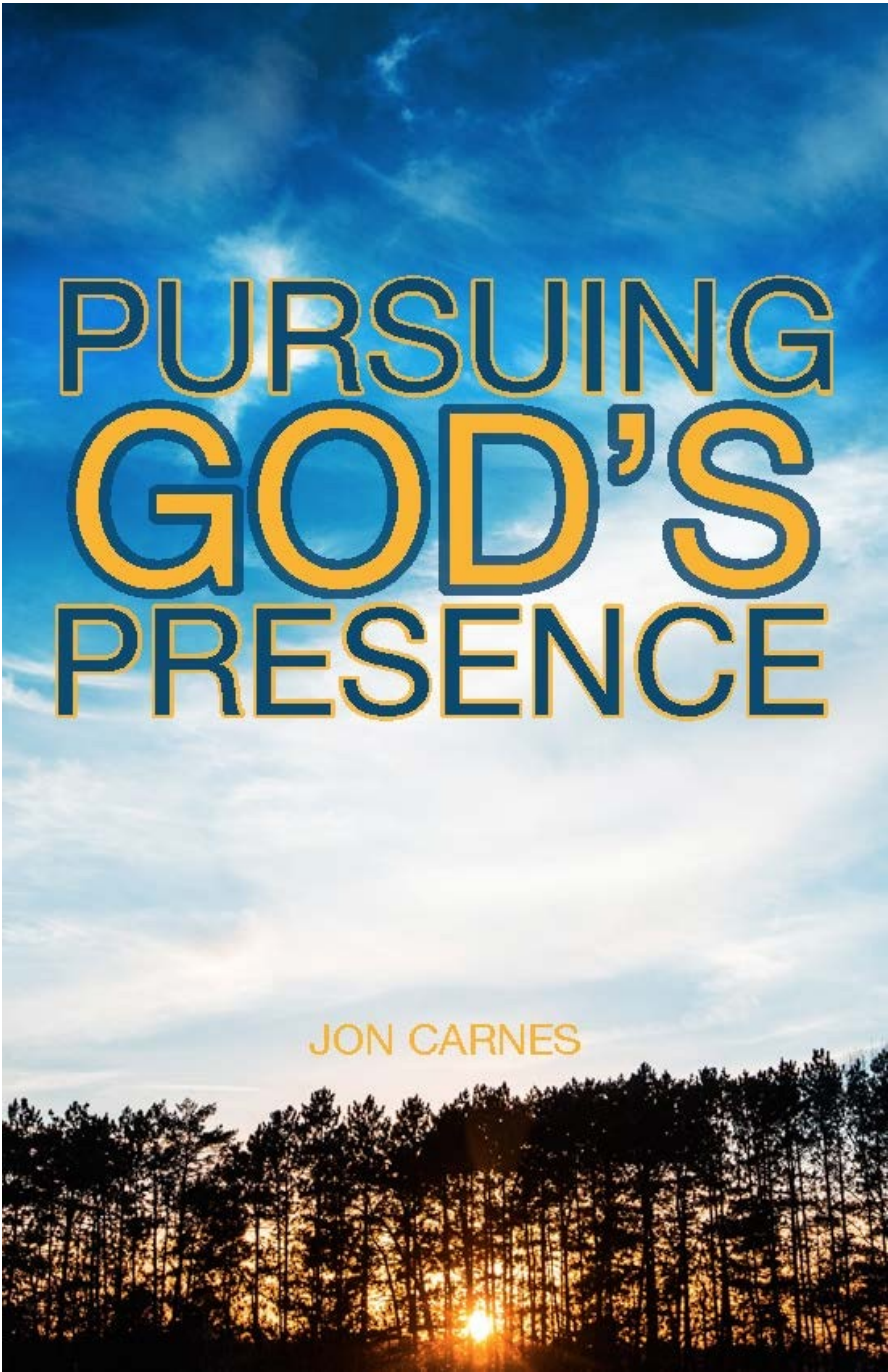




PURSUING GOD'S PRESENCE

JON CARNES



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Revelation 2:20

“Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”

Fasting Commitment Hungering for God

My Cause or Reason for Fasting

Corporate Prayer: To seek the presence of God

Personal Prayer: (Specific Daily Prayer)

I will fast: Begin date: _____ End date : _____

Who will I ask to pray with me on a specific issue, if anyone?

I believe that God is the only answer to my request and that prayer without fasting is not enough to get an answer to my need. Therefore, by faith, I am fasting because I need God to work in these matters.

God being my strength and grace being my basis, I commit myself to this fast.

When you fast you can expect:

1) Expect to get to know God better

Lamentations 3:25-27 The LORD is good to those who depend on him, to those who search for him. So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the LORD. And it is good for people to submit at an early age to the yoke of his discipline:

Jeremiah 29:11-13 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

2) As you demonstrate sincerity to God, you can expect:

- Expect strength in your inner character

2 Corinthians 7:1 Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God.

- Expect God to answer unselfish prayers
- Expect resistance from the devil
- Expect your prayers to go to a higher level

How to succeed in fasting

1) Fast with friends

Matthew 18:19 "I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you.

2) Fast with a purpose (not casually)

3) Fast unselfishly

4) Spend time with God (Fasting works when you pray)

Types of Fasts

Full Fast

Drink only liquids (establish a certain number of days).

3-Day Fast

This fast can be a Full Fast, Daniel Fast or give up at least one item of food.

The Daniel Fast

Eat no meat, no sweets and no bread. Drink water and juice. Eat fruits and vegetables. Daniel 1 and 10

Partial Fast

A partial fast is from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm or from sun up to sundown. There is no food during the daylight hours. The normal meal times are used for prayer.

Scripture References for Fasting:

Matthew 6:16-18, Matthew 9:14-15, Luke 18:9-14

Relation to Prayer and Reading of the Word: 1 Samuel 1:6-8, 17-18, Nehemiah 1:4, Daniel 9:3, 20, Joel 2:12, Luke 2:37, Acts 10:30, Acts 13:2

Corporate Fasting: 1 Samuel 7:5-6, Ezra 8:21-23, Nehemiah 9:1-3, Joel 2:15-16, Jonah 3:5-10, Acts 27:33-37

Remember that it is the attitude of a heart sincerely seeking God to which He responds with a blessing (Isaiah 58, Jeremiah 14:12, 1 Corinthians 8:8). May God greatly bless this season of fasting!

How to prepare for the Daniel Fast

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

How to begin Spiritually:

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

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

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

Deciding How Long:

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

How to End a Fast:

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

Pursuing God's Presence An Imperative Decision

Psalm 63:8 "I cling to you; your right hand upholds me."

Purpose

The purpose of this devotional is to help Christians remember, and if need be, rediscover the importance of divine relationship. Scripture is not the key to Christianity. It is the tool, the means by which we discover the knowledge of God. We teach truth that is the foundation for faith, as we should. However, we are tempted to become comfortable and complacent that a knowledge of the Bible is enough. While knowledge is important, it cannot replace the assurance and confidence that comes with a personal relationship with God.

How to use this Booklet

There is a devotional thought for each day of the twenty-one day fast. Each reading ends with a scripture and inspirational thought from a song and a prayer. Scriptures are used as a foundation for each prayer. We know we are praying the will of God when we pray the scriptures. The closing prayer for each day comes directly from a Bible passage.

Symbols used in each section



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Day 1 - Pursuing Relationship

All relationships infer one specific attribute and that is interpersonal interaction. Yes, it is God Who initiates the relationship which is called prevenient grace. However, once we experience the drawing of the Spirit upon our souls, it becomes our task to respond. *Revelation 2:20* “Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him (her) and will dine with him, and he with Me.” This verse echoes the reciprocal nature of the relationship God expects with us.

All relationships are built on mutually beneficial interaction. Even though grace is unmerited favor, it never allows for unwarranted neglect. “For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through the angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (Hebrews 2) In other words, we receive a Savior Who imparts forgiveness; we do not receive forgiveness that is accompanied by a Savior.

This relationship with our Lord stirs us to experience *Psalm 42:1-2*, “As a deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?” A spiritual hunger and thirst does not come just because we attend church services. The deep thirst of the soul comes as we seek God with all our heart. He can put the urge within us, but we must cultivate a taste for the Holy. Scripture reveals God having the ability to think, be rational, love, be jealous, enjoy, intercede, suffer, grieve, bless, curse, will, etc. In other words, He is a God Who created us in His own image and desires to have a personal relationship with His creation. Our own awareness of our spiritual lives gives evidence of God’s passion to have a relationship with us. He is calling us to recapture the incredible wonder of Who He is.

After the initial drawing of grace on the soul (*John 12:32*) comes each person’s response. We discover what the early church was taught in *James 4:8* “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded.” We are expected to do our part in maintaining a right relationship with God. Why else would James add repentance and surrender to the encouragement to continually draw near. We have a calling that goes beyond our vocations. It is a calling to continually discover more of God. We should never become satisfied with ordinary, but desire the extraordinary presence of God in our lives. This is not an appeal for emotion, but for the reality of discerning the voice of God. Emotionalism has never proven God’s presence. A growing knowledge of Who God is and who each Christian is in Him is the proof of God’s presence in a life. This results in lifestyle and attitude changes where we understand how to be more Christ-like in all areas of life. The Divine is drawing His people to Himself. He is still calling people to worship in spirit and truth. He urges our soul to “follow hard after Thee.” It is the choice of each individual, so choose wisely.

 *Psalm (42:1-5)*

As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, with the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence.

 **“Open Up The Skies” (Deluge)**

Our beloved Father please come down and meet us, we are waiting on Your touch. Open up the heavens, shower down Your presence, We respond to Your great love.

We won’t be satisfied with anything ordinary.

We won’t be satisfied at all. Open up the sky, fall down like rain.

We don’t want blessings, we want You. Open up the sky, fall down like fire, we don’t want anything but You.

Our beloved Jesus, we just want to see You, in the glory of Your light. Earthly things don’t matter, they just fade and shatter, when we’re touched by love divine.

We won’t be satisfied with anything ordinary. We won’t be satisfied at all. Open up the sky, fall down like rain we don’t want blessings, we want You. Open up the sky, fall down like fire we don’t want anything but You.

Praying the Scripture into My Life



Hebrews 10:19-25

Father, through Your Spirit I have found a confidence to enter the Holy of Holies. This is the place where You sit on the judgment seat of the world. Through the New Covenant, signed in the blood of Jesus, I have the right to come before You in prayer. I come before Your throne with a sincere heart. I come with a full assurance that is promised to those who have received You through faith. My sins have been forgiven and I know, by faith, I am one of Your children. I commit to hold without reservation the hope I profess.

I acknowledge my spiritual life has its foundation in the work of Christ. Help me realize the opportunity to encourage others in order to fulfill the good works God has created for us to accomplish. I commit to remain faithful to corporate worship. It is easy to get out of the habit, and I confess my need for the fellowship of the church body. Help me to develop and maintain a passion for Your house and the worship I experience in it. Help me develop an appetite to learn the truth found in Your Word and to make it a part of my daily living.

Day 2 - Pursuing Knowledge

2 Peter 1:2-11


“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him Who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Knowledge is the ability to grasp reality as it actually is. The common thinking in our society is that everyone's truth is their reality. This grievous error has led to a multitude of religious philosophies which have no basis in scripture. However, true knowledge is a discipline someone develops when they set aside personal philosophy and tradition to seek God's revelation. God has manifested Himself in scripture, creation, history, and in the lives of people. He does not desire to be a strange power somewhere out there in a distant universe. He is ever-present, a right here, right now God. He desires to have a personal relationship with His creation. *“This is good, and pleases God our Savior, Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”* (1 Timothy 2:4)

Creation is a perfect example of God's revelation. While the world attempts to find a creation without God, the universe still screams out His name as it moves in miraculous order. People who do not desire to come into complete conformity with the will of God will search for an explanation other than Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God..." Christians do not have all the answers, but knowledge allows us to see the fingerprints of God all over this universe. Knowledge finds its beginning when a person starts with the understanding that God is. From this truth, creation and life begin to make sense.

Proverbs 9:10 reminds us, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Knowledge is not always having the answers. It is however, understanding Who designed the answer. No one can tell how a great artist sees the sculpture in a block of granite before the first chisel mark, but the result proves there was a creative mind behind the work. Look at the world around us and the only explanation that makes any sense is that a creative Genius was at work.

The Apostle Peter teaches us that we can know Who God is as well as participate in the divine nature. In other words, we can become increasingly Christ-like in attitude and behavior. We understand there is no power in us to do anything other than submit our will. The power comes from God's Spirit that is alive and at work in every believer. In Peter's list of spiritual discipline we see both action and attitudes: moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. The Apostle makes it plain these divine qualities come from God's nature. He also makes it clear the responsibility lies with each believer to cultivate them. In doing so, we become more like Christ and more attune to His presence in our lives. Knowledge is not mystical. It is attainable for those who will put in the effort to learn and grow.

 **Proverbs 2:6-10**

For the Lord gives wisdom, and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds victory in store for the upright, He is a shield for those whose walk is blameless, for He guards the course of the just and protects the way of His faithful ones. Then you will understand what is right and just and fair – every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

 **“Take time to be Holy” (William Longstaff)**

Take time to be holy; speak oft with thy Lord. Abide in Him always, and feed on His word. Make friends with God's children; help those who are weak, forgetting in nothing His blessings to seek.

 **Praying the Scripture into My Life**
Colossians 1:9-14

Father, I pray that You will fill me with the knowledge of Your will. Grant me the wisdom and understanding of Your Spirit. I commit to live a life worthy of You and to do my best to please You every day. Help me bear good fruit in the tasks you have provided and gifted me to do. I commit to engage my mind and grow in the knowledge of You. I pray that You will strengthen me with all power according to Your glorious might. Empower me to be an example of great endurance and patience. Father, I will give thanks and offer praise for accepting me into Your family. I will honor You for allowing me to share in the inheritance with the holy people who walk in the kingdom of light. You have rescued me from the dominion of darkness. You have given me forgiveness and the redemption of my soul.

2 Peter 1:3-9

Father, I acknowledge that Your divine power has provided me everything I need for a godly life through my knowledge of You. You are full of goodness and grace and have withheld nothing from me. You have given me many wonderful promises allowing me to participate in Your divine nature. This nature set me free from slavery to sin. You have offered me life with power over the evil desires which enslave this fallen world.

For this reason I commit to add to my walk of faith: goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and divine love. I will not only commit to know these characteristics but will work on developing them consistently in my life. I claim the promise You gave, so that if I do grow in faith, I will be productive and effective in my Christian walk. I will not allow myself to become nearsighted or blind and forget what You have delivered me from. I choose to move forward in faith.

Day 3 - Pursuing the Spirit

The scripture today comes out of Galatians Chapter Five. We start with a simple truth of freedom found in verse one, *“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”* We understand the freedom we find in Christ is not a static experience. It is a dynamic relationship in which we abide, grow, and find peace and hope. It is freedom to “deny self, take up a cross and follow Christ.” In the words of our Lord, *“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.”* We, as Christians, have been set free and empowered to live a holy life. It is in this life we find unity with God’s Spirit.

What freedom releases us from can be discovered in the words “subject again to a yoke of slavery.” We have to ask, “What slavery were we subject to?” We were slaves to a sinful mind which resulted in sinful behavior. *“For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace...”* (Romans 8:5-6) Therefore, the freedom we find in Christ releases us from the “mind set of the flesh.”

The second part of pursuing the Spirit is found in submitting our will to the leadership of the Spirit. *Galatians 5:16* states, *“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”* This is a picture of two walking together without controversy. Where the Spirit leads, we follow. To do this we have to become well acquainted with God’s Word and attune to His voice. God’s Spirit will never lead us to sin or anything else which would lessen our passion for God’s presence. Instead, He would lead us to the knowledge of God and the holiness found in Him. This is why Isaiah described God’s straight way as a highway of holiness in which the unclean could not venture. It is God Who makes us clean and it is the submission of our will to follow the Spirit which keeps us walking blameless before Him. Yet, there is one more important issue.

The last verses of this chapter offer us positive encouragement as well as a personal challenge. *Galatians 5:22-25*, *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.”* We discover encouragement when we realize that when the Spirit comes into our lives He brings the fruit of His presence with Him. The fruit of His presence is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. As we crucify the flesh and keep in step with Him, we discover this same fruit can be experienced in our lives.

Crucifixion was a terrible way to die, it was torturous and fierce. We are told to crucify the sinful nature because of its deadly work within us. The authority to do this comes through unity with the Spirit. We cannot do a holy work unless we are made holy. We are sanctified (made holy and set apart for holy service) through the Spirit. In turn, the Spirit empowers us to crucify everything in our lives which does not honor God. Many people will not go this far in their spiritual walk. Instead, they attempt to make friends with this hideous nature.

A man was walking along a path and in front of him appeared a large 5 ft. rattlesnake. It was as thick as his arm with a head almost as big as his fist. The snake spoke to the man, “You don’t have to fear me, I would never bite you.” The snake offered to let the man pick him up to experience that what everyone said about rattlesnakes was wrong. The man reached down and picked the snake up. Immediately the snake struck, sinking his inch long fangs deep into the man’s arm and releasing a lethal dose of venom. The man let go in an instant and protested, “You bit me after promising not to.” The snake responded as he crawled away, “I’m a rattlesnake; it’s my nature, why would you believe me?” Believers are challenged to take responsibility for keeping in step with the Spirit.

Romans 8:12-16

“Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”

“Be Thou My Vision” (Mary Byrne)

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart; Naught be all else to me, save that thou art; thou my best thought, by day and by night, waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.



Praying the Scripture into My Life

Galatians 5:22-26

Father, I commit to keep in step with the Holy Spirit. It is Your Spirit which will empower me with divine fruit. May I come to know Your love so intimately that I can share it with others no matter who that person might be. Thank you for the peace I have because of my salvation. I also pray that I may always know and remember the peace you desire to give that passes all worldly understanding. I ask for a steadfast spirit when the world is crashing around me. I ask for hope when the circumstances of life would remove my smile but cannot touch my soul. I ask for patience when people choose to reject me. I pray for compassion and forgiveness when misunderstanding divides relationships. I ask for strength when it is time to take an unpopular but necessary stand.

I ask for great courage as I share my life with others. Let me see them through Your eyes. Let me believe in their possibilities and not present circumstances. Help me to have a kind heart. Teach me to be slow in making judgments. May I always be quick to reach out with healing hands. Give me wisdom to choose my words wisely and speak with grace and true compassion. When I must speak directly, help me to do it with the right spirit. May I be known as a good person marked with good deeds done out of sincere compassion.

I commit to a life of faithfulness. I know this is Your will for me and the fruit of walking with Your Holy Spirit. May the influence of my life example a faithful walk. May people be able to see my passion for You through my life examples.

May violence be far from my life. Help me reject the temptation to engage this violent world with violence. Give me wisdom to know the difference in defending what I am responsible to defend and when to turn the other cheek.

Teach me self-control in all circumstances. Give me wisdom to know when the enemy has set a trap for my soul. Help me to set up moral barriers, relationship checks and balances, conflict resolution, and life principles that guard against wrong ethical choices.

Teach me what it means to crucify the flesh. Give me power to take control over the passions of the body and mind in order to walk with the Spirit. And when You have worked to make me a faithful child, remind me to be absolutely dependent upon You. Help me to escape the temptation that comes with arrogance and comparing myself with others. May I find my source of life in You alone.

Day 4 - Pursuing Grace

There is prevenient grace which draws each of us to God when we were dead in our sins. This kind of grace is unmerited favor initiated by God's Spirit as an invitation to repentance and forgiveness. Salvation is offered through the work of Christ, *"For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."* (Romans 5:17) The initial drawing is a person's first indication that God desires a personal, ongoing relationship.


It seems odd that most of our doctrines start with relationship and immediately turn toward liturgy or study. There is nothing wrong with either of those things unless it replaces the first order of business. The primary focus of each individual Christian should be to continually draw near to God. Our study, liturgy, discipleship and everything else we do must surrender to the need for God's presence. We move from the dynamic to the static quickly. We celebrate our theology to the neglect of the God we study.

Jesus had some strong words when He spoke of those who are known as disciples. This passage from *Luke 14:28-33* is one of those passages where the message is crystal clear. *"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' 'Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple."*

I have heard, as you have, people who say there is no cost to being a disciple of Christ. Jesus would offer a different perspective. There is a great difference between trying to earn salvation through works and living by faith as God requires. Those who try to be justified by a written code have no spiritual power to lift them from their sinful state. They may experience a life of discipline and sacrifice but no more than any person with determination could do. The drawing of the Holy Spirit (grace) cannot be earned. The sins of all people needed a perfect sacrifice. The grace that offers us salvation cost our Savior plenty. We cannot cheapen the work by intimating that such a tremendous sacrifice isn't going to require you and me to make a total commitment. Far too many Christians want to use Christ as cheap "fire insurance." He wants to be much more than that. Christ wants to have Lordship in your life.

Herein lies one of our great modern debates. It doesn't seem to be so modern when we realize Jesus spoke to the subject 2,000 years ago. Some would say, "Grace isn't free if it calls for any requirement or commitment." Jesus said, *"... any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple."* The Savior is saying you cannot continue in the experience of grace if you don't make an absolute commitment.

Peter encourages believers to grow in grace and knowledge. No one debates the idea that someone can grow in knowledge. But just as true is the fact that we can grow in grace. How do you grow in an atmosphere of unmerited favor? Grace is about relationship with God who draws us to Himself. We continually open out lives to the drawing of the Spirit. The depths of God's holiness is an ocean we can spend a lifetime getting to know.

 **Psalm 103:8-12**

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor His anger forever; He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

 **"Call it Grace" (Unspoken)**

It's the light that pierces through you to the darkest hidden place; it knows your deepest secrets but it never looks away; it's the gentle hand that pulls you from the judgment of the crowd; when you stand before them guilty and you've got no way out.

It's the breath that's breathing new life into what we thought was dead; it's the favor that takes orphans placing crowns upon their heads; it's the hope for our tomorrows, the rock on which we stand; it's a strong and mighty fortress even hell can't stand against.

Some may call it foolish and impossible, but for every soul it rescues it's a miracle, it's nothing less than scandalous, this love that took my place; just call it what it is, call it GRACE!

Praying the Scripture into My Life



Ephesians 2:1-10

Father, today is the confession of my salvation life. I confess that when I was living in sin I was spiritually dead, separated from You, and in danger of hell. I was walking in the company of the devil even though I did not realize it. I lived to gratify my own desires and was deserving of Your wrath. Only because of Your great love and mercy I was made alive in Christ. When I was dead and bound for hell, lost in sin, You found me, forgave my sin, and made me new in my soul.

It was Your wonderful grace which saved me, I did not possess enough power in myself to avoid that lifestyle of sin. You made me alive in Christ. You gave me power to live. You washed away my sin and gave me a brand new start. I never could have done enough good works to earn that. My sin was greater than my good deeds. Jesus paid my debt and set me free! Now I confess that I am Your workmanship, created in You to do good works. These works are by no means a way to earn salvation, but they are the result of my salvation. So I commit to a walk of faith which holds on to Your grace for the salvation of my soul. I commit to doing good works which manifest the faith I claim. I commit to growing in my knowledge and faith that I may be worthy to be led by Your Spirit to do works that honor You. Empower me to be worthy of the title “Christian.” May I ever live up to the purpose of a blood bought, Spirit-filled, new creature in Christ.

Day 5 - Pursuing Faith **Hebrews 11 (selected verses)**

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the Word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible... And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him... All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them... And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.”

Faith is defined in scripture by its activity. The word has a dictionary definition which offers the idea that faith is a belief and confidence in a truth with or without proof. Faith is an intangible quality within the spiritual mind. For those who do not believe in an eternal soul, this concept is difficult to grasp. For the reasonable person, it cannot be denied. Faith is a part of normal existence. We cross bridges everyday believing they will hold us up while we are told 7700 are in danger of collapse. We get in a box called an elevator which pulls us to death defying heights without much thought because we put our trust in engineers and contractors. However, when it comes to faith in God, there are some differences.

A certain amount of spiritual faith is found within each person. We know the universe is larger than we are. We know from its order and complexity that it had to have behind it a Creative Mind. Some will choose to make a life's work attempting to discount God only to show the futility of their argument with dead-end questions. If we are going to have a dynamic relationship with God, we must start with believing He is and He desires to interact with His creation. A. W. Tozer commented, “The modern scientist has lost God amid the wonders of His world; we Christians are in real danger of losing God amid the wonders of His Word.” We should know God's Word as much as is possible, but that is never a substitute for knowing God.

He is not a God that is somewhere out there in the distant universe. He is right here, right now; He was in the past, He is in the present, and He is already working into the future. God is a personality Who created humanity in His own image in order that our personality could have relationship with His. No one knows another in one meeting but over the long path of spending time together. God communicates through our mind, will, and emotions. In salvation we come alive in Christ, and now we are empowered and encouraged to cultivate that relationship. We have found God and now we pursue an intimate knowledge of all that makes Him God.

We most often relate faith with miracles or extraordinary events. Enoch walked with God and was no more. Moses saw seas part and food delivered from the sky. Elijah called fire from heaven. Paul shook the serpent off in the fire without any ill effects from the viper's bite. We miss the most important issue because the event seems so grand. The event came after the person walked with God so closely he knew His will and responded with obedience. Having faith is pursuing relationship until our will and God's will come into unity. Then, John tells us, we know our prayers will be answered.

Psalm 37:3-9

Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourselves in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

“Search My Heart” (matt Crocker and Joel Houston)

Search my heart and search my soul, there is nothing else that I want more, shine Your light and show Your face, in my life Lord have Your way.

Hear my cry and hear my prayer, draw me close I know You're near, Give me strength and give me grace, to walk with You Lord all my days.

So with all my heart and with all my soul, with all I am Lord I will follow You, You took the cross, You took my shame,

restored my life Lord, I will follow You.



Praying the Scripture into My Life

Colossians 3:1-10

Father, I'm thankful to have been raised with a Christian spiritual life. I commit to set my heart on things above. I will focus on things which honor You and help me serve You better. I commit to keep my mind from dwelling on earthly things. I do not want my decisions to hinder my ability to see the best path in life. May I keep my life hidden in You as Lord of my entire existence. I thank You that when Christ returns I will get to be with Him. However, I have to live this life here until You call me home.

Today I commit to put to death within me anything that belongs to the earthly nature. Such things as immorality, impurity of any kind, lust, evil desires, and greed will find no resting place in my life. These are things which belonged to my life before salvation. However, now I want to live free from anger, rage, malice, slander, and any filthy language. I commit to tell the truth as a believer should and not lie about anything. I will put on the image of Christ which is the life of every true Christian.

As one of God's holy people I commit to wrap myself in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. I will bear with my fellow Christians and forgive any offense which comes my way. I choose to forgive others as You have forgiven me. More than anything else, I will wrap my life in the love of Christ which is the key to a spirit of unity. I will allow Your peace to rule in my heart and always be thankful for all the privileges of being part of Your kingdom.

I gladly receive Your message of salvation. I accept my responsibility to grow in grace. I will share this message with others at every opportunity. I commit to a life of excellence. I will give You the very best effort I have. I choose to always have a thankful spirit.

Day 6 - Pursuing Passion

Philippians 3:7-16

“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.”

The biblical writer, who often spoke about striving for perfection, was the first to admit his constant need to move closer to God. Paul, the great apostle and church planter, presents the picture of a Christian on a journey. No matter how far he has come, he wants more of God. With all his experiences of seeing God change lives, even entire cities, Paul wants to sense the Divine Presence moving among people again and again. We can hear in these words an inner plea to not allow himself to get complacent and lose focus on the most important issues.

As E. Stanley Jones reminded us, “We are but Christians in the making.” We can be presently ready to stand before God, and therefore, perfect in a sense of being fitted for the walk of faith and ready to receive the prize. Yet, at the same time realize our need to keep pressing forward, to know God more intimately. This can be seen when you put it in terms of a changing, developing invention. Was the Wright brother’s airplane perfect? Yes, it was because it did what it was built to do. We only call it imperfect when compared to a Boeing 747. Is a Boeing 747 perfect? Yes, because it does what it is designed to do. However, can it do all the things a space shuttle can do? Christian perfection is relative to our present understanding of God’s will. Every one of us is in need of God’s grace, guidance, protection, and yes, even discipline. The determining factor is whether we “keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.” The ocean of God’s holiness is deeper than we can reach in a lifetime, but that does not mean we do not press on to know as much as we can. His love is unfathomable, but that does not mean we do not attempt to understand it as much as possible. His grace is without measure, but that does not mean we do not try to grow as if striving for a finish line. His mercy is too great for the mind to comprehend, but that does not mean we do not set our minds to learn. His personality is a great vast expanse, but that does not mean we do not venture into the vastness to discover all we can know of Him. Swim in the deep end of God’s holiness. The kiddie pool is no place for sincere followers.



Psalm 86:11-13

Teach me Your way, O Lord, and I will walk in Your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear Your name. I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify Your name forever. For great is Your love toward me; You have delivered me from the depths of the grave.



“I Am Resolved” (Palmer Hartsough)

I am resolved no longer to linger, Charmed by the world’s delight,
Things that are higher, things that are nobler, These have allured my sight.

I am resolved to follow the Savior, Faithful and true each day; Heed what He sayeth, do what He willeth, He is the living Way.

I am resolved to enter the kingdom, leaving the paths of sin; Friends may oppose me, foes may beset me, Still will I enter in.



Praying the Scripture into My Life

James 4:7-10

Father, I commit to submit myself to You. I offer all my life and not just parts of it. I will resist the devil with

Your Word, with faith, and with the knowledge I have gained. I commit to develop an appetite for You and not for sin. I thank you for the promise of victory when I resist the enemy. You promised as I draw near to You that You would come to me. So here I am again drawing near to You. From Your Word I understand that part of coming near to you is to wash my hands of sinful actions; to be done with evil. It also asks me to have a focused heart; a lifestyle not playing both sides.

I refuse to live where I try to search for Your divine blessing while still searching for pleasure in sin. That kind of life makes me double-minded and unstable as a Christian. When I have failed You, my spirit is convicted because I know I have grieved Your Spirit. Today I humble myself before You. I ask You to forgive everything in my life that may need to be forgiven. Help me to have such godly sorrow that to turn away from all that grieves Your heart is my reaction. Cleanse my heart so I am single-minded. I cannot lift myself. It must be You Who does this for me. I pray for renewal and for a revival of passion for holy things, I ask for Your abiding presence in my life.

Day 7 - Pursuing Hunger and Thirst

Matthew 6:25-33

“For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

The problem with any fast is most of us like to eat. Some have made it an art form. We often choose other things to give up so we do not feel the pain of hunger and thirst. Built within us in this drive to survive with hunger and thirst at its center. If someone stops eating, all the red flags of physical problems arise and the doctors are not far from a visit. In our passion for food we have developed a taste for that which we like. We know how to replace the things we do not like with those we do. We spend time learning how to cook a certain way. We know calories, fat content, and what is healthy and unhealthy to eat. People pay big money to have personal trainers to help them with hunger and health.

It is good to have a healthy body, but even more profitable to have a healthy soul. Whether we realize it or not, we are always feeding our souls. Hopefully we intentionally feed it on God’s Word. We also feed it with the entertainment we allow into our minds, the music we cultivate as a habit, and the people we allow to influence us. If the seeds of the things we put into our minds sprout roots and grow, what will it produce as fruit? We have to engage our minds at work. Christians should be known as the best employees anyone has. We have to engage our minds in the human relationships we have if we want them to be healthy and happy.

However, we are so often drawn by the hunger found in our flesh, we get distracted from the hunger we need to develop in our souls. Jesus teaches us that if we seek Him and that which belongs to His kingdom first, He is more than able to take care of the rest. People seek for righteousness two different ways. The first is an attempt to keep a law, which almost four thousand years of history taught us was impossible to do. The other way is to find our righteousness in Christ. This empowers us to surpass anything the Pharisees could ever understand or achieve. This kind of righteousness comes out of relationship. God will write His law upon our hearts and minds. That which He writes He empowers to achieve. He does not ask of us the impossible. That would make Him vindictive. John said that, in Christ, His law is not burdensome. In other words, it becomes the taste our soul likes to feed on and a joy to follow. It satisfies the hunger and thirst we have allowed to develop in our soul. It feeds the deepest longing of the heart.



Psalm 18:20-26

The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His ordinances were before me, And I did not put away His statutes from me. I was also blameless with Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore, the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyes. With the kind You show Yourself kind; with the blameless You show Yourself blameless; with the pure You show Yourself pure, and with the crooked You show Yourself astute.



“In Christ Alone” (Keith Getty and Stuart Townsend)

In Christ alone my hope is found; He is my light, my strength, my song. This cornerstone, this solid ground; firm through the fiercest drought and storm. What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when strivings cease, My comforter, my all in all, Here in the love of Christ I stand.



Praying the Scripture into My Life

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Father, teach me the path of walking in Your divine love. I acknowledge before You that if I speak in the tongues

of both men and angels but have not love, I am just making noise. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and knowledge and can move mountains with great faith, but do not possess love, I am nothing. Not one thing I am could make up for what I am not. Even if I seem compassionate, give to the poor and sacrifice personally for the good of others, but do none of it out of a heart of love, it has done me no good. This is a difficult confession but one that is true.

I pray that You fill me with love. Allow Your love to define my life. May it be revealed in patience, kindness, a lack of any envy, humility, absence of sinful pride, and an ability to honor others. May I sincerely be concerned about the needs of others above my own, not easily angered, and refuse to keep a record of wrongs someone has done to me. Train me to hunger for Your truth that works itself out in my life. May Your love always protect, always trust, find security in hope, and persevere in faith. For Your love will never fail my life.

Where there are prophecies they will cease; while I can learn from them I cannot lean upon them. Human and angelic tongues will be silenced and knowledge will pass away before Your holy Presence. I admit I only know in part and do the best I know how. I ask that You help me mature in faith. May I gain Your wisdom and understanding. Help me to set aside any childish ways I have and move on toward maturity. Faith, hope and love will be what endures in my life. May my life be marked with all of these but especially with the greatest, Your divine love.

Day 8 - Pursuing Attitude

Philippians 2:1-8

“Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

The attitude is the most important factor which determines how our life on any level will turn out. Attitude determines success in a job, in leadership, in family, in friendship, and in spiritual matters. We have all heard of someone who is “so heavenly minded, they are no earthly good.” Another debilitating attitude is to see evil in everything and hide from the world. Others have the attitude that God has to fit their definition or He will have to do without them. On and on we could go because there is no end to both good and bad attitudes. The great thing about attitudes is that each person determines the one he/she possesses. Your mindset is your mindset because you have chosen it to be just like it is. We blame the other person who has a bad attitude and excuse ours.

The attitude of the mind determines the depth of relationship we can have. The man who does not trust women will have a constant roadblock to developing a healthy family life. The person in life who distrusts other people may never know what it is to have a true friend. Our attitude toward God and His church has everything to do with how we seek Him and the depth of the relationship we will be able to discover. This is a fact of life, an absolute principle that is spoken to in scripture in many ways. Our attitude will lead us to seek the knowledge about God which is static and impersonal, or it will cause us to seek Him as a personality; to know in the sense of experiencing His divine presence.

In this passage Paul lays out some attitude principles that work in anyone’s life. We should constantly recognize that we are encouraged in Christ, experience His divine love, fellowship with His Spirit, and receive affection and compassion from His presence. This should make every Christian have a proper attitude. However, Paul recognized that some people would not be able to maintain the right mindset by focusing only on what they receive. He gives us some spiritual disciplines to practice in order to keep a correct focus.

Points of discipline:

- 1- Work at the difficult task of maintaining among Christians:
 - The same mind of Christ
 - Unified in spirit as we are led by His Spirit
 - In agreement on one purpose which is Christ’s commission.
- 2- Do nothing out of selfish ambition, be humble in attitude.
- 3- Consider the needs of others over your own.
- 4- Choose a servants attitude.

Take notice that all of these things have to do with the attitude of the mind. The mindset we choose opens or closes the door to coming into unity with God’s Spirit. Our attitude will be one of the greatest determining factors of whether we fellowship with the Spirit. God does not do stinking thinking. He wants us to come into unity with His will and grow in an incredible relationship offered through the work of Christ.

 **Proverbs 7:2-3**

Keep My commands and you will live; guard My teachings as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.

 **“May the Mind of Christ, My Savior” (Kate Wilkinson)**

May the mind of Christ, my Savior, Live in me from day to day,
By His love and pow’r controlling, All I do and say.
May the Word of God dwell richly, In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph, Only through His pow’r.



Praying the Scripture into My Life

Romans 12:9-21

Father, we confess that my love must be sincere, You accept no hypocrisy in this. I accept Your call to hate what is evil and cling to what is good. Help me be devoted to others above myself. Help me to willingly accept the role of servant instead of being the one who is served. Teach me to honor others in ways that please You. Convict me when I lack the zeal I should have for the life You have called me to.

Teach me to be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer. Remind me to share with Your people who are in need. Help me to learn hospitality. Give me grace to bless those who persecute me. Give me wisdom to minister faithfully as I rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who are hurting. Guide me to know how to live in harmony with others and not be party to division or quarreling. Guard my soul from positional pride so I can treat everyone the same. Make me blind to the financial or social status of people. Convict my heart if I become the least bit conceited.

Teach me not to repay evil for evil. Instead, empower me to do what is right in the eyes of others. As much as depends on me, I commit to live at peace with everyone. I reject the temptation for revenge but will leave room for Your wrath. Instead, if my enemy is hungry, I promise to find a way to feed him. If he is thirsty, I will find a way to give him something to drink. By doing this I will gain an opportunity to be a witness. I will learn to live a life above all worldly philosophy. I make a personal commitment to overcome evil with good through Your strength.

Day 9 - Pursuing Wisdom and Understanding

Wisdom is defined as the ability to grasp what is true and lasting. It comes from a root word which means to "live in the middle." This is to live with an understanding of God's truth and not be given to extremes. Isaiah teaches that it is a life in the middle of the Highway of Holiness. We choose neither a sinful lifestyle nor a Pharisaical attitude toward religion. It is to walk with our God in humility and in the knowledge of His will. Paul said it like this in *Philippians 3:16*, "Only let us live up to what we have already attained."


A clear picture of this characteristic can be gained by comparing the difference in human and divine wisdom. Human wisdom searches for knowledge outside God to explain life and its complicated relationship to nature. Divine wisdom believes all truth is God's truth and searches for created wisdom found in the foundations of the world. Human wisdom applauds craftiness and political cunning while divine wisdom celebrates personal responsibility and developing healthy relationships built on integrity and honesty. Human wisdom is man-made and man-defined; divine wisdom is God-given and can be found only through relationship with Him. We are reminded in *Proverbs 3:5-6*, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

True wisdom brings five benefits to life. It creates the ability to make decisions based on understanding the truth we find as we walk with the Spirit of God. Wisdom will become a life-long teacher to the person who allows it. It forces people to have to come to terms with whether they will choose the righteous path in life. Wisdom also protects people from the extremes in all areas of Christian living. It empowers believers to find and walk in the middle of God's road toward eternity. The fifth benefit of wisdom is that we can see eternity through the haze of the present culture. This was just as true in the middle ages as it is in this post-modern malaise of religious thought.

Words from the wisdom literature help make this clear, *Proverbs 2:1-6*, "*My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.*" This is true in spite of whatever the prevailing cultural philosophy.

Wisdom is recognizing truth while understanding is knowing what to do with it. They are two sides of the same issue. Yet, there can be no understanding without wisdom. Wisdom is the foundation and understanding provides the building blocks we use to construct who we are to become as a person. It is the union of both seeing and doing. We observe this in the life of Christ as He had wisdom and built His entire life on the understanding He gained. We find Him going often to prayer to find direction for the next step. This understanding humbly accepts the fact that there is a need for God's direction.

Understanding brings stability to life. This becomes most evident in times of trouble and when the world seems to be going through cultural confusion. *Psalms 119* establishes this principle for believers, "*Your righteousness is everlasting and your law is true. Trouble and distress have come upon me, but your commands are my delight. Your statutes are forever right; give me understanding that I may live.*" Understanding satisfies the thirst of the soul as it leads to a growing and effective life. *Proverbs 16:22* states, "*Understanding is a fountain of life to those who have it, but folly brings punishment to fools.*" A Christian has the opportunity to gain what Jesus said was life more abundant. This is life with meaning and a passion for something greater than the temporary nature of this existence. Wisdom and understanding always leads us to pursue hard after God.

 **Proverbs 2:1-5**

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

 "Amen" (Gloria Gaither and Chris Tomlin)

I believe in the Son, I believe in the Risen One; I believe I overcome by the power of His blood. I was dead in the grave, I was covered in sin and shame, I heard mercy call my name, He rolled the stone away. I'm alive, I'm alive because He lives.

 **Praying the Scripture into My Life**

Ephesians 1:18-21

Father, I pray that the eyes of my heart may be enlightened in order that I may know the hope to which You have

called me. Empower me through the incredibly great resources that come with the glorious inheritance You have created for holy people. May I experience Your great power as I choose to believe. May I know that same power present at the resurrection. This power is greater than any earthly power, any ruler, any authority, any dominion, and any name that could be invoked in this world or in the spiritual world.

What You have offered is power to become a new person in You, victorious over the enemy or any force which would hinder my walk with You. I am made alive by that power. It is this power which keeps me. Your power is there to provide all the strength I need. I find spiritual, emotional, and physical rest in that power.

Psalm 1

Father, I claim the promise of blessing if I do not keep in step with the wicked (sinful people who do not love God or care about His ways). I commit to never stand in the way of sinners or take a seat with those who would mock You, Your scripture, or a holy walk of faith. I will find my delight in Your law. I commit to think on Your words during each day and especially at night when life has slowed down.

I want to be like the person described as a tree planted by streams of water. I ask that You help me become someone who bears fruit (prosper in every area of life). Strengthen me to have a testimony of a healthy life spiritually and physically (a tree who has leaves that do not wither). May Your blessing be on the work of my life.

When judgment day comes, those who choose to be wicked (live in a habit of sin) will not be able to stand before You. They will never be allowed to sit with those who chose righteousness as a lifestyle. So I ask for divine protection as I commit to a righteous walk. The end of wickedness is destruction and I want no part of that. Guide my steps as I learn to follow after You.

Day 10 - Pursuing Revival (Five Keys to Revival)

Prayer is one of the essential keys to experiencing any type of spiritual renewal in an individual or in a church. There is no revival without answers to prayer, there are no answers to prayer without Christians praying in unison with the will of God, and there is no unison with His will if there is not a vital relationship with His Spirit. John said it this way, *"This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him."* (1 John 5:14-15) Prayer is not a suggestion but a prerequisite before the hand of God moves. When prayer is neglected, the will of God is suspended until His people come into agreement with Him in prayer.


The second key to revival is seeking and experiencing the power of God. Power was obvious in the life of Christ. The miracles, the command over life and death, and the power of His message were all examples of power. Power is also promised in the life of a believer. *Acts 1:8* promises, *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* Again in *2 Peter 1:3-4* we read, *"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."* These are not maybe scriptures, they are promises.

We have the power to change our communities. When the church began to minister in Ephesus, the power of their testimony made such an impact it was described in these words: *"In this way the Word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power."* We often act fearful at the noise of the world when we are the ones holding the power. When the church does not change its community, it is often because believers hide behind the walls of the building and scream uselessly at the darkness outside. The early church came out of the upper room on the day of Pentecost with power to turn a world upside down. Our communities would experience the same thing if we will live by the power of God's Spirit 24 hours a day.

God's divine presence must be in our midst if we are to experience spiritual renewal. We shy away from prayer meetings and settle for second best with just another Bible study. Most of us are educated far beyond our level of obedience. We need to study His Word, but first we need to seek His presence. Both are important; however, the most important is God in our midst! *"Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord..."* (Acts 3:19)

Where His presence is also comes a passion for heart purity. *"Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:21-22)* God always honors a pure heart. Revival will come when the people of God are ready to repent of our excesses and follow hard after Him.

The fifth key of revival is uninhibited praise given to God. This is not a call for emotionalism, even though revival has always carried with it an emotional characteristic because we are emotional creatures. *Psalm 150* teaches us, *"Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty expanse. Praise Him for His mighty deeds; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness. Praise Him with trumpet sound; Praise Him with harp and lyre. Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe. Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!"* Praise and testimony are natural responses to being in the presence of God. Isaiah fell to his knees, David danced in the streets, while others stood in awe at the wonder of God. There is no right praise, but a sincere, natural response each individual has when they experience God drawing near them.

 **Psalm 51:10-12**

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.

 **"Pentecostal Power" (Charlotte Homer)**

Lord, as of old, at Pentecost, Thou didst Thy pow'r display— With cleansing, purifying flame, Descend on us today. For mighty works for Thee, prepare and strengthen every heart; Come, take possession of Thine own, and nevermore depart. All self consume, all sin destroy! With earnest zeal endue each waiting heart to work for Thee; O Lord, our faith renew! Speak, Lord! before Thy throne we wait, Thy promise we believe, And will not let Thee go until Thy blessing we receive.

Praying the Scripture into My Life



Psalm 51:1-17

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your unfailing love. According to Your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, and You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight. You are right in Your verdict and just when You judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Yet You desired faithfulness even in the womb; You taught me wisdom in that secret place. Cleanse me so I will be clean; wash me so my soul will be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones You have crushed rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me. Then I will teach sinners Your ways, so they will turn back to You. Deliver me from the guilt of anger, hatred, malice, and any offense to the law of divine love.

O God, You Who are my Savior, my tongue will sing of Your righteousness. Open my lips Lord, and my mouth will declare Your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice or I would bring it. You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart. This You will not despise.

Day 11 - Pursuing Wonder

Psalm 8

*O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth,
You have displayed Your splendor above the heavens! From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength
Because of Your adversaries, to make the enemy and the revengeful cease. When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?
Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, All sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!*

The Church needs to recapture the incredible wonder that should be in the heart of every believer. We keep rearranging the order of service, the words of our liturgy and the process of discipleship hoping somehow to recapture the wonder of God. Somehow we have fallen into the trap of thinking if we get lucky enough to find the right combination, we will see God unlock His great treasure house of divine blessing. There is no secret combination, no right words of incantation, nor any certain order that will ever draw God. What grabs God's attention is a sincere hunger and thirst for Him.

Much of Christianity has shrunken God down to a mere "Cosmic Candyman." They surmise that He is a God Who blesses you with material good if you do the certain right things. Truly this must grieve the heart of God. If any should have been healthy and wealthy it should have been the disciples, yet all of them died martyrs except John. He died fairly poor in material goods, but wealthy in faith. We teach whatever doctrine we have come to hold while all too often not realizing the poverty we live in spiritually. No amount of knowledge can fill the place where God desires to reside. When we have come to know God, we can say as Paul did that we are content with little or much of this world's goods. The object of our affection is God and not His blessings.

Our "self-sins" keep us from knowing God in His fullness. Self-righteousness, self-love, self-security, self-dependence, self-pride, etc. have all kept us from drawing near to God with reckless abandon. We cannot seem weak before men so we wear masks to pretend when we know we are far from Divine presence. We have lost the wonder of God because we have lost the understanding that our iniquities separate us from our God. Every great renewal moment in history was accompanied by one common theme, people regained the wonder of God's presence and earnestly sought to draw up as close as they could get to Him. We must put off the fear that His light may reveal some dark secret and offer ourselves without reserve to His Lordship. May we be able to say again, "*O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who has displayed Your splendor above the heavens!*"



Psalm 145:3-5

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; His greatness no one can fathom. One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of Your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and I will meditate on Your wonderful works.



"How Great Thou Art" (Stuart Hine)

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds Thy hands have made, I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee. How great Thou art! How great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee. How great Thou art! How great Thou art!



Praying the Scripture into My Life

Psalm 8

Father, you are the covenant making, covenant keeping God. I praise Your name at home, in the community and in the sanctuary. I see Your glory in the stars and in all of nature. I promise to teach the children to praise You and by doing so build a stronghold against the enemy. I will praise You that from my lips those who would do harm to

the Church will be silenced and stop those who speak without wisdom.

I am amazed when I see the sun during the day and the moon and stars at night. I see Your fingerprints in the tides that rise and fall, the seasons that come and go, and the earth that renews itself season after season. What amazes me is the Creator of all this knows me by name. With all my faults You care deeply for me. I have been made a little lower than angels and entrusted with the responsibility to care for this earthly creation. You have entrusted me with Your wisdom, Your work, and Your testimony among all the peoples of the world. Lord, I am humbled and honored at Your willingness to trust me with all this. I will worship and praise You as my Covenant Keeper, Creator, my Lord God Almighty.

Day 12 - Pursuing Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father Who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.’”

The simple truth is prayer is a mystery. It is the discipline of learning to commune with God. The desire to spend time with our Father should come before the quest to receive answers to specific prayers. Religion without prayer is little more than a philosophy which believes in God. This kind of religious practice is at best static and worse is lifeless. Religion without prayer is like all the wires run in a house with the appliances, lights, and receptacles all in place but nothing is connected to the power source. Prayer is the connection between the power source, God, and the house, our hearts and the unity of many hearts connected for a common purpose.

Prayer has always been the defining characteristic of God’s people. When the Apostle Paul was acting out his aggression upon the New Testament church, he was sincere in his religion. He believed he was doing God and the Jewish religion a service. However, when he came face to face with Christ, he had a very different experience. God told Ananias, described simply as a disciple of Jesus, to go and pray for Paul. Ananias resisted approaching Paul because He had heard the stories of how he was persecuting the church. The next words of Christ show how He recognized the sincerity of Paul. He said, *“Behold he prays...”*

The power of prayer lies in learning how to pray in accordance with the design God set forth. It is not in how much we pray but learning to use Divine principles. Prayer is more than just a religious act. It is a work of faith in which believers join together with God to accomplish His divine will. It is the union of a Christian’s thoughts with God’s mind and heart. Bill Hybels stated, *“His (God’s) supernatural strength is available to praying people who are convinced to the core of their beings that He can make a difference. Skeptics may argue that answered prayers are only coincidences, but as an English archbishop once observed, ‘It is amazing how many coincidences occur when one begins to pray.’”*

As people become sensitive to the Holy Spirit, they can pray as they should. When Jesus told the disciples He was about to be arrested and killed, Peter spoke up and rejected the idea. We all know the famous next words of Jesus, *“Get thee behind me satan.”* However, most of us miss the point He was making. The next statement defines His concern, *“You do not have the interests of God in mind.”* This last sentence brings understanding to the first dramatic words. Peter wanted his will over the will of God. He was not at that moment willing to change his mind or prayer to fulfill God’s big picture purpose. As believers we bring what we feel are the immediate needs before God. We must be ready to change our prayer, even for the smallest of things, in order to fit into God’s picture.

God desires humble, holy people to come in agreement with Him to act according to His will to accomplish on earth what is desired in heaven. *“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...”* Therefore, the actions of heaven are governed by the agreement of believers with God in the communion of prayer. It is important to note that God binds or sets loose not according to the will of a person but according to His own divine will. Therefore, the key to effective prayer is to come into the understanding of God’s will. This relationship makes Christians powerful and fit vessels to be used by God. J. Hudson Taylor, that great missionary to China stated, *“The prayer power has never been tried to its full capacity. If we want to see mighty wonders of divine power and grace wrought in the place of weakness, failure and disappointment, let us answer God’s standing challenge, ‘Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not!’”*

Psalm 66:17-20

I cried out to Him with my mouth; His praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer. Praise be to God, Who has not rejected my prayer or withheld His love from me!

“Jesus, My Strength, My hope” (Charles Wesley)

I want a sober mind, a self-renouncing will, that tramples down and casts behind the baits of pleasing ill; a soul injured to pain, to hardship, grief, and loss, bold to take up, firm to sustain, the consecrated cross. I want a godly fear, a quick-discerning eye, that looks to Thee when sin is near, and bids the tempter fly; a spirit still prepared, and armed with jealous care, forever standing on its guard, and watching unto prayer.

Praying the Scripture into My Life



Matthew 6:9-13

Father, you deserve all the praise I can give. You deserve praise because of Who You are: Creator, Comforter, Savior, Sanctifier, Protector, Guide, Strengthener of my soul, Counselor, and Encourager. There is no end to the list of Your attributes.

You are my God, and it is Your kingdom I wish to live in. I confess my need for Your help to live out Your will now as it will be done in heaven. I ask that You help me to be sensitive to Your Spirit's leading in every area of life.

All the needs of my life are already known to You, however, I am directed to bring all my concerns to You. Your Word teaches me to be specific about my needs. Here are the things on my heart and in my life that I have need of.

Forgive my sin and all my offenses toward You. Forgive my neglect when I have not given the best of myself. Forgive any sin of omission when I knew the good to do but let it pass by. Help me to see others through the eyes of grace. In the same measure You desire to forgive me, I will work to forgive others. I admit that in my humanity it will not always be an easy thing to do. Through Your divine love I will forgive any and all offenses done to me.

Give me wisdom to see how the devil is trying to get a foothold in my life. Lead me away from all evil influences. Lead me toward people and places which will encourage my faith. Keep me safe from the evil one being able to find a place to hinder my walk with You. I commit my life to be one which brings You honor. Teach me to allow Your image to shine through my behavior and my attitudes to bring glory to You through my lifestyle.

Day 13 - Pursuing Manifest Presence

James 4:8-10

“Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

Many of us look at God and think of Him as too high to reach and too mighty to be approachable. This is not so! James makes a declarative statement. If we will draw near to God, He will come toward us. It is the passion found in *Jeremiah 29:13*, “*You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.*” When a Christian’s attitude is to get as close to God as possible, we find God honors us with His holy presence.

The natural inclination as we get close to God is to realize our spiritual failures and weaknesses. Isaiah experienced this when he saw God high and lifted up. His first realization was his own spiritual state of being. Pastor James encourages us to practice two spiritual disciplines when we recognize our state of being. The first is to “wash our hands.” This is not a literal statement; it is a figurative phrase indicating the presence of sin. Hands represent the physical instrument of action. James encourages us to ask for forgiveness for past and present sin. This request comes with a heart of repentance which simply means a change of mind. It leads to stopping sinful actions and therefore have clean hands. Even though we may see the scars left by sin, God sees a clean slate, sins cast as far as the east is from the west.

However, clean hands are only the first encouragement from Pastor James. If all we do is deal with symptoms the real disease remains and inhibits our walk with God. Believers must deal with the inner heart issue that causes wrong behavior. So Pastor James admonishes us to “purify your heart.” This stresses the need to have a singular focus. The inference is that an individual without a pure heart is “double-minded.” One mind wants to do right while the other desires sin. Each believer has the right through the power of the Holy Spirit to live with an undivided heart. The will to have a clean heart comes from within the individual. The power to obtain and maintain that heart comes from God. It is not God’s will that we live with guilt, condemnation, or the acts that bring destruction.

There is no salvation without surrender, no repentance without a change of mind, and no victory without Christ’s Lordship over our lives. We come to the realization that God is here, right here, right now. Our response to Him is imperative. When the Psalmist questions, “*Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there; if I make my bed in the depths, You are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast.*” (*Psalm 139:7-10*)

The answer to where anyone can hide from God is absolutely nowhere! It is good news for those who desire His presence. So why all the drive for His presence if it is already there? We need the manifest presence of God. This is more than just realizing He is there. It is experiencing His presence. Faith tells us He is everywhere; experience tells us He is presently drawing close to our souls. An acute desire for Him must drive us or we will not experience Him manifest among us. We have made the error of depending on the complexity of our religious higher education to the neglect of how simple God made this. An incredible renewal came in the days when God’s people did the simple task of seeking His manifest presence.

 **Psalm 89:14-17**

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; love and faithfulness go before You. Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim You, who walk in the light of Your presence, O Lord. They rejoice in Your name all day long; they exult in Your righteousness. For You are their glory and strength, and by Your favor You exalt our horn.

 **“Oh, the Glory of Your Presence” (Steven Fry)**

Oh, the glory of Your presence, we the temple, give You reverence, so arise from Your rest and be blessed by our praise as we glory in Your embrace, as Your presence now fills this place.

 **Praying the Scripture into My Life**

Ephesians 3:14-21

Father, I ask that out of your glorious riches You will strengthen me with power through Your Spirit. Create in me a constant realization of Christ living in me. I ask for more than enough faith to know fellowship with Christ. Help me to be rooted and established in holy love. Grant me spiritual power and insight to understand how wide, high, and deep Your love goes for me. This love surpasses all the understanding of this world You have offered me. In this love I find all the fullness of You Lord.

I place faith in my Savior Who can do immeasurably more than I ask or more than I have ever imagined You could

or would do. Yet, I also come with the understanding that experiencing this kind of Christian life depends on me submitting to Your Lordship. I must allow You to fill me with power and knowledge. Help me to know Your passions. For what You have done and what You choose to do I give You praise. I commit to allow Your glory to shine from my life in both action and attitude. I will praise you in my home, in the street, and in the church.

Psalm 34:1-4

Father, I will praise Your name at all times, when things are going great and when life is difficult. I will glory in You even when affliction has overtaken me, Your promises overshadow any momentary strife. I will take the time to praise You. I will offer praise from my mouth and not keep silent. I can seek You and hear from You as again You bring deliverance from that which makes me fearful. Today I seek to experience the ministry of Your Holy Spirit in my heart.

Day 14 - Pursuing Treasure 2 Corinthians 4:7-9

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.”

Life can deliver some pretty strong blows, but God is always faithful. These verses remind us of four tough truths about life and four promises God has given us. Life will not always be easy. We will be hard pressed, yet not crushed. *Psalm 46:1-2, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.” Galatians 6:9, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”*

The Bible never promises us all our days will be easy. On the contrary, it teaches that it may well rain on the just person as it does the unjust. Living in a fallen, marred world we cannot expect fairness. Life can be very perplexing with questioning events and circumstances that come our way. But, we do not have to be in despair. We are told in *Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.” Isaiah 26:3 states, “You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in You.” Again in John 14:27 we read, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

The Apostle Paul warns us that we may be persecuted but will never be forsaken. Remember the words of *Jeremiah 29:11-13, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Psalm 27:13-14 promises, “I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.”*

We are told life may knock us off our feet, but we will not be destroyed. *Hebrews 7:25 states, “Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.” We are promised in Philippians 1:6, “Being confident of this, that He Who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” 1 Corinthians 2:9 encourages with these words, “However as it is written: No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

“We have this treasure in jars of clay.” What is this treasure? It is the presence of God. Jesus said I will not only be with you but in you. When Jesus was teaching He spoke of a person who discovered a treasure in a field. That person went out and sold all he had in order to buy the field. The treasure is Christ in us the hope of glory. It is worth all we have, all we are, and all we will ever be in this life. Pursue the Treasure with everything we have and He will show Himself to us in mighty ways. The pressure, frustration, confusion, and knocks will not compare to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ in the power of His resurrection.

A Writing: I Am a Disciple of Jesus

I am part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have Holy Spirit power. The dye has been cast. I’ve stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of His. I won’t look back, let up, slow down, back away or be still. My past has been redeemed, my presence makes sense and my future is secure. I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, cheap giving, and small goals. I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, promotions, or popularity. I do not have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by Presence, lean by faith, love by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power. My face has been set, my pace fast, my goal is heaven, my road narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my guide reliable, my mission clear.

I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, diluted or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity. I won’t give up, shut up, let up or burn up till I’ve prayed up, paid up, stored up, and stayed up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop and preach till everyone knows. And when He comes to get His own, He’ll have no problem recognizing me...my colors will be clear.

By: Bob Moorehead

 **"I'd Rather Have Jesus" (Rhea Miller)**

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold;
I'd rather be His than have riches untold;
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands; I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand.

I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause;
I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause;
I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame;
I'd rather be true to His holy name.



Praying the Scripture into My Life

Galatians 6:7-10

Father, I refuse to be deceived in my Christian walk. I acknowledge knowing the principles of sowing and reaping. I will receive from life what I put into it. I will also receive from my spiritual walk what I invest into it. I realize if I give in to sinful behavior, as my flesh would tempt me to do, it will bring destruction. On the other hand You teach me that if I sow to please the Spirit, I will reap eternal life. I choose eternal life!

If I am being honest with you Lord, I have to admit at times this is difficult. Often it would be easier to give in and move along with the flow of the world around me. It seems less stressful that way. I understand this is an issue of faith. I accept Your Word that no matter the emotions of the moment, if I persist in doing good, a harvest will come when the time is right. This time cannot be determined by me. I must allow You to set it. I commit to a life of constant endurance; to walk through this life as the Holy Spirit teaches and leads.

I refuse to give in to selfish living. I accept my responsibility to take the opportunities to do good as they come my way. I pray that You would make me sensitive to those around me. Especially make me sensitive to my fellow believers. Help me develop a heart that desires to always add value to the lives I am honored to influence.

Day 15 – Pursuing Truth

Truth is that which is always universally without fault or error. This is why it is correct to say, all truth is God's truth. Man has projected theories by the multitude most of which are found to be flawed. The truth that comes from our knowledge of God is universal, meaning true for everyone. Some kick against this with such arrogance as, "It is not my truth." That is like the clay saying to the potter, I do not need you. I can form myself. The absurdity of that picture does not escape us. Yet, men make that mistake constantly. All of our debating over the complexity of modern religious thought will seem insignificant when we stand in His presence to live out eternity. Until then, we must seek His truth and never stop the pursuit. *Proverbs 23:23* says, "*Buy truth, and do not sell it, get wisdom and instruction and understanding...*"

Finding truth is like discovering diamonds scattered along the road of life. Every time we stop and pick one up, we are that much richer for it. We have to ask the question, "How can we know truth with all the voices around us saying different things?" This is where we must strike the balance in seeking His presence and being a student of the Word. It is not one or the other. Both have great value for the soul. The psalmist said that he hid the Word of God in his heart that he may not sin against Him.

We read in *In John 8:31-32*, "*So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you continue in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.'*" The first issue was believing, putting their faith in, Christ. This is a relationship issue. The other side of that same issue is receiving His Word and walking in the truth. When anyone seeks one without the other, heresy is usually the result. Heresy is not impassionate religion, it is bad theology. Theology is the study and discovery of God. We can study old saints like Wesley, Calvin, Luther, or Huss. They are dead and gone so we cannot have a conversation with them.. We can think their thoughts through their writing, but at best, only guess at their heart. No so with God Who is alive and active, an ever present One. Our truth is found in Him. Other people's thoughts may help us, but we must be students of the Author who inspired the written Word.

Even people of promise can be carried away with smooth sounding words if they are immature. When we develop our minds to know God's voice and to learn His Word, we gain a discernment that guards our heart against bad theology. Paul speaks to this in *Ephesians 4:14-16*, "*As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*"



Psalm 119:33-40

"Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, and I shall observe it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law and keep it with all my heart. Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it. Incline my heart to Your testimonies and not to dishonest gain. Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, and revive me in Your ways. Establish Your word to Your servant, as that which produces reverence for You. Turn away my reproach which I dread, for Your ordinances are good. Behold, I long for Your precepts; revive me through Your righteousness."



"My Story" (Mike Weaver and Jason Ingram)

If I told you my story you would hear hope that wouldn't let go, and if I told you my story you would hear love that never gave up, and if I told you my story you would hear life but it wasn't mine. If I could speak then let it be of the grace that is greater than all my sin, of when justice was served and when mercy wins, of the kindness of Jesus that draws me in, Oh, to tell my story is to tell of Him... This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.



Praying the Scripture into My Life

Psalm 119:57-77

Father, You are my portion and that which satisfies my soul. I commit to keep the truth You are teaching me. I seek Your favor with all my heart and ask that You be gracious to me as Your Word promises those who diligently seek You. I will keep watch over the behavior of my life so that I may have a good testimony as one of Your children. I will seek Your truth in order to be obedient to Your will.

You understand this sinful world that surrounds me and the challenges it brings to my life. I promise to keep my eyes on truth and not be swayed by the glitter of temporary pleasures. When I wake at night I will take time to speak with You and remember the truth You are teaching me. I will fill my life with people who know what it is to walk with You. I

will learn from their example as I hope they can learn from mine. I will keep that which You have placed in my heart at this point in my life.

The earth is full of Your goodness and grace is always working in the hearts of people. You have treated me far better than I have deserved and hidden Your Word in my life to keep me safe and secure in Your truth. Help me to be discerning in order that I may gain knowledge of You and trust completely in the commands given. I know those commands are for both protection and provision. Protection from a sinful world that would harm my life and provision that I may find abundant life in You.

I strayed but have come back with a determination to follow Your way. Even when people want to use my past to bring lies about my present, I refuse to lose my focus on walking faithfully with You. I have developed a taste for the righteousness found in Your presence. This is what I seek with all my mind and heart. There was good that came out of my past. It taught me You are the true treasure and truth is like gold and silver added to the wealth of my soul. You are the Potter and I the clay, make me into what You want me to be.

May I be an example for those who are seeking You. May my passion to wait on Your presence be an example for others. May my patience encourage others on their journey of faith as You do Your work of grace and maturity in my life. Lord, may even Your discipline in my life be a testimony of Your great compassion. Your lovingkindness is a comfort to my soul. I will find rest in the grace that began a good work in my life and continue to follow faithfully as You bring it to completion. I will be a person of truth and, as much as is in me through Your Spirit, be Christ-like in attitude and nature.

Day 16 - Pursuing Security

1 Peter 5:8-10

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”

Hurricane Charlie came through town and did a lot of damage. The eye of that storm came directly over with strong winds. When the storm was over, a few hundred thousand were without power. Trees sat on tops of houses, some through houses, some lying where houses previously stood. In our county we did not have one loss of life. The reason for this was there was plenty of warning. Everyone saw it coming and had plenty of time to prepare. Lists of items to buy were given out, read over the radio and TV stations. Anyone who was not ready for the storm could only blame themselves.

The Apostle Peter gives us preparation plans to make ready for the storms of life. He starts with one of the most important characteristics an individual can develop, self-control. The person who can control his/her emotions and actions has the ability to think during crisis times. This person has a tremendous advantage in life. The individual who has developed self-control understands it is more important what happens in them than what happens to them. Self-control is mental toughness which expresses itself in self-denial and a willingness to sacrifice for a greater cause. It could well be defined as character in action

The second way to prepare is to be alert; pay attention to what is going on around us. Too often people get overwhelmed by what they should have seen coming. It takes but a little observation to realize where society is heading. The view of our culture becoming more secular, materialistic and sensual doesn't have to bring fear to our lives. Instead, it should make us resist the forces of evil. It has taken about 30 years for our culture to change from God-fearing to God being pushed toward the fringes of society. All the while the Church slept unaware except for a few voices crying out, but they were quickly labeled extremists.

We should never adopt the fatalistic view of believing the deterioration of society is inevitable. This can only be true if the Church handcuffs itself to the pew. It is not enough to stand in our Churches cheering, clapping, singing, and saying amen to truth. This world does not need our commotion as much as it needs our motion. We need to put on the full armor of God and go to war. Not a war of yelling at one another, but a war of God's love reaching a lost world. We have lost the simple message of *1 Corinthians 13*. The greatest weapon in the Christian arsenal for evangelism is showing God's love.

Why would God empower the motionless? It takes very few calories to be a pew potato. There is a ministry maxim that holds true. Where the Spirit cannot find a channel in which to move and accomplish His will, He will cut new avenues and find obedient people to empower. The coldness in our churches may well be the absence of God finding those who will take up His cause and stand in the gap for a lost world. If we seek God's presence we must be willing to move when He shows up. He isn't into having parties that dismiss just before noon and then the most action out of the church is the race to a favorite restaurant for lunch. Security is not found behind the walls of the church, but out in the trenches of sharing God's love. God did not ask us to be safe or He would not have provided an armor. Armor is for soldiers. Stand up Church and be counted for the cause of Christ!

 **Psalm 62:5-8**

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from Him. He alone is my Rock and my Salvation; He is my Fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God, He is my mighty Rock, my Refuge. Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our Refuge.

 **“Onward Christian Soldiers” (Sabine Baring-Gould)**

Onward Christian soldiers! Marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before. Christ the Royal Master, leads against the foe; forward into battle, see His banner go! Onward Christian soldiers! Marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before.

 **Praying the Scripture into My Life**

 **Psalm 23**

Father, I confess you as the only Shepherd I need. I do not need another. You are more than sufficient.

You desire to guide my life and take me to places and times of peace and rest. You promise to refresh my soul in quiet and peaceful moments. When I follow closely You remove me from the fast pace of the world that I may be renewed in my spirit.

Lord you guide me along the right path. You give me opportunity to be a witness of Your grace and majesty. I commit to walk along the right road you have put before me.

Even in the most desperate moments of life, deepest of pain, greatest of emotionally draining experiences, I fear not the evil this world may bring against me. I have found my hope in You and You never fail, never leave, never disappoint. You are more than enough for my soul. Your guiding rod, Your protecting staff is what I depend on to bring security to my life. In that security I find great comfort.

Even when some people would choose to be an enemy, You find a way to allow me to be a blessing to them. You bring opportunity for them to see the sincerity of my faith. You spread a table of ministry in order that I may show Your love and light into the darkness of their soul.

You come and bring strength to my life. You have given me more blessings than I can count. You brought healing when I was hurting, comfort when I was in distress, guidance when I was confused, hope when I was questioning, and strength when I was weak. I lean on and claim the promise that Your goodness and love will follow my life 24/7 until I get to walk through the gates of that eternal city. What more can I do today than praise Your holy name! Blessed be the name of the Lord!

Day 17 - Pursuing Positive Habits

Philippians 4:8

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

We cannot always help the thoughts that enter our mind, but we decide what to do with them once they come. If a person can discipline his/her mind, the rest of life will fall in place. We know everything that influences our faith has been sifted through the filter of our minds. Our mind determines how we look at life, how we act, and the attitudes we choose to adopt.

Meditating on the truth of scripture is a developed spiritual discipline. Think about the good things in life, the truth God has revealed. Refuse to allow negative thinking to influence emotions. Intentionally spend time thinking on righteousness, noble ideas, right attitudes and actions, the good things in life, and habits that please God. When we do this our life is opened to the Spirit’s guidance. Our spiritual eyes become open to see the world through the lens of Christ-likeness. Our spirit looks for the positive move of God even in the most negative of circumstances.

Looking at life through a negative lens will cause us to question the grace and sovereignty of God. If we see evil as more powerful than righteousness we will be tempted to build a religious cocoon around us. It stirs a pessimistic outlook on life.

The opposite is true when we think on good things. God has defeated satan; that enemy of everything good is marked for destruction. This truth is an encouragement to any Christian. We can see the world as a place where God wants to share His love and grace. There will grow within us a belief that it is a privilege to live a life pleasing to God.

One of the greatest positive habits is found in true repentance. Repentance is defined as godly sorrow for a sinful life and determination to have a change of mind and behavior. *Romans 6:1-2, 6-7* “*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?*” “*For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.*” We discover a life of victory and not defeat when we embrace the possibilities of these verses of scripture.

Another of the positive habits we need to develop is to live by the principles of the harvest. Galatians chapter 6 offers us an inescapable truth. “*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.*” This speaks directly to our personal responsibility for what we sow in life. Our words and works are the seeds. This life on earth is the soil. If we sow good seed, we’ll reap good fruit. If we sow to please the flesh, we will reap sinful destruction. This is a no excuse zone. We each will choose the seed we sow. Determine to live a lifestyle that pleases the Spirit of God.

The promise is beyond question. We will reap a harvest in God’s time if we continue to do what is righteous. We must never give up living by the truth God reveals to us. When it seems difficult for a season, even a long season, never forget the harvest is coming. A “good measure” well-shaken, pressed down and spilling over. Plant the seeds of godly behavior, works of compassion, but most of all pursuing hard after the manifest presence of God.

 **Proverbs 3:5-6**

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.

 **“Lifesong” (Casting Crowns)**

Empty hands held high, such small sacrifice, if not joined with my life,
I sing in vain tonight, may the words I say, and the things I do,
Make my lifesong sing, bring a smile to You

Lord, I give my life, a living sacrifice, to reach a world in need, to be Your hands and feet. So may the words I say, and the things I do,
Make my lifesong sing, bring a smile to You.

Let my lifesong sing to You, I want to sign Your name, to the end of this day, knowing that my heart was true, Let my lifesong sing to You



Praying the Scripture into My Life

James 2:14-24

Father, I confess that it does me no good to claim faith yet have no deeds to show that faith is real. That is empty faith; it is all in my mind and does not direct my life. I ask that Your Spirit convict me when I see a need that I have the ability and resources to help with, but choose to walk on by. Do not let me become so shallow a believer that I would speak a blessing over someone but not lift a finger to help. Those would be worthless words spoken in empty air. They are meaningless of any true compassion or mercy. Shadow boxing as if it meant something.

Remind me often that my faith is proven by what I do and not just by what I say. You gave me an example to follow with Abraham who was willing to sacrifice his son at Your Word. You showed kindness by providing what was needed when Abraham took this giant step of faith. When Abraham acted upon faith, You credited him with righteousness. You called him Your friend.

I truly desire to be called Your friend, Lord. I am passionate about having complete faith, not just some static experience or stale long past testimony about a decision moment in life. I want faith to be active all the time. I want a daily experience of a life blessed by Your willingness to credit it with righteousness. Remind me always that my faith must be real and active to be considered authentic. Open my eyes to see every opportunity to combine faith and deeds.

Day 18 - Pursuing Significance

Psalm 1

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”

Elisabeth Elliot endured a great loss when her husband was killed by South American Indians he went to minister to. She later went to those same people with the message of hope in Christ. She said of Christian maturity: “Maturity is the willingness to bear uncertainty and to carry with one’s self unanswered questions.” Maintaining a holy lifestyle is most difficult when the pressures of life create an atmosphere where doubt can grow. We must follow the wisdom of this psalmist if we are to endure and overcome difficult seasons of spiritual distress and discover significance

We see two directions for what not to do if we desire to live a fruitful life. Do not seek the counsel of the ungodly. Those without the Spirit cannot understand spiritual truth. An ungodly person cannot give spiritual wisdom. Their words would be marred by sinful thinking and worldly philosophy. Seek instead the counsel of Spirit-filled believers who have been walking with God.

This psalm teaches us not to follow the example of a sinner. Sin separates from God, therefore stay away from it. Do not entertain the pleasures of sin. Sin is a spiritual cancer which starts slow but will eventually cover the soul. It takes the life out of the Christian experience. Sin divides the heart and blinds the mind of any individual who tries to straddle the fence between right and wrong.

Develop great spiritual habits in life. Many people strive for success in life only to come to the conclusion that material gain did not fill the desire to make a significant contribution to life. Even if the sphere of influence is small, can we make a difference because we lived, loved, and served God? The answer is, absolutely we can.

We can be like a tree planted by a river of life giving water. This is the Christian who has a relationship with the life giving God. It creates a life driven by an inner character. We live with a definite, definable purpose that brings consistency in our walk of faith. We do not bend to the emotions of the moment but chose to live by principle. Inner self-examinations cease to be a threat because we realize the value of an ever strengthening character. Such are the individuals who find their delight in the Lord.

Jesus said when our life is found in Him we will bear much fruit. This kind of prospering is experienced first in the soul and then in the lives of those we influence. *John 15* offers this picture as a vine and branches. Jesus is the life giving vine and we are the branches who find our life in Him. We experience a life where He makes our actions righteous when we remain in this vital relationship. In doing so we have a significance that could not otherwise be known. When all has been said and done, what will they say about what we have done? Scripture encourages to make these decisions wisely. When we do what is right even those who chose to be our enemies will have to testify to our good works on judgment day.

Psalm 139:13-16

For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were written all the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.

“Make me a Blessing” (Ira Wilson)

Out in the highways and byways of life, many are weary and sad. Carry the sunshine where darkness is rife, making the sorrowing glad.

Give as was given to you in your need, love as the Master loved you. Be to the helpless a helper indeed; unto your mission be true.

Make me a blessing; out of my life may Jesus shine. Make me a blessing, O Savior, I pray, make me a blessing to someone today.

Praying the Scripture into My Life



Philippians 3:7-16

Father, whatever I have gained in life I will consider as loss for the sake of Christ. Next to knowing You as Lord, there is nothing of greater value. I consider everything I have in my hands, my influence, and my reputation as worthless if they could keep me from knowing You to the fullest. My greatest desire is to constantly gain more knowledge of You. I desire to experience the righteousness that comes from faith. I want to know You so intimately that I am willing to share in the power You have given as well, when necessary, in persecutions for Your name. I commit my life without reserve even if it means suffering or the death of this body in order to experience the experience of resurrection. I claim the promise of the resurrection You offer to those who walk in obedience.

I do not brag about already getting this from You or about the maturity I have come to enjoy at this point in the journey. I want to keep moving forward in faith. I desire to gain all that You have for me. I want nothing left out. I want to know what it is to live with You in abundance as You define that experience. I hunger for all the knowledge I can gain. I commit to forget and move past the old life, the rewards people have given me, the celebrations of victories won, past successes, or anything else that would tempt me to stop moving forward. I refuse to stand still. I commit to press forward and win the eternal prize for which I have been called. I will live by the light You have given me to this point in my spiritual journey and commit to change my life as new light is revealed.

Day 19 - Pursuing Peace

God's gift of peace is found deep in the soul of a person. Even while both profess to be Christians, one person can have peace while the next does not. People can know peace in the most dire of circumstances. Stories of the martyrs expose a calm peace in the face of torture and death. What is the secret to this inner tranquility? It comes to those who have learned to practice the presence of God in their lives.

This person can be described as someone who has submitted to the will of God in all things. He/she does not fear the voice of God because they have already made the decision to obey. Scripture teaches us that Christ made peace through His blood on His cross reconciling all things to Himself. He did not just reconcile those who would believe but all creation. The whole world is subject to His authority and is offered His goodwill. Redemption is found in those who go beyond calling Him Lord but also allow Him to be Lord of all. There is no fear in our life in Christ, for fear has to do with punishment. We can find peace in Christ. In disobedience we find conflict, conviction, and inner division.

God encourages us to "be still and know that I am God." This busy, loud world we live in distracts us from that simple task. We often find preference in listening to sermons or music. However, God simply asks us to be still until we learn to discern the voice that comes from Heaven and speaks into our life. The voice may start with a new realization of His presence, then we learn to hear the sound of His voice. It becomes more distinct and clear until we are not fooled by other voices. We come to know the sound of our Father speaking. This brings a surety, a peaceful emotional and spiritual strength that cannot be stolen from those who find their life in the Vine.


The Bible will never have its full value until we believe the One Who authored it and speaks life into it. Dogmatism without Presence can never bring life or create new creations. We must understand God gave us His Word so we could learn more of Him and to increasingly grow in our knowledge of the Holy. The discipline of experiencing God in our devotional life as well as corporate worship will bring a sense of awe in His presence. The gaze of the soul is not on the words, but He Who inspired the words of the Book.

Peace is offered to all believers. Only those who will learn the practice of private communion with God will understand it to its fullest. We have come to know that great public prayer comes after someone learns the discipline of deep private prayer. Unity in the church comes as God's children seek to solely and then corporately practice the presence of God.

Dr. Tozer gave the illustration that gives clarity to this idea. One piano tuned with a tuning fork will sound great. One hundred pianos tuned with the same fork will sound in perfect unison. One Christian tuned to the voice of the Spirit will be powerful in the hands of God. One hundred and twenty Christians tuned to the voice of the same Spirit can turn their world upside down. It has happened in the past and can happen in the present. This is where peace is found. It is the absence of self as we gaze upon God. It is the submission of will as we seek His kingdom. It is the pleasure of life discovered as we keep in step with the Spirit. It is the strength found when we live in the Vine. It is Christ in us, the Hope of glory, and the Promise of hope and a future.

 **Psalm 34:11-15**

Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the way of the Lord. Whoever of you who loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. Turn from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their cry.

 **"Cornerstone" (Edward Mote, Eric Liljero, Jonas Myrin, Reuben Morgan)**

My Hope is built on nothing less, Than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name.

When darkness seems to hide His face, I rest on His unchanging grace. In every High and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil.

Christ alone, Cornerstone, weak made strong in the Saviors love, Through the storms He is Lord, Lord of all.

 **Praying the Scripture into My Life**

Psalm 46:1-7

Father, You are my refuge and strength, an ever present help in times of trouble. In You I do not fear. When the entire world around me seems to be going crazy with chaos, I find rest in You. Even when it seems the world is trembling at the troubles of the day, I rest in Your strength. You have made for me a place of peace in Your presence. I come to that

place with my eyes upon You. For in Your presence there is security and a fortress that no power of man can breach. Nations come and go, people change governments and policies, but God, You never change. Your words and ways are everlasting. I commit to walk in the way of holiness and to be kept secure by Your mighty hands. I confess You as my Savior, Protector, Guide, Counselor, Comforter, Peace-giver, and Keeper.

Day 20 - Pursuing Personal Convictions

2 Peter 3:11-14

“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with Him.”

How would I live this week if I knew I was going to stand before the Lord next week? What would I do differently than I have done so far today? What would I make sure I didn't forget to do? What things would lose their meaning and what would become more precious than ever? What would I do differently if I knew this was my last week on Earth?


I would get up in the morning and begin each day talking with God. I would make sure there was no unsettled business between me and God. I would pray that I would not miss the special moments of the day. I would ask for strength and wisdom. I would ask God to help me be self-controlled because I do not want to leave any relationships unsettled. I would ask God to help me see people through His eyes that I may experience the greatest sense of love possible for me to feel. I would ask for grace to show others and for His grace to cover my life.

In my last week on Earth I would turn off the TV more and talk to my family. I would want to speak with my two children every day. I would want to see my 5 grandchildren, hug their necks, and tell them how much I love them. I would take walks with my wife and make sure she realized how much she makes my life better for being married to her. I would make sure my personal business was in order so my family would have as little to worry about as possible.


During the last week on Earth I would be considerate to my co-workers. I would take some of them out to lunch and tell them how much they were appreciated. I would do my work with honor and excellence. This last week would be used to add value to the lives of those around me.

If there was only one more week to breathe Earth's air, I would make sure my relationships with others were good. I would pick up a phone and call anyone who I felt had something against me. I would generously tip those who serve me. I would thank my mailperson for delivering in all kinds of weather. I would speak to my neighbors and call old friends.

If I only had one more week to live, I would live in such a way that I could smile my last minute on Earth and say, “It has been a good week!” But why wait until the last week? I can live this way right now. I don't have to bend to the selfish thinking of a sinful world. As I thought through this, I am glad that I didn't think about going out and buying everything I always wanted. Instead, when faced with this question, my mind went to the really important issues. Why not live this way all the time? When the last day does come and the last hour reaches our door, we can smile and say, “It has been a good life, one well worth living!”

 **Psalm 119:104-106**

I gain understanding from Your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow Your righteous laws.

 **“Refiner's Fire” (Brian Doerksen)**

Purify my heart, let me be as gold and precious silver. Purify my heart, cleanse me from within, and make me holy.

Refiner's fire, my hearts one desire, is to be holy, set apart for You Lord, I choose to be holy, set a part for You my Master, ready to do Your will.

 **Praying the Scripture into My Life**

Romans 6:1-6, 15-18

Father, I acknowledge You did not offer grace so that I would have freedom to sin. On the contrary, grace led me to be baptized, immersed in the character and nature of Christ. I count myself dead to sin. I refuse to allow it a foothold in my life. Through Christ I have the opportunity for a new life. I am no longer entrapped by the things which once bound my soul. Christ paid the price so I may no longer be a slave to sin like I was before You saved me.

I accept my responsibility to be an obedient child of Yours. I choose to walk away from the sinful living that brought spiritual bondage and death. I choose to live in newness of life found in righteousness. I place my allegiance to the walk of faith and obedience as I am led by the Holy Spirit and scripture. I offer myself to You as a servant of holy living.

Day 21 - Pursuing Spiritual Worship

John 4:21-24

Jesus spoke to the woman who came to draw water, “*Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 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.*” The act of prayer is in part an act of worship both personally and corporately. Worship and prayer (whether private or corporate) are two sides of the same coin. They cannot be separated into two different activities.

“Little of the Word with little prayer is death to the spiritual life. Much of the Word and little prayer gives a sickly life. Much prayer and little of the Word gives more life, but without steadfastness. A full measure of the Word and prayer each day gives a healthy and powerful life.” These observations by Andrew Murray have been proven over thousands of years of Christian history. God has set in place a pattern by which we grow in grace and knowledge.

We hear this throughout God’s Word such as in *Psalm 95:1-7*, “*Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills are His also. The sea is His, for He made it; and His hands formed the dry land. Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.*” Coming to God in worship is coming to speak to Him with songs, thanksgiving, testimony, and presenting a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of our lips. All this is worship and at the same time it is communing with God.

We miss true worship when we come into God’s house without thought. Mechanical church attendance is no replacement for heartfelt worship. We see in the Psalm a correlation between singing to the Lord and speaking to Him. The psalmist leaves no doubt that worship and prayer are interconnected. This helps understand Jesus’ passion when He entered the temple and drove out those who were there with the wrong motives. We do not just have a prayer in worship but the entirety of worship is communing with God. It is part of a corporate experience of acknowledging the presence of God. It is a conversation the Holy Spirit is having with the Church when He comes to speak to hearts calling for commitment. In other words, it is prayer initiated by Him.

There are some convictions about worship which will have an effect on a believer’s prayer life. The first conviction is that worship is and should be a dialogue between God and His people. It is a response of the created to being in the presence of their Creator. It is a declaration of love and honor to God. It involves offering God a sacrifice of praise, sharing our burdens, honoring His presence and responding to His voice. It is an act of declaring our love and dependence upon Him.

The second conviction is one desperately needing to be learned. True worship is not performance but participation. It is focusing our hearts toward our heavenly Father. Too often in our churches we perform for people when we sing instead of offering our voice to God as an act of worship. We care more that people liked it than if it honored God. Participating in worship is imperative if we desire to experience a Divine visitation.

Worship communicates both faith and devotion. *Psalm 100:1-5*, “*Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is He Who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the LORD is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.*” He is our Shepherd, Provider, Comforter, Guide, Redeemer, Sanctifier, Protector, Healer and on and on we could go. This is why Jesus taught us to start prayers with Holy (hallowed) be Your name. What would happen if we walked into a worship service next Sunday with this spirit in our hearts?

Richard Foster commented on prayer, “To pray is to change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us. If we are unwilling to change, we will abandon prayer as a noticeable characteristic of our lives. The closer we come to the heartbeat of God the more we realize our need. This leads us to a greater desire to be conformed to Christ. To pray is to change.” The presence of God in a life makes new creations. On the other hand prayer-less people cut themselves off from the power of God. Jesus offers a call to all people in *Matthew 11:28-30*, “*Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*”



Psalm 95:1-7

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and extol Him with music and song. For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In His hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to Him. The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land. Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care.



“As the Deer” (Martin Nystrom)

As the deer panteth for the water, so my soul longeth after Thee. You alone are my hearts desire, and I long to worship Thee.

I want You more than gold or silver, only You can satisfy. You alone are the real joy giver and the apple of my eye.

You alone are my strength, my shield; to You alone may my spirit yield. You alone are my heart’s desire, and I long to worship Thee.



Praying the Scripture into My Life

Isaiah 26:3-4 & 1 Chronicles 4:10

Father I praise You for keeping me in perfect peace as I have chosen to keep my mind steadfast on You. I have absolute trust in You. I commit to trust You as my covenant keeping God, for You are a covenant keeping God, and as my covenant keeping God, You are my Rock eternal.

I ask for a divine blessing in my life. I ask that you would help me be faithful as a servant and as a testimony in the area of influence I presently have. I pray that my influence would increase greatly that I may serve more effectively. Would You protect me from sin and harmful schemes of the enemy. Would you allow me the privilege of being an example of Your wonderful grace.