword of the Spirit

"…and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God…" Ephesians 6:17

Some contend that the word of God is the Bible and only the Bible. But whatever comes from God's mouth is His word. This is why we believe the Scriptures are His word—because they are spoken by God.

If the Spirit didn't speak the Scriptures into existence, they would never have been written. If the Holy Spirit's voice is not valid for everyday life, then neither are the Scriptures. But seeing that the Scriptures are valid and are the authoritative word of God, the Holy Spirit's voice is equally as valid for everyday life.

Knowing this fact, you must become more familiar with the Spirit's voice and with your Bible together. You cannot put one above the other, but you must come to understand them both. For the Spirit interprets the Scriptures to us, and whatever He may tell you to do will never contradict the Bible. So the more you understand your Bible, the more you will understand the voice of God.

Do not only read the Scriptures but, rather, study them diligently, that you may understand them to apply them. By 'diligent study' we mean to say that you must set aside time daily to grow in the knowledge of the written word. As it is written,

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

How can you rightly divide the truth? By studying the Scriptures in the Spirit. How does one study in the Spirit? By listening to the Holy Spirit while you read. Then, whichever scripture seems to come alive and pop out from the pages is what the Holy Spirit is sharing with you during that moment. When you find a part that speaks to you, meditate on it, and memorize it if necessary, that you may later practice it.

If the Spirit compares one scripture with another, write down what He has said. If He is teaching you anything from the word or comparing His word to your life, record the lesson—but only write His words and not your own thoughts. If you do this, it trains your spiritual ears to listen only to His voice and not to your

own heart. In this way, by nature you will be able to discern the Spirit's voice more accurately.

When you study Scripture in the Spirit, you are studying both forms of the word: You're learning how to discern the Spirit's voice, and you are growing in understanding of the Scriptures. But is it truly necessary to listen to the Spirit while you read? Yes, for it is He who teaches you the true doctrine.

2 Timothy 2:15 tells us to "rightly divide the word of truth." You cannot right divide unless the Lord shows you how He intended for His word to be divided. Thus, we must all be taught by God, even as Jesus 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

And as He furthermore stated,

"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 is our teacher, and if we don't listen to Him, we cannot walk in the true righteousness God intended for us. But if we do listen to His voice and obey His convictions, we fulfill the law by nature. For those who love the Lord will most assuredly listen to and obey His voice.

Also, that the Holy Spirit leads us to the true doctrine is evident. For it is written,

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, <u>He will guide you into all truth</u>…" John 16:13

The Spirit guides each of us into the truth. If you want to have a righteous walk, then do not try to apply the Scriptures how you think is best. Rather, sensitize yourself to the Spirit's voice, that He may show you on a moment-by-moment basis how and when to apply them. By listening to God, you are justified. For we also read,

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

We walk in the Spirit when we hear His voice and obey. And Jesus also taught us,

"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the

Spirit.” John 3:8

Those who are born of the Spirit are like the wind, which is carried around the world. In this Jesus is making it clear that we have a spiritual walk the unbeliever cannot understand. The sound they cannot comprehend is the spiritual wisdom of the world of God, for as we also read,

“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Corinthians 2:14

In order to have the spiritual understanding of the Bible, you must have the Holy Spirit open your understanding of the Scriptures even as Jesus did for the Apostles. As we read,

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

God must teach you the word. Therefore, you must sensitize yourself to His voice. For those who are God’s are led by the Spirit, even as the wind comes and goes around the world. And as it is also written,

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

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. But what are those who are not led by the Spirit? Examine yourself in this. Are you being led by the Spirit in everything you do? Are you laying your desires down before God prior to fulfilling them? Are you letting Him have the final say as to what you should or shouldn’t do?

Commit yourself to Him in this and allow Him to refresh you in a daily walk that honors Him. A true walk with God is not reading and applying Scriptures how we see fit. This is really just legalism. We must not interpret His word but, rather, allow Him to explain the Scriptures as His Spirit teaches us from the pages. But does the Spirit teach us? What has been written on this matter?

“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

The Holy Spirit teaches us how to apply the word on a moment-by-moment basis, and He teaches us from the word by comparing particular spiritual lessons

with other spiritual lessons in our life or from the Scriptures. But is it wrong to have our own opinions? Yes. Only God's opinion matters, for He is the Judge:

"For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." Ecclesiastes 12:14

And Jesus also 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

Fear may be the first feeling one experiences when reading the last two scriptures I've shared. But what have you to fear if everything you say and do is said and done through the Holy Spirit? Will you not be justified? Take it to heart to do so. For truly, Jesus shall judge us all:

"For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice…" John 5:26–28

Knowing these facts, be diligent to be found approved in the sight of God as one who rightly divides His word, having been taught by the Spirit of God. When the Holy Spirit has taught you, you shall have total confidence, even as Paul exhorted Timothy to have:

"But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:14–15

If you have learned from God, do not allow anyone to sway you from what He has taught you. But if you have not been taught by the Holy Spirit, whether inwardly or through men, you'll be at risk of living according to opinions.

Would this really be so wrong? Doesn't God have grace? Certainly He does, but grace is no excuse for complacency. True love is not complacent, but diligent. If you love the Lord, then let it show by growing in His word in His own way. But if you live by opinions, you'll be adding to His word, the end result of which is a rebuke. As it is written,

"Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.

Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar." Proverbs 30:5–6

Trust in His word and what He speaks to you—not in what you interpret but, rather, in what the Spirit teaches. If you interpret the word, you will be adding to it. But if God opens your understanding, you will walk in the word of truth the way He intended you to do.

A true walk is diligently studying of the word through the Spirit, listening to His voice and discerning it from our own heart and the deceit of Satan, and then choosing to obey God's voice alone. When we have heard His voice, had faith in His voice, and acted on that faith through obedience, we have found the true meaning of righteousness. Hence, the full armor of God comes full circle, with every concept working and functioning together in harmony. That harmony is only found through the Spirit of God.

So take the time to sharpen your sword. Have you been studying your Bible lately? Take it seriously and grow in it. Listen carefully for His voice while you read, that you make rightly divide His word and be grounded in the one and only truth, which the Holy Spirit teaches us.

The Prayer

Lord, I choose to obey You. Teach me Your word and how to apply it. Help me to hear You more clearly, that I can obey You with sincerity. I know that when I struggle to understand Your voice, it isn't because You aren't speaking clearly—as if there were any fault with you! But I know, rather, that it is an issue with how I understand You. Give me wisdom, that I can understand your voice; help me to discern it, that I can live by it.

From this day forward, I will listen carefully for Your voice as You speak to me throughout the day, and I will apply what Your Spirit is telling me to do. I will study Your Scriptures daily and fervently until I come to understand them perfectly. I believe that You can give me this perfect understanding, and I pray that You will, that I can walk in all wisdom before You.

Scripture for Thought

"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.” James 1:5

“For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path.” Proverbs 2:6–9

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15

“Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.” Proverbs 30:5–6

Enter the Battle

Do not be complacent but, rather, circumspect to the wiles of the enemy: division in church, relationships, and marriage; false doctrine; discouragement; and disbelief. Satan always manifests his intentions as appealing while hiding his hidden motive. But God calls us to be of a sober mind, and if we are being distracted by the activities of life, likely the enemy will tear us down anytime the Spirit of the Lord begins to move in our life.

When God begins to move, the enemy rises up to hinder His work in us. While we can be hindered, God cannot. But He allows the devil to do so in order to test you. By this He will see whether you will fold in fear or join the fight of faith and continue boldly in the Spirit of God. So the question is: Will you join the fight? Come pray with boldness of faith, and keep your eyes fixed on Jesus' plan for your life. If you don't stay on His course, you'll never be fully dedicated to Him. 'Christian' literally means "follower of Jesus." Following suggests that we will get behind Him and let Him charge the way. We cannot carve our own path, for the Lord has determined the best one for us. So surrender to His daily will and the daily works He has planned for you, that you may live them out.

Now that you know and understand your armaments, prepare to use them! There is a battle going on all around you, and whether you want to join it or not, you're in the midst of it. Daily the enemy fights for your attention to distract you from the Lord. He attacks the weak, younger Christians to make them wander into sin. He creates division in the church, between friends, and in marriages. He attacks those who are coming to Christ but have not yet been saved, that they may flee from God. With all his strength, he tries to steal away the seeds and trample those you have planted.

But God has given you a weapon to defeat Satan. It is a weapon of weapons to overcome the trials and warfare Satan produces: prayer. Prayer enters you straight into the throne room of God and gives you complete access to His Majesty at any time. Then, if He wills to answer your prayers, the infinite power of the Almighty will completely overwhelm the situation with victory.

Day Seven

Dedicated to a Life of Prayer

Knowing that victory is found in prayer, we must take it to heart to pray always. Spend the entire day today in prayer. Whether you're at work sitting at a desk, working on a machine, or at home with the kids, keep on praying as the Spirit guides your heart. Stay sensitive to Him in prayer, that He may guide the conversation you're having with the Father.

But know that Satan will attack you. He will battle for your attention because your prayers will defeat him and overthrow all of his intentions. Expect to be distracted inwardly with idle thoughts that may bombard you while you pray. Each of these irrelevant and unnecessary thoughts is a seed from the devil. He hopes that your mind would carry the thought and continue to think idly about it, rather than pray.

Also, expect others around you, especially the unbelievers, to distract you. Unbelievers are easily used by Satan, being sons of Satan. Pay close attention as you pray. You may find that the neighbor suddenly has to make noise. If you're at work, a coworker may come up to you and talk idly as soon as you begin to pray.

Even your believing family members will be targeted by the devil. He will stop at nothing just to hinder your prayers, that he may have the victory. At home, your kids may suddenly fight or otherwise make noise, or the young ones may need to be held for no reason at all.

Perhaps your spouse may get tempted, without realizing it, to come and talk idly when you're trying to pray silently. But give a gentle reminder that you are praying, and your spouse should obey God's conviction thereafter. Regarding the children, give them the necessary discipline to respect your prayer time. Perhaps it would be best to inform them of what you are doing in order to give them a better chance to obey God's conviction. If your baby starts crying, allow your spouse to take over for you so that you can go be alone with God.

No matter what happens, keep in the fight and don't stop praying. Let this not only be your challenge for today, but also seek to practice it each and every day as the Scriptures command you.

The Prayer

Today, God, I dedicate myself to an unending conversation with You. I will listen carefully for Your replies, spoken by the Holy Spirit, while I pray, knowing that prayer itself is a conversation. I will take your words seriously and believe and apply them.

Help me to keep a steadfast heart and a sober mind. For I know that Satan will distract me. But remind me when my thoughts trail off of You, that I may wrangle them back in and continue praying.

Scripture for Thought

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

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

Day Eight

Dedicated to a Life of Praise

No matter what happens in life, God deserves your praise. Is He the cause of our suffering? Certainly not! He's the cause of our healing. Why, then, does He allow us to suffer? In most cases, it's for growth—especially when we suffer need. So, through pain, God intends peace. Shouldn't we worship Him for that?

But what about trials from which God may not have a direct lesson, such as the loss of a loved one? We certainly can learn and grow from those circumstances, but we know the Lord has not brought them on us for that reason. So for what, then, can we praise Him during those times? For His love and for His comfort, out of faith that He's good no matter what happens. And for the things He teaches us, that we may be nearer to the One who holds us through it all.

Job suffered these things, and we should keep the same heart as he had. After hearing that he had lost his wealth and children in a day, his first reaction was to worship God out of faith that He's good no matter what. As we read,

"Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.' In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong." Job 1:20–22

So if your life is good right now, then praise Him from a joyful heart. But if not, then worship Him in the pain, and He'll be a source of comfort. Regardless of your circumstances, you should be lifting up an unending song of praise to your God.

Whether you're at work in between phone calls or picking and packing in an industry, you should worship Him with a joyful heart inwardly. If you continually praise and pray, rather than being torn down by the stresses of the week, you'll feel recharged and energized by the Spirit.

Some Christians struggle with a cycle of spiritual exhaustion. They go to church on Sunday and feel recharged. Then they start work on Monday full of the Spirit, but get dragged down through the stress of the day. Tuesday morning they read a devotion, and they try to apply it at work but end up burned out at the end of the day. This process repeats itself until Friday rolls around, when they're ready for

Sunday again.

But God desires much more for you. Every day can be as energizing and blessed as Sunday or as Wednesday night Bible study. All you have to do is continually pray and worship. By focusing on God's presence and being quietly intimate with Him throughout the day, you will find that His presence refreshes you continually. So rather than feeling refreshed for thirty minutes during a devotion, you'll feel refreshed all day. You may come home mentally or physically drained, but spiritually and emotionally, you'll be blessed and energized.

Yet be aware that Satan will do everything he can to distract you. If you are not intentional about continually praying and praising, he will be successful. But if you learn to recognize quickly the devil's working, you can resist him steadfastly in the faith by ignoring him and continuing your worship or prayer.

However, do not merely sing about God. Sing to His face, toward His presence. You will feel the presence of God more powerfully by singing, "Lord, You're holy—You are holy!" versus singing, "God is holy, He is holy."

Worship is a conversation. During worship you express your heart to the Lord, and He answers by sending down His presence. Listen to the Spirit while you worship, and He'll guide your heart to the proper words with which the Father wants to be worshipped. And as it is written,

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:23–24

Worship in the Spirit by being sensitive to Him while you praise. Keep an open ear for His replies and sing directly to Him; then you'll be blessed with the feeling and power of His presence. Focus on His presence, that the Spirit may be upon you continually.

Yet while you may have the Spirit continually, He is not always upon you for victory. Notice in the Scriptures that the Spirit came upon Samson when victory was needed. There is a difference between having the Spirit and having Him overtake you. Abide in that overflow, and you'll be empowered with continual victory.

Take the challenge today to worship the Lord throughout the day. While it may not be practical during moments that require extreme thought and attention to

detail, it is possible to pray during those moments. Ask God to help you with the task at hand, for example. But you can easily worship in between those mentally trying moments. So keep worshiping and spend your whole day, rather than thirty minutes a day, with the Lord. It will strengthen you for greater battles and bless you every moment in between.

The Prayer

Today I make my heart fully Yours. While I will enjoy my temporary devotions with You, from this day forward I will worship You throughout the day and pray every moment in between. Help me to focus on Your presence while I do so, that I may become more sensitive to Your voice. For I know that righteousness comes through obedience, but how can I obey if I can't hear You because I'm distracted by the stress of the day? Help me to find continual rest in Your presence by keeping my heart near to Yours through constant worship.

Scripture for Thought

"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

"I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth." Psalm 34:1

Day Nine

Becoming a Love Warrior

Look for the needy or the hurting and practice the love of God today. Pray for open eyes and take this challenge seriously. Meet that need and do not merely brush it. Give others all they need to get out of their trial and back on their feet again. If you ask yourself what Jesus would do, you know that He would do the same for you. So go and do likewise, walking in the full love of God.

I challenge you not only to walk in God's love today but also to do this daily through faith. It can be difficult because it may put you in need as well, but if you soak everything in prayer, God will lead you to the perfect works that will keep you safe and deliver your brother as well. So don't just do what you think is right but, rather, lay it all before God, and He will show you what is perfect and how to do it. As it is written,

"Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 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 4:5–7

You'll have peace because you'll know that the Lord is taking care of you as He leads you. And He also takes care of those who diligently practice His love. As we read,

"Blessed is he who considers the poor; the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will preserve him and keep him alive, and he will be blessed on the earth; You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies. The LORD will strengthen him on his bed of illness; You will sustain him on his sickbed." Psalm 41:1–3

The Prayer

Lord, open my eyes to see those around me who need Your touch. Make me sensitive to their situations, that I can be the example of Your love. Please guide my hands in this as I commit life to be the image of Your love always, in everything I say and do.

Scripture for Thought

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

“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

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

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” John 15:9–10

Day Ten

Dedicate to Praying for Others

Be sensitive to others' needs for prayer today. Depending on a person's situation, he or she may need prayer more than direct help. If, for example, another person is struggling with making a decision and needs the Lord to speak, or if he or she is struggling with warfare, prayer would be a more effective way to help. Ask the Lord to give the person clarity and to incline your heart constantly to pray.

Ask the Lord to give you open eyes, that He may show you who needs prayer, and ask that He would show you what to pray. A true prayer warrior looks for others' needs and lovingly brings them before the Lord.

Keep a piece of paper with you and write down others' prayer requests. Then set aside time each day or night to pray through each one. If you don't write them down, you may forget. But if you do record prayer requests, it shows the people you're praying for that you care and that you actually will pray for them. There are many of the brethren who say, "Yeah, I'll pray for you, brother!" Then they pat the other's back, walk away, and completely forget. Wouldn't a brother or sister feel more loved by your sincerity?

The Prayer

God, I desire a sincere heart in my prayer life. I will be sensitive to others' needs for prayer and will lift them up to You. Please make me the shining example of Your love in my prayer life.

Scripture for Thought

"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit." James 5:16–18

Day Eleven

Praying Through the Scriptures

When we pray according to the Scriptures, it keeps our hearts in line with the Lord's. All you need to do is pray over a book or particular passage and then read it. If there is any scripture that speaks out to you about current situations in your life, then take the time to pray through each verse. Pray over every concept and ask the Lord to bless your own walk accordingly.

One of the major benefits of praying the Scriptures is that it forces you to read. Diligent study is always necessary for every Christian. So it can be helpful to read and pray at the same time.

But don't just pray anything. First be certain that you understand the verses, so that you can pray according to their meaning, as well as how they apply to your life. The Spirit will reveal to you which ones are best and will teach you from the word during this time of devotion.

Today's challenge requires you to study your Bible. Find a place in the Scriptures where God is speaking to you. These are not necessarily the portions that you feel apply to your life but, rather, the pages that come alive and speak to you. These are the passages the Holy Spirit wants you to reflect on, memorize, and maybe even pray, for the purpose of life application. But reflect on them first, before you pray.

The Prayer

Today, Lord, I dedicate myself to Your word—both to read it and to pray it. Show me the passages on which You want me to meditate. Teach me from Your word and guide my mouth in prayer according to your word.

Scripture for Thought

"I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word." Psalm 119:15–16

"My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word." Psalm 119:148

Day Twelve

Praying for Wisdom and Interpretation of Scripture

The Lord desires that all believers would have their swords as sharp as possible. When you pray for wisdom, you can expect an answer. It is not a gift for the few, but it is God's desire for everyone to have it. His word is the light by which we walk. As we read,

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

If we don't know it well, then we will stumble and not even know what made us stumble.

Therefore, stand in the light and be edified by it. Let His word minister to your heart, and grow in the wisdom of God. Today's challenge is not merely a call to grow in knowledge of the word. Rather, it is a call to grow in wisdom. Knowledge is stored information whereas wisdom is the ability to apply it accurately. That accuracy comes from perfect doctrine and the leading of the Spirit.

So how do we gain this accuracy? Through the Holy Spirit's voice. And as it is written,

'"For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding…" Proverbs 2:6

And it is further 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

Pray for wisdom and expect God to give it to you. Then study your Bible diligently and listen to the Spirit's voice as you do. If there is any scripture that speaks out to you, consider memorizing it for daily application. If the word is not locked in your heart, how can you recall it to mind when you need to apply it?

The Prayer

Lord, give me wisdom. I have all faith that You will give it to me as I pursue it.

Help me to memorize Your word and to understand it. Enlighten me and open my understanding. Your word is my light, and without Your voice, how can I walk by it? Bless me by teaching me. I commit myself to the pursuit of Your wisdom, that I may walk accordingly from this day forward and forever.

Scripture for Thought

“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

“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

Day Thirteen

Praying for Growth and Applying It

A plant that doesn't bear fruit doesn't serve the purpose for which it was created. A plant that doesn't grow isn't useful to the farmer. As Christians, we are the plants of God. We must always be growing and bearing fruit, that our conduct may please the Lord.

Sometimes life can distract us from needful growth. If you feel as if you've hit a plateau in your walk, remember that you are called to be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect. So if you are not perfect, you should still be growing.

Needless to say, no one is perfect, so whether you're a pastor or a new believer, you should be experiencing seasonal growth. God leads you season by season in life. A season may be a particular workplace, or it could be a financial situation. But every season of life has its end. At the end of the season, there should have been several lessons you learned from it. So growth doesn't just occur at the end of a season but, rather, it can happen daily as you learn new things about your walk with God.

Examine yourself today to see if you've been growing constantly. If you haven't, then take it to heart to draw nearer to the Lord starting today.

The Prayer

Lord, I dedicate myself to daily growth in You. Open my eyes to see the things You're teaching me. I know that daily growth begins with diligent study of Your word and that seasonal growth happens through Your voice. Help me to understand these lessons with clarity and wisdom.

Please give me what I need in this season of my life to grow and to bear the fruit You desire from me.

Scripture for Thought

"…but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen." 2 Peter 3:18

"…that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ…" Ephesians 4:14–15

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

Day Fourteen

No soldier engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life.

Growth can be difficult to experience due to the distractions we experience in life. Yet God does not call us to be distracted but, rather, to walk soberly in the Spirit of God. Distractions from God are really just idols in a hidden package. All idols must be eradicated.

It's not that any of us intend to have an idol, but they do tend to sneak up on us. They can take the form of overindulgence in entertainment—games, TV, movies, and the like. They can be overindulgence in food or even hobbies.

But one of the last places people consider looking for idols in their own life is among their friends and family. While God calls us to love our families and be devoted to them, He never calls us to place them above Him. If God tells you to do one thing and your family tells you to do another, to whom should you listen? If you struggle with the right decision, then you may very well have an idol. Pray about what the Lord would have you do.

If you put God first and that damages your relationship with your family, then you have been persecuted. They should accept you for the decisions you make to honor the Lord. If they can't, then how are they honoring God at all? If they aren't saved, then why would you listen to their counsel? It will always be contrary to God because they don't have the Holy Spirit to bear God's wisdom.

But can playing or eating be an idol? What do the Scriptures say?

"And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, '<u>The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play</u>.'" 1 Corinthians 10:7

Notice that Paul doesn't bring up engraven images when he mentions idols. Rather, he only mentions the activities the people chose to do rather than honor God with their time.

Examine your heart today. Determine if you have anything in your life that is distracting you from God. Those distractions may not be as villainous as I've made them sound. However, they may, without you realizing it, be getting in the way of your growth and needful time with the Lord. The word 'idol' literally means "thing of nothingness." Remember that Paul said,

"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

If you're spending more time with an activity, or any other thing of nothingness, than you spend with the Lord, then you have an idol. How much time do you spend praying each day? Now compare that to the time you spend watching TV, surfing the internet, playing games, or being with that special someone. If God isn't the direct center of these activities, then they should be counted as rubbish. If that special someone has Christ, then edify him or her with your words and change any idle time you have together into fellowship. True fellowship isn't playing games and talking about nothingness. Rather, it is time spent discussing the goodness of the Lord.

Show God your affection by giving Him your time. When you came to Christ, you gave 24/7 of your life to Him—not thirty minutes a day during a daily devotion. So honor the Lord by meditating on Him in prayer and worship throughout the day. Incorporate Him into your day by focusing on the presence of the Spirit, listening to His voice, and honoring Him in all you do.

You must seek the Lord daily to grow in Him. If you have the opportunity to do so but find yourself desiring to do other things, then Satan is tempting you, that you may not bear fruit. Eradicate those idols and do not be entangled with the affairs of this life. If God toured your heart right now, would He be pleased with what He would find? If not, then consider how you must make changes to please Him.

God has a better life for you than this world can offer, and His plan for that life begins now. All you have to do is submit.

The Prayer

Lord, search my heart. Tour it right now, Jesus. If there is anything contrary to You or entangling my walk, please save me from it. Free me from the captivity that distractions bring. Save me from trying to live life my way! I surrender to Your plan and Your design. I give up the idle activities that my flesh enjoys to embrace a deeper and more intimate relationship with You. You mean more to me than any earthly thing does. So I pray that You would clean my heart and make it Your throne room as You rule over my life.

Scripture for Thought

“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 10:7

“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’” 2 Corinthians 6:16

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” 1 John 5:21

“No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.” 2 Timothy 2:4

Day Fifteen

Wholly Devoted to the Will of God

The Lord has a plan for you. This is not just an eternal plan, but He in His wisdom has preordained the purpose your life shall serve here on this earth. Do you know what that purpose is? Do you know what He wants you doing daily? How can you know?

Through the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit communicates the Father's will on a moment-by-moment basis. His voice comes as still and small, so the only way to hear Him is to be intentional about listening throughout the day.

God always knows what's best. Sometimes we have desires to fulfill certain plans and goals in life. Such goals may be further education for a higher-paying job. So we go to college and apply for our new careers without hearing from God as to whether it is His will for us or not. But some may say,

"Why wouldn't God want me to get that job? It's a good thing, and it will provide for my family. Not only that, but with the money I'll make, I can also make larger donations to help the church have a bigger impact."

People say this while forgetting that the Lord intends to take care of them if only they'd follow Him and obey His voice. But does the Lord really have plans for you? What do the Scriptures say?

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29:11

The original Hebrew word for 'thoughts' literally means "thoughts, intentions, or plans," which is why some versions of the Bible translate the verse to say, "I know the plans I have for you." Before time began, God was thinking of you. He has thought of how your life should look and what would be best for you. While you may think you know what's best for you, God truly knows, and you must submit to that.

In today's challenge, you need to reflect on yourself to determine how you've been conforming to God's plan for your life. If you don't know what His plan is for you, then don't stop praying until He reveals it. It can take days, months, or even years to understand your place in the church. But if you don't search for it, you may never know. Instead, complacency will take its hold on your life, and

the only way out is to repent and to search for, and submit to, the Lord's plan.

The Lord also has a daily will for you. At every moment of the day, there is something He wants you to do. If you listen to the Spirit, you will know what it is. Life is like a flight of stairs, and every little moment is a step that needs to be taken. If you ignore the steps God has for you, you will stumble and may even backslide.

From this point forward, determine God's will for your life and wholly surrender to it.

The Prayer

Lord, I know You have a plan for my life. Show me what it is, that I can happily submit to live it out. You are my Lord, after all, and since You are my Master, I will obey You; since You are the Potter, I will submit to Your design. Shape my life and use me for whatever pleases You most. I gave You my life, so it's Yours to do with as You wish.

Scripture for Thought

"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. 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 12:1–2

Day Sixteen

Living Sacrifice

“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

Jesus gave Himself as a dying sacrifice, but we are called to live a sacrificial life for Him. If we are to embrace His will daily, then we also need to be prepared to embrace our crosses.

Bad things happen to those who trust in Jesus. Why? Because there is a real enemy. But do not despair, for the Lord is with you. He will prepare a future for you and deliver you from your enemy. However, He will permit negative circumstances to develop your character.

Be prepared to make changes to conform to His design. The Lord will allow certain circumstances to strip you of everything that is not of Him. He will strip your emotions, desires, plans, sins, possessions, and anything else that is contrary to Him or that you may be leaning upon. Sometimes we like to prop our faith up with things that bring us comfort, but Jesus requires that we trust in Him alone.

So when He sees that we have created a crutch for ourselves, He will draw near to change that. Then, as we lean comfortably on that certain thing for support, He will walk over to us and, lovingly and gently, kick it out from under us. Then, during those moments in which we are fallen to the ground, humbled, and are looking up at Him, we’ll see our need for Him alone.

The Lord has always desired a servant who gives up everything to love Him. Consider the wisdom and spiritual value of living with such abandon. Take the challenge to have a life that relies completely on the Lord!

A living sacrifice must be holy and acceptable. The law commanded that an animal being offered for sacrifice be consecrated unto the Lord. It also needed to be without blemish. We likewise must live a life unspotted from this world if we are going to be living sacrifices for Him. As Romans goes on to say,

“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

God's will is perfect. The Scripture doesn't say His will is a "good suggestion" but that it is "good, acceptable, and perfect." If you believe God's will for your life is perfect, then flee from your plans for this life. Let God plan your way and let Him determine where you shall work, where you shall live, and what you should or shouldn't do daily. Lay all things before Him in prayer before you do anything so that He can have the final say.

Many of the things He will call you to do will be contrary to anything you want or anything you think is logical. But living a sacrificial life requires you not to depend on these things, anyway. God is above your logic and has plans that are better than what you can imagine. If you can't even imagine what He has in store for you, then what good is it to live by desire? Besides, all sin begins with desire, but if you conform your heart to Christ's, your desires will be purified and in line with His will. Then you will have the things you pray for, even as He promises.

With today's challenge, determine to rely solely on God for everything. If you are sold out to Jesus, then let your life reflect it. Ask yourself how He has been guiding your plans and making the decisions for your life. If you can't be one hundred percent certain how He has made the decisions, then perhaps He hasn't and you have. In this case, you are no longer living a God-controlled life but are leaning instead on the crutch of your logic. Beware, lest the Lord soon comes over and kicks it out from under you so that you may live by faith.

The Prayer

Jesus, You offered Yourself to save me. Is it, then, too much for You to ask that I should offer myself? I believe it is right and proper to give my life up to live for You. Lay hold on my life and do with me as it pleases You. Help me to live my life with abandon as I learn to be wholly dedicated to You.

From this day forward, I will live my life completely dependent on You and Your provision.

Scripture for Thought

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Colossians 3:17

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

Day Seventeen

Fight the Good Fight

A true prayer warrior never loses hope. It can seem like a battle to keep faith sometimes, especially when all your senses are telling you your situation is hopeless. But we trust in a God whom we do not see, although we see Him working and moving in our lives. We have faith in a God whom we cannot feel with our fingers, yet we experience the joy of His loving touch in our lives. While we cannot experience Him with flesh, our spirits are sensitive to His presence.

God has commanded us to trust neither in the things of this life nor in our understanding of life. For God is above all of these things, having created them. You cannot make it day or night, nor can you send forth rain to water your garden. If God makes a drought, what can you possibly do to resist Him? Everything you have is from God, and without His providence, you have nothing. Trust therefore in the living God, who is able to make light from darkness and substance from nothing.

If your life takes a turn for the worse and there is no hope, God can yet create hope from nothing. When you sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to you. Keep the faith, knowing that the Lord will bring everything together for good.

If you have lost a loved one, there is nothing good about that. But God can create substance from nothing. You'll experience a deeper, richer, and more fulfilling relationship with Him as He tenderly comforts you. All you have to do is run into the arms that are outstretched and willing to embrace you.

Not only this, but also the Lord will reunite you with the one you lost and lead you to dwell forever in His presence, where no form of evil can taint your life again. While you know these things, when you're suffering it can be hard to remember or to believe that God will make your life good again.

No matter what happens to you, resolve to keep faith. But true faith comes from God's voice. If everything around you is telling you hope is lost, ignore it and focus on the voice of the Holy Spirit. Whatever He tells you, believe Him instead, and by faith in His word you'll be refreshed again.

Following God doesn't always lead to victory immediately. Sometimes victory never happens the way you'd expect it. Remember that Jesus was led to the

cross, and through the cross He was victorious. You likewise may be led to circumstances of crucifying defeat, but through your circumstances, God will raise you up, making the impossible possible. All that's required from you is to continue to obey His voice and believe. If you know you've been obeying the voice of the Lord, and you have entered a difficult circumstance in life, God will redeem you from it.

The Prayer

Lord, I resolve to trust You through every circumstance of life. I know that being a living sacrifice will cause me to experience loss sometimes. I know that Satan will tempt me to believe I must have done something wrong and that I should trust in and follow my own logic. But I refuse to obey him. For I also know that if I've followed Your voice and obeyed you, You will give me victory—because victory is something that only You provide.

Scripture for Thought

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." 1 Timothy 6:12

"I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" Psalm 34:4–8

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:57

Day Eighteen

The Battle Is the Lord's

No matter what you go through in life, know that you do not fight alone. God is there, fighting the battle for you, and will deliver you from every evil thing that come your way. While He may allow trials to abound, He only does so for your growth.

God does not tarry. For He is never early or late, but He works in your life exactly when He intends to. He may work sooner than you could imagine or later than you had hoped, but His timing is still perfect because He knows what you need. You see the physical needs, but God sees the greater—and more important—spiritual needs. First He will tend to your soul and its growth; then He will deliver you from your circumstances.

God must first have victory in the spiritual things, and then He will step forward to claim victory in the physical. Remember that sin was destroyed at the cross and it was a spiritual destruction that killed it. Then, afterward, Jesus had physical victory when He was raised from the dead. Thus, we read,

"'O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?' The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:55–57

If trials abound, God will deliver you. You'll never have to deliver yourself; all you'll have to do is step out in faith when God tells you to step. Then you will walk out of your situation just as Jesus walked away from the crowd who sought to kill Him.

If you desire to live a godly life, expect war to come, for the devil will see you as a big, red bull's-eye and target you from that day forward. He'll attack you inwardly with warfare and temptations and outwardly with persecutions. Therefore, keep the faith as you wait for the Lord to grant you victory, but that the godly suffer is evident. For we read,

"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12

"As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.'" Romans 8:36

Some expect to have peace when God leads them. If the Lord compels them powerfully, they seem to think that victory is right around the corner. However, they forget that after they have been flogged like Jesus, they must also go to the cross as He did.

Consider that Paul was given an awesome mission from God, through a vision, to meet a man in Macedonia and preach to him. So he went forward in faith. Some who experience similar callings in their walk expect total victory. After all, God sends them forward with a grand christening of their ship. He offers them an amazing vision for hope and change. But when they arrive, everything falls apart as it did for Paul.

Paul walked through the town, waiting for the will of God to be revealed. He knew what he was supposed to do, but he was waiting for God to tell him the next step. Then a demon-possessed girl followed them and cried out behind them. As we read,

“This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, ‘These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.’ And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And he came out that very hour. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.” Acts 16:17–19

You’d think that the men would have had fear at seeing the power of God with Paul to rebuke the spirit. But instead they laid hands on Paul and Silas to punish them:

“Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.” Acts 16:22–24

The word ‘stripe’ in the original Greek is *plēgē* (pronounced: play-gay), the word from which we obtain the English word ‘plague.’ A person is beaten with stripes when they receive bruises or welts from rods or whips.

Many would wonder if they had made a mistake after being beaten so harshly and thrown into prison. But neither Paul nor Silas lost faith. Instead, they worshipped the Lord in chains, and God shook the prison and released everyone.

Like Jesus, first they were beaten. Then they had to take up their cross and go to prison in innocence. Afterward, the Lord worked and shook open the doors to raise the two men up from their situation. The guard, having seen the power of God, was compelled to receive Jesus as Savior. This was the man who had begged Paul to preach the gospel to him in his vision. Notice that Paul needed to carry his cross not for himself but, rather, for the man who was going to receive the Lord.

As a prayer warrior, you may likewise suffer for another person's salvation. But rejoice that you partake in the cross of Jesus. For if you partake in His cross, you will share in His resurrection. If you pray for others and try to enter their situation to help them, you may suffer for it. Satan will stop at nothing to stop you from operating in the power and love of God. But do not fear,

"…because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." 1 John 4:4

While the last two prayers may or may not pertain to your current situation in life, know that if you desire to live as a true prayer warrior, you'll experience suffering eventually. You can refer back to these prayers when that happens.

Life may seem more peaceful when you're in control. It's like sitting in a boat when God calls you to walk on water. A person may be inclined to reply kindly, "Um … no, God, I think I'm fine right here in the boat! Why should I walk to shore on water when my boat can take me there safely?" All will seem well for you—until God sinks your boat.

Have no idols and cast away all crutches, for the Lord your God has healed your walk in Him today. According to the measure of your faith, so your peace will be. Paul had peace in a sinking ship on a raging sea. Can you do likewise? Take up the challenge to grow in the faith until you can.

The Prayer

Come fight for me, Jesus! I will never stop chasing after You, Lord. I will obey Your voice and believe. May I not have to raise a finger against my enemies. Those who hate me I pray would experience Your love from me.

And when spiritual warfare arises, I trust You'll overwhelm it with victory. When Satan arises, I pray You will hammer him down. When he rears his ugly head, I pray Your heel would crush him. Raise me up, Lord, and glorify Your name in my life.

I pray that everything I go through, whether good or bad, You will use for the glory You deserve. Here I am, Lord. I surrender to Your will. Send me, whether to the cross or to the mountains of life, and I will follow you. Simply have mercy and give me peace in the end.

Scripture for Thought

“The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” Exodus 14:14

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 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. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:31–39

Day Nineteen

Becoming Love

There is a point at which prayer must become action. Don't merely pray for a person's situation but, rather, also ask the Lord how you can enter it. If a brother or sister in the Lord is struggling in poverty, perhaps God has a work for you that will accomplish the love of God. What would Jesus do if He saw a person in need? Would He pray for the person and go along His way, or would He show the person the love necessary to take care of his or her needs?

Take this time to pray for open eyes and an open heart. But let the Spirit guide you in how you will help. He knows best what others need and what will encourage them the most.

The Prayer

Lord, open my eyes to see others' needs. Open my heart also to love them with perfect love. Show me how to help them, and if You require much from me, I pray that You will help my faith.

Scripture for Thought

"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

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works…" Hebrews 10:24

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." 1 John 4:7–11

Day Twenty

Showing Mercy

Mercy is having forgiveness and compassion on someone who has wronged you. Remember the Lord's mercy toward you daily. When others wrong you, be swift to forgive them. How quickly does God forgive you when you sin? Go and do likewise, that you can be the example of Jesus in all you do.

Our enemy loves to cast division. He is the author of it, having been the first to divide himself from God. Yet a true warrior would fight back against the wiles of the devil and love his neighbor with unrelenting compassion.

Resolve from this day forward to be one who unifies. If you have wronged anyone, go to the person quickly and make amends. Even as Jesus said,

"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5:23–24

The gift at the altar was for forgiveness from God. Jesus was stating that if you are sincere about desiring the Lord's forgiveness for your offenses, you should go and make amends with the person you have offended.

Be the first to step up to the responsibility of forgiveness. If you need to be forgiven, then go and apologize quickly. But if another has sinned against you, go to the person quickly and try to make amends. If he or she refuses to come to you, then remember that Jesus didn't wait for you to reach out for forgiveness. He reached to you first and touched your life in such a way that you'd be convicted by your sin and desire His forgiveness. Go and do likewise with your brethren. Lovingly convict them through the kindness of Christ. In time God will turn them around for repentance. If they still refuse, then at least you made every effort to honor God.

But if you cannot forgive them, then remember what Jesus said:

"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses." Mark 11:25–26

And He also said,

“Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. ‘So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.’” Matthew 18:32–35

Forgive and be forgiven. Be merciful, and mercy will be granted to you. As Jesus also said,

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Matthew 5:7

Today and forever, resolve to forgive first and ask questions later. Be meek and be merciful. Seek to establish lasting relationships with your brethren.

The Prayer

Lord, make me the example of Your mercy. I know that as I forgive others, so You will forgive me. Give me strength to battle against Satan, who would love to tempt me to have a bitter root in my heart. I pray that You would reveal to me and convict me of any such bitterness I may have, or will one day be tempted to have, that I can walk in the fullness of Your love.

Scripture for Thought

“Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.” Luke 6:36

“For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.” James 2:13

Day Twenty-One

Being Faithful

A warrior must be disciplined in all things, especially in faithfulness. We must always be faithful to obey both in the great things and in the little ones as well.

For even the Lord uses the little things to amount to the greater. Consider His creation, for example.

The sun is so large that it could fit 1.3 million Earths in it. Look up at the sky. Can you even count how many stars there are? Many of these stars are millions of times larger than our sun. VY Canis Major is the largest known star in the universe and is estimated to be 9.3 billion times the size of the sun.

That would make it over twelve quadrillion times the size of the earth! For those who are having difficulty wrapping their minds around it, a quadrillion is a million billions.

Creation in all its complexities is too wonderful to be understood. There are too many objects, concepts, and forms of life to be explored. The stars are so far away that no one can even hope to travel to them. But where there is a star, it tells us, “The Lord has been here.”

God is always where we could never be, and His understanding is unsearchable. How much more should we mirror our conduct to be like His?

When He created the universe, He made objects in the heavens beyond comprehension in size, yet He has made particles so small that science can only theorize about them.

To observe these small particles requires the help of the Large Hadron Collider. Being 27 kilometers in circumference, it is the largest particle accelerator in the world. So just to get a millisecond glimpse at some of the smallest particles in creation requires a device that is 27 kilometers in size!

And yet these small building blocks God uses to create life, worlds, and stars that are too tremendous to be fathomed. God makes objects so large and so bright, from the smallest things to those that can be seen from billions of light-years away. The greatest and largest things are always made from the smallest. The invisible always amounts to the visible.

Even so, our smallest acts of faith must always amount to the greatest. Our invisible faith should lead to visible works of loving obedience as evidence of our faith. Allow your faith to illuminate others as you shine your works of faith through obedience. It is certain that if we are not faithful with the little things, neither will we be faithful in the greatest things.

Some of the littlest things are the small, soft whispers of the Holy Spirit, which are spoken to you all day throughout the day. If you aren't circumspect, you may not hear His voice. Pay more thoughtful heed to the voice of God.

Take up the challenge to listen carefully for, and faithfully obey, the whispers of the Spirit. Every moment of the day God is speaking to you, but are you listening? There is always something He wants you to be doing. Do you know whether or not you've been doing all of those little things? You cannot make assumptions in this; you must know perfectly. If you haven't been listening to the Spirit, then you will not know the answer.

Take it to heart, then, to incline your ear to the Spirit all day today. Praise and pray all day and keep your focus on His presence, that you can hear Him more clearly. This is a virtue that must be practiced every day. Then, when you have learned to practice the smallest steps, you'll be given the greater tasks, having proven yourself faithful. Our Lord has taught us this in a parable:

"So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'" Matthew 25:20–21

And in another parable He said,

"Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'" Luke 19:16–17

Be faithful in everything, the lesser as well as the greater. Let God lead each of your steps—not just the big decisions but also all of the small ones in between.

The Prayer

Lord, help me to hear You more clearly, that I can follow You in all the little

steps. From this day forward, I choose to obey You in everything. Lead each of my steps and each of my decisions. Show me what I should do, and illuminate the way. That way, my little steps of faith will grow my heart to take the larger leaps.

Scripture for Thought

“He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.” Luke 16:10

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

Day Twenty-Two

Taking Up a Servant's Heart

Jesus came to serve, not to be served. If He is the King of kings and the eternal Lord of heaven, yet He would serve us, how much more should we as His servants be found loving and serving one another?

Pray for open eyes to see others' needs around you. With every opportunity God provides you, portray a servant's heart today. Do not do this for today only, but always, that you may be the example of Jesus daily.

The Prayer

Jesus, please make me more like You. Open my eyes to see others' needs and help me to serve them diligently. Open the door for me to serve more, both the church and my brethren. Simply lead me as I serve in each way, that I may know what will have the greatest impact for Your glory.

Scripture for Thought

"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." Galatians 5:13

"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

Day Twenty-Three

Finding Strength in Your Own Battles

There are times when the battle seems to take a turn for the worse. But do not lose heart: God never loses. While Satan may be able to hinder us and our actions, he can never hinder God. The Lord will work and act exactly when He intends to; then you will be delivered by the hand of God, and nothing shall stop the Lord from saving you.

Have faith and let your heart rest in it. When all hope seems lost, reflect on all the ways God has been faithful to you before. Remember each situation and meditate on it. Then worship the Lord, thanking Him for His faithfulness. Proceed to worship Him in thanksgiving that He will overcome your current struggles in life.

The Prayer

Lord, strengthen me today. Overwhelm my losses with Your victories. I cannot fight the battles. The battle is Yours and always has been. So help me to rest in You while I wait for Your mighty hand to save me. If there is anything You want me to learn from this season of my life, I pray that You'd open my eyes to it, that I can learn it sooner.

Scripture for Thought

"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

"I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living." Psalm 27:13

Day Twenty-Four

Finding Strength Through His Promises

The Lord cannot lie, and is always true. Why, then, would God need to promise us anything? His words are perfect! If He says it will come to pass, will it not come to pass?

When we promise something, it helps us hold to integrity. When we swear an oath, it makes us feel a greater obligation to uphold what we've promised. Therefore, we as flawed humans promise things not only for the sake of those to whom we promise but also for our own sake. We promise for their comfort, that they may have greater faith that we will uphold our word. Yet we also promise for our own sakes, that we would have greater conviction to put forth extra effort to finish what we began. By making a promise, we feel more obligated to uphold our word.

But the Lord is perfect in all He is and all He does. Since He is perfect, it stands to reason that He doesn't make promises to have conviction or to feel obligated. God, unlike mankind, is not obligated by promises but by love, and through love He upholds His word and saves.

Then why does God make promises? For our comfort, no doubt—that we who trust in His word should believe that He will be faithful to finish what He began.

Knowing, then, that the promises were made for our faith, we ought to take them to heart. By reflecting on the promises of God, we aren't reminding Him to be faithful, for God is always faithful. Rather, reflecting on His promises reminds us of God's love that obligates Him to be faithful. Read your Bible today and reflect on His promises, including biblical promises as well as personal reassurances the Lord may have given you.

Pray according to those promises and let it increase your faith as you reflect on His faithfulness and love.

The Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for each of Your promises. Thank You for power to overcome the enemy. Thank You that my name is written in heaven. Thank You that You promise to provide for my needs always.

Help me to reflect on each of Your promises today. Show me which ones I should meditate on as I read Your word. Please encourage me and strengthen my faith.

Scripture for Thought

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” 2 Peter 1:2–4

“For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” Acts 2:39

“For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” 2 Corinthians 1:20

“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

Day Twenty-Five

Becoming a Praise Warrior

Worship the Lord in every situation of life, whether life is good or trials abound. Isn't He worthy of this? Not only should our mouths glorify Him in the joyous moments of life, but during hardships as well we should be found singing of His faithfulness.

Whatever your situation may be today, resolve to worship the Lord throughout the day. Let His praise continually be on your lips and in your heart. When we reflect on the joy of the Lord, we ourselves become joyous.

If you're at work and are constantly full of the Lord's joy, how might that affect unbelievers who hate their job? "Why are you always so happy being here?" they'll ask you. But do you see how it gives you an opportunity to witness? Thus, the praise of God will be on your lips even more as you describe the wonderful love of God.

The Prayer

Lord, I dedicate my day today to Your praises. Help me to keep a constant heart of worship and to honor You with all the things I say. I commit my life to being a living worship for You. Help me to keep this heart always, from this day forward.

Scripture for Thought

"I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High." Psalm 9:1–2

"Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful. Praise the LORD with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy." Psalm 33:1–3

"I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth." Psalm 34:1

“Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.” Psalm 29:2

Day Twenty-Six

Choosing Words That Heal

There are times when a prayer warrior will have to step into the shoes of a medic. Satan beleaguers the brethren, and our words can have a profound impact on their healing. But if we aren't careful with the things we say, our words could tear down rather than build up.

Words can bless, and words can crush, but if they're not founded in love, they'll always be harmful in one way or another. There are times when we let certain words slip that we don't really mean to say: Some may be hurtful words, due to frustration or anger, and some may be crude or ungodly words. When battling our own hearts to speak uprightly, surrounding ourselves with godliness is key.

If we surround ourselves with people or activities that don't edify, they will influence us to speak or act inappropriately. If you watch inappropriate movies or shows, play inappropriate games, or spend quality time with ungodly people, it will influence you to do wrongly. Even as it is written,

"Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.' Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame." 1 Corinthians 15:33–34

What we choose to spend our time with dictates what manner of person we'll become. If we choose to surround ourselves with godliness, it will assist us in our efforts to become godlier people. But if we surround ourselves with negative influences, negativity will come from our mouths. You reap what you sow. If you sow to the flesh, you will reap the corruption of the flesh. As we read,

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." Galatians 6:7

Knowing this, we should sow incorruptible seeds of love into the hearts of others through the words we use. And we should sow godliness in our own hearts, that we may produce those words. For every word we speak begins with the heart. As Jesus said,

"…For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 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 12:34–37

Knowing that we are judged by our words, we should be careful to speak each of them in the love and purity of Jesus. Love justifies, but the flesh brings forth corruption. If we sow to the flesh, our words will reflect it. Fleshly words do not heal but, rather, can assist the enemy in his efforts. Yet words founded in the grace and love of Jesus, which are laid on our heart through the Spirit, will certainly create victory. As the Lord said,

"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:10–11

Everything comes full circle when we realize that our words must be spoken with regard to the love and conviction of the voice of the Holy Spirit. Everything we say and do must be a reflection of His heart. The only way to speak His words is to listen carefully to His voice and speak accordingly. For the Lord also said,

"…I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say." Exodus 4:12

God has works for us to accomplish and healing words for us to share. If we listen intently to Him and apply His love toward others through our speech, it will edify, build up, strengthen, and empower a fellow warrior to rise up in faith again and seize his or her own victories through Christ.

But if we surround ourselves with ungodly activities and unholy people, we will act like them, walk like them, and talk like them. As it is written,

"The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray." Proverbs 12:26

The way of the wicked doesn't lead the wicked astray. They are already astray! In order to be led astray, you must be walking in the paths of good first and then be tempted to stray from them. The wicked influence the righteous to do as they do.

You've always known about peer pressure, and that is one of the methods a

group of ungodly people would use to turn you astray. If they are your friends, then by nature you'll want to make them happy. If everything contrary to God makes them happy and everything holy makes them unhappy, what manner of words and actions will you use to appease those friends? Hence it is written,

"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.'" 2 Corinthians 6:14–17

Some preach that we should become like the world to let the world in, but this verse testifies otherwise. We must show them through loving conviction how far away from God they are, that they may see their need to repent and receive Jesus. If an unbeliever needs healing words, then preach Christ to him or her. What good is it to heal the heart but allow the soul to remain condemned and corrupted? Even though we must be loving to them, we should never be friends with those who do not love Jesus or have Him as Savior. As it is also written,

"Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." James 4:4

Yes, we should attempt to be a light to ungodly people, but spending too much time with them can stomp out our own light. We need to focus on the things that benefit our walks in Christ—the first being the time we spend with the Lord.

The more you sit in the light of Jesus, the more like Jesus you'll become. The Apostles were the ultimate example of the Lord in everything they said and did, but they also walked with the Lord. If you abide constantly in the Spirit of Christ, then you likewise will have words that empower, edify, save, build in faith, and make a difference.

Examine yourself today. How have your words been healing others? How have they been reflecting the heart of the Lord? Dedicate your mouth to the Lord from this day forward to expressing the love of God through everything you say.

The Prayer

Lord, I dedicate my mouth to You from this day forward, that all my words would be spoken through Your Spirit and in Your love. Help me to achieve this. Keep me convicted to keep a holy, loving mouth. I want to reflect Your image not only in my actions but in my words as well. May Your words be with my mouth, and please teach me what to say. That way, everything I speak will not return void but, rather, will be filled with Your blessings, love, and praise.

Scripture for Thought

“O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.” Psalm 51:15

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

“For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things.

“See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.

“But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing.

“My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh. Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.” James 3:2–13

Day Twenty-Seven

Abiding in the Spirit

It is written,

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” John 15:4

The original Greek word for ‘abide’ in this verse is *meno*, which means to “abide, or continue in.” It is a word that is generally used in reference to places or time, and it can pertain to traveling or sojourning. To abide in Christ, therefore, doesn’t merely mean “to continue to be Christian” or “to dwell in Jesus.” Jesus is calling the believer to dwell in the path of light or to continue along its course by remaining in the light.

So in essence, He is calling you to remain in the light of His presence. This concept was discussed earlier in the Old Testament, by Job, and was revisited in this passage. As it is written,

“There are those who rebel against the light; they do not know its ways nor abide in its paths.” Job 24:13

Knowing this, we must all abide in the light. But now the question remains, “If God is always with us, then how can we *not* abide in His light?” Jesus answered this in John 15:4 when He said, “Abide in Me, and I in you.” By this statement He made clear that He abides in us always but we need to “abide back,” so to speak.

When you abide in Christ, you bear the fruit of Christ. If you always abide in Him, then why do you sin? Is that His fruit? Certainly not. Thus, it is easy to determine that we don’t always reflect on Him as we ought.

While His mind is always on us, our minds are not always dwelling upon Him. But if we continually reflect on His presence, and speak to Him constantly through the day, we will be more sensitive to His Spirit’s voice—and that is how you abide. If you aren’t doing this, then you haven’t been abiding in Christ the way He calls you to do.

You must sensitize yourself to the Holy Spirit by reflecting continually on His presence. If you don’t incline your ear to Him, it may be difficult to discern His words when He speaks softly. The Spirit is always speaking to you. If you don’t

pay attention, you won't know what the Lord is calling you to do.

If you don't know what God is telling you to do, how can you obey and bear the fruit of Christ? Instead, you will be left trying to interpret the Scriptures for yourself, and trying to figure out when and how to apply them as you personally think God may want you to do. This, however, is a legalistic approach to applying the Scriptures.

But if you listen to the Holy Spirit, He will tell you continually throughout the day how to apply the word and what the Father wants you to be doing. If you don't abide, His voice will be hard to hear and you won't know these things. True victory comes through the Lord's strength. If you want God to be your strength, then you must abide in His constantly.

In the course of this book, we have mentioned many times two of the greatest ways to abide: continual prayer and worship. Because abiding in the Spirit is the cornerstone of walking in Christ, it is essential for us to revisit this concept continually.

When you worship, go to church or Bible study, or read a devotion, you may feel a sense of strength and rejuvenation in the Spirit. This is what it feels like to abide. Some people may try to convince you that those "high moments" are rare and that it is typical to experience them once a week or less. But God wants you to experience this invigorating enlightenment every moment of the day.

Practice abiding in His presence today. Make it your life's goal to abide all day and every day. Worship, pray, and reflect on His presence. When you do, you'll be sensitized to His voice and will be able to obey Him more effectively, have greater conviction, be more emotionally sound in trials, and even get more from reading your Bible. The Spirit will speak to you constantly, both inwardly and when you read the word. He will teach you, strengthen you, and edify you.

So make it your goal to rely more on the Spirit and to lean completely on Him for every decision you make, path you take, action you choose, and word you use. By abiding, you'll overcome every trial, obstacle, sin, and bondage with ease. Nothing will be too difficult for you because the Lord will be doing it through you.

The Prayer

Lord, teach me to abide continually. Help me to do this, and deliver me from

Satan, who will rise up to distract me through other people or circumstances so that I may forget to abide. I commit myself to abiding in your Holy Spirit continually from this day forward.

Scripture for Thought

“But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him. And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.” 1 John 2:27–29

“Whoever abides in Him does not sin…” 1 John 3:6

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

Day Twenty-Eight

Being Led by the Spirit in Everything

Abiding and being led by the Spirit are two different concepts. Abiding sensitizes us to His voice, and when we are led by the Spirit, we are obeying His voice. Just because we hear Him doesn't mean we always listen—consider sin, for example. The Spirit convicts us, and if we don't obey, we sin.

Any time we don't obey God, we sin. If we can't hear Him because we don't pay attention, we're sinning through complacency. God's voice must matter to us, and we must walk in the Spirit. Those who walk in the Spirit perform every righteous act, and there is no judgment against them because the Spirit is above the law, having written it. Hence we read,

"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them." Ezekiel 36:27

"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

When we are led by the Spirit, we fulfill every work of righteousness God desires from us. But that abiding and walking in the Spirit are two different concepts is evident, for it is written,

"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 the Spirit. Therefore, we must be exhorted to do so. We must conform our heart to the Lord's, that we can be led by Him in everything. If we truly desire His will, then we'll obey His voice.

If you struggle with understanding His voice, pay even more thoughtful heed to what you believe to be His voice. Then, if the voice tells you to do something but it turns out that it isn't of God, remember that voice and never obey it again. If, however, it turns out to be God, remember how it felt and sounded, and never question it again but, rather, obey through blind faith.

If any do not walk in the Spirit, they will walk in the flesh. If we walk in the flesh, we sin. Knowing this, we must not be self-willed but, rather, die to self to

obey the Lord’s conviction.

Now, some may argue, “I know what God wants of me. I read it in the Bible. When I do what the Bible says, I walk in the Spirit naturally.”

However, this isn’t true. The Holy Spirit will tell you how and when to apply the word. If you obey the Scriptures how you assume God wants you to, rather than waiting to be led by the Spirit, then you’ll act presumptuously. The word ‘presumption’ literally means, “a belief that something is truth without evidence to prove it” and “a desire to act on a belief without having the authority to do so.”

The Holy Spirit’s voice is your evidence. In what way has He ever lied? In what has He ever been wrong? How have His ideas been less than our own? In what way has the Holy Spirit ever led you in an imperfect way? If His ways are perfect, then why should we act without Him, knowing that our own are not?

But if any say the Bible is above the Spirit, they neglect the fact that the Holy Spirit wrote the Bible through men, for which reason it is called the word of God. Assuredly, if He wrote it, He would know it better than anyone else. But if we say the Holy Spirit is not necessary, then we risk blaspheming Him by claiming that our own interpretations of the Bible are wiser than His perfect truth.

This is why presumption is a sin. As we read,

“‘But the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the LORD, and he shall be cut off from among his people.” Numbers 15:30

And as David said,

“Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression.” Psalm 19:13

Notice that the scripture finishes by calling it a great transgression. While it may seem like a small thing to us to brush off the faint whispers of the Spirit, or to form our own opinions about the Bible and live by them, God makes clear that it is one of the most grievous sins to Him.

So take it to heart to obey the Spirit in everything. Commit yourself to walking in the Spirit and being led by Him always. A true prayer warrior obeys the voice

of his or her general and does not question Him.

So submit as a warrior ought to the General's voice, no matter how small, that you may please Him who enlisted you.

The Prayer

Lord, I understand the importance of not being presumptuous. I want to be a person after Your own heart. So lead me by the hand as I humbly submit to Your Holy Spirit.

Scripture for Thought

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

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

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

Day Twenty-Nine

Praying for Spiritual Gifts

Prayer is a powerful weapon, but God has many more He wants to add to that arsenal. Pray for spiritual gifts, and by them He will build and edify the church through you. Through gifts the Lord also shows you a great sense of intimacy.

If you want to be more intimate with Him, then gifts are one of the many ways. If you're going through a trial and God gives you an encouraging dream or vision, wouldn't that draw you nearer to Him? Wouldn't that encourage you to have more faith? Certainly it would, and when your faith increases, so does your sense of victory—because faith is your victory.

Sometimes He doesn't give you these things, however, unless you ask for them. He is always reaching for you, but being relational, sometimes He waits for you to reach back.

Take the time to pray in faith for each of the gifts. You never know which one God may grant you. Do this always, and in time He will give you many of them if it is in His will.

The Prayer

Lord, I want to take the time to ask You for a greater intimacy with You. I believe that if You're willing, You can grant the gifts to me. Not knowing which one You desire for me, I pray for each of them—beginning with prophecy: I pray that You would show me the unseen for the edification of the Church. Or maybe the gift of tongues to edify my own heart.

If it is in Your will, I ask for spiritual dreams and visions. Teach me what will happen next in my life through them. I ask for the ability to discern spirits, and that You would sharpen this ability constantly so I can walk with Your eyes in my head, discerning what is happening behind the veil at all times.

Lord, I ask for miracles to Your glory, that my faith and the faith of my brethren may be increased. I pray especially for words of wisdom, for knowledge, and for extraordinary faith. Distribute to me as you will, and grant me the gifts that are best for me and for Your body.

I don’t know what Your will is, but I will ask You for these things daily because I want more of You. Jesus, will You be more intimate with me?

Scripture for Thought

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” 1 Corinthians 12:4–11

“Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” 1 Corinthians 14:1

Day Thirty

The Power of a Thankful Heart

With all that God does for us, it's good to remember to have a heart of gratitude. Everything He does is done out of love to create a future for us—even the hardships He permits. When we choose to have a thankful heart regardless of our circumstances, we humble ourselves to remember His faithfulness daily. When we remember His faithfulness, it increases our faith to overcome the obstacles we experience.

Whether you need an extra boost of faith or have experienced a tremendous victory, you should be found praising the Lord. As it is written,

"…in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." 1 Thessalonians 5:18

A prayer warrior's greatest battle is against his or her own heart. It can be difficult to flee temptations, keep a focus on the Spirit, have hope when there is none, find good in evil circumstances, and praise God through all the pain. But as you learn to surrender your thoughts and feelings and just thank Jesus, it washes away the difficulties in the refreshing peace of the Spirit's presence.

It is not that we should thank Him for the evil in our life but, rather, that we should find reason to thank Him during those experiences. I have heard some teach that you should thank God not only *in* your circumstance but also *for* your circumstance. But this isn't what the Scriptures are telling us to do.

As if God would require a person to say, "Thank You, God, that my nine-year-old daughter suffered terribly from cancer before I finally lost her. Thank You that she died and I am full of grief now. I am grateful for that."

How abominable! God requires such a person to find comfort in His arms. And during those moments, the person can be grateful that his or her daughter is at peace and that the parent can find comfort in the Lord. Those who are of the world have nothing when they lose a loved one. But we have comfort from the most compassionate Person to exist. Being able to be sincerely comforted is always a good reason to be gracious.

Look into your own circumstances and find something to be grateful for today. Let the Spirit guide your heart as you find the things for which to praise God in

prayer. While you may not be suffering now, one day you will be, and if you commit yourself to developing a habit of praise, you will find strength in your darkest moments. Even when it seems impossible to smile, God will reach down into your empty heart and create joy from the nothingness that consumes it.

Dedicate yourself from this time forward to give thanks in every situation, every day. Find reason to adore your God and build a habit of praise.

The Prayer

Lord, I see the wisdom in developing a habit of praise. May You remind me of all Your goodness and all the ways You've loved me as I reflect on the works You've done in my life. Increase my faith as I remember Your faithfulness.

Show me also how to have joy and gratitude when I can't see a reason for it. I know that You are always doing something good in my life. So please open my eyes to it, that I can praise You for it. From this day forward, I dedicate myself to building a habitual life of praise.

Scripture for Thought

"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…" 1 Chronicles 16:8–12

"…be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ…" Ephesians 5:18–20

"…in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." 1 Thessalonians 5:18

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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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