



re·vive
verb /rə'vɪv/
Restore to life, consciousness
or strength.

21 DAY FASTING GUIDE

OUR MISSION

People Growing People by connecting them to their next step with Christ.

OUR CORE VALUES

BOLDNESS FOR CHRIST

Unapologetically representing Christ to the world.
(Philippians 1:20)

PASSION FOR PEOPLE

Intentionally cultivating life-giving relationships.
(John 13:35)

CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Relentlessly transforming our city.
(Jeremiah 29:7)

HUNGER FOR MORE

Radically pursuing what God has next for me.
(Matthew 5:6)

A LETTER FROM PASTOR CARTER

Happy New Year!



Pastor Bryan Carter
& First Lady Stephanie

It's hard to believe that 2021 has arrived. The start of a new year is a call for each of us to prepare our hearts and our minds for what God has in store.

One of the first things we can do is grow our gratitude. This time of thanksgiving is to express our appreciation to God for the privilege of seeing another year. The year 2020 was filled with so many ups and downs, but we are truly grateful for what God has done and that He was with us every step of the way.

Secondly, we must grow our faith. Throughout our 21-day journey we will be drawing closer to God, my prayer is that He makes you more like Him in greater and greater ways.

Welcome to the journey. Let's Grow!
Sincerely,

Pastor Bryan L. Carter
Senior Pastor, Concord Church

DAILY PRAYER INFORMATION

In addition to fasting, Pastor Carter will also be leading us through daily prayer.

Morning prayer will begin at 6:30AM CST each day.

To watch/listen you can join us on

 Facebook.com/mrbryanlcarter

 Phone: (712) 451-0200 Access: Code 193840

For more details, visit concorddallas.org/21days

FASTING 101

Fasting is to deny myself food for spiritual purposes. It is a spiritual discipline that allows one to reset and refocus on God by removing things we normally enjoy. We will be practicing a Daniel fast, which is a vegetarian fast.

- Fasting is a Christian's voluntary abstinence from food for spiritual purposes.
- Fasting does not have to be specifically food, but the denial of any legitimate desire for spiritual purposes.
- Scripture describes the fasting of numerous individuals including Jesus (Matthew 4:2), Daniel (Daniel 1:12), John the Baptist (Matthew 3:4) and Esther (Esther 4:16).

FASTING TIPS

- Drink 6-8 glasses of water daily throughout the fast. This is very important!
- Anyone with a medical condition related to eating or under the treatment of a physician must consult their doctor before proceeding.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

- Side effects: You may experience moderate to severe headaches for the first day or two as your body rids itself of caffeine, salt, sugar, and various impurities. You may need to take Advil or aspirin. If your doctor has advised against Advil or aspirin, please contact your doctor for an alternative.
- Important exceptions: Use your discretion along with the advice of your physician and prayer to modify the Daniel Fast to adhere to your medical needs. Anyone with a medical condition related to eating or under the treatment of a physician must consult their doctor before proceeding. Also, if you have extreme difficulty with the fast, such as an impairment of your ability to work at your job, you will have to make adjustments. Utilize wisdom. Seek the Lord and discuss it with other Christians involved in the fast, to find alternatives.

FOODS INCLUDED:

- **Whole Grains:** Brown rice, oats, oatmeal, barley and pasta
- **Legumes:** Dried beans, pinto beans, split peas, lentils, black eyed peas
- **Fruits:** Apples, apricots, bananas, blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, cantaloupe, cherries, cranberries, oranges, figs, grapefruit, grapes, guava, honeydew melon, kiwi, lemons, limes, mangoes, nectarines, papayas, peaches, pears, pineapples, plums, prunes, raisins, raspberries, strawberries, tangelos, tangerines, watermelon (limit your intake to 2 citrus fruits per day i.E. Lemons, limes, grapefruits and oranges)
- **Vegetables:** Artichokes, asparagus, beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, chili peppers, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, ginger root, kale, leeks, lettuce, mushrooms, mustard greens, okra, onions, parsley, potatoes, radishes, rutabagas, scallions, spinach, sprouts, squashes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, turnips, watercress, yams, zucchini, collard greens, turnip greens
- Vegetables, such as potatoes, beans, and soybeans will help provide substance. Fresh or frozen vegetables are recommended. If canned vegetables are desired, use sodium free or drain and wash prior to cooking.
- Individuals who have an intolerance to beans should substitute with soy products. It is advisable to take a multi-vitamin/mineral supplement during the fast (1 per day). You may also include various nuts to serve as a protein supplement.
- Seeds, Nuts, sprouts, olive oil, seasonings, and spices
- **Liquids:** Spring water, distilled water, 100% all-natural fruit juices, 100% all natural vegetable juices (apple juice, orange juice, grapefruit juice, cranberry juice, etc.) No sweetened drinks or sweetened fruit.
- To maintain portion control, refer to the USDA Food Pyramid on www.mypyramid.gov for the recommended servings per day. For example, limit fruits or vegetables to 7-10 per day and nuts to 12-15 per meal.

FOODS NOT INCLUDED:

- Sugar, sugar substitutes and sugar products, desserts, soft drinks, etc.
- Table or box salt
- Drinks including caffeine (coffee, tea, etc.)
- Bread, enriched grains, and rice
- Meats, fish, poultry, dairy, eggs
- Fried foods
- Margarine, shortening, high fat products

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WEEK 1

DAY 1 | JANUARY 3

Key Thought: Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift of God, which is why we call it the present.

Bill Keane

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. ²Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. ³For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. ⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.

Psalm 51:1-4 (NIV)

Every day that we wake up is a gift from God. He gifts us every day with brand new mercies and another chance to live for him. It is hard for us to focus on the gifts that greet us each morning if we continue to focus on the past. In Psalm 51:1-4, we are reading words penned by King David. He has been confronted with his sin of adultery and murder. David writes this prayer to God as he realizes the depth of his sin. David does not skate by his sins but he communicates to God that he understands the nature of sin and how he has displeased God. Next, David asks God for forgiveness, to clean him up, and to give him the power to repent. David goes on to say in the later verses that he will be a witness to others and tell them to turn from sin and turn back to God. Are we going to sin? Yes. David, however, teaches us that sin interrupts our relationship with the Lord. David reminds us that we should be serious about confession and repentance so that we might reestablish our relationship with the Lord. It does not end there. Our goal is to turn from sin and teach others to do the same. David recovered from his sin and went on to lead others to God.

Reflection: Psalm 51: 1-15 | Philippians 3:13-14 | 2 Corinthians 5:16-17

- What does God respond to when we confess our sin?
- What is God saying to you through these verses?

Every day we receive brand new grace and brand new mercy to be thankful for. God freely forgives and blesses us with another chance. Our past is history. We must learn from it, but we also must not dwell on it. We must overcome our past by giving our sins and shortcomings to Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, my past has the tendency to haunt me. I need to give my past sins and shortcomings to you. I want to be an overcomer and walk in the newness of life that you have called me to. I know that you want me to live life and live it more abundantly. Help me to trust you and what you have for me. Amen.

DAY 2 | JANUARY 4

Key Thought: Nothing satisfies like Jesus.

¹³Jesus replied, “Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. ¹⁴But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.” ¹⁵“Please, sir,” the woman said, “give me this water! Then I’ll never be thirsty again, and I won’t have to come here to get water.” ¹⁶“Go and get your husband,” Jesus told her. ¹⁷“I don’t have a husband,” the woman replied. Jesus said, “You’re right! You don’t have a husband— ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and you aren’t even married to the man you’re living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!” ³⁹Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.”

John 4:13-18, 39 (NLT)

The Samaritan woman was at the well minding her own business. I am sure she did not expect to have an encounter with Jesus. Jesus walks up and invites her to have a conversation. As they talked, Jesus told the woman about her past and the five husbands she had as well as the man she was currently living with. Jesus clearly saw that there was a pattern in her life and that she was seeking fulfillment in men. How many of us have sought fulfillment in everything else but Jesus? One thing we can count on when it comes to Jesus is that he loves us too much to leave us where we are. God offers her living water so that she would no longer thirst for the attention of men, but she would thirst for the things of God. If you are searching for something to fill the empty void in your life, Jesus has what you need. With your empty bucket in hand and God’s forgiveness, come to the everlasting well found only in the Word of God. Jesus Christ will meet you there bearing the gift of “Living Water” that only he can give. Once you take a drink from the fountain that overflows, go tell others like the Samaritan woman did. She did not keep it to herself. Jesus is the ultimate thirst quencher!

Reflection: John 4:1-10

- The Samaritan woman was thirsty. How did she try to quench her thirst?
- Reflect on any quick fixes that you have relied on in your past or even now to fill a void in your life. Write them down. How have these quick fixes affected your witness to others?
- List ways that the testimonies from your past can help others see Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, I am a sinner in need of your Living Water – nothing else will do. Thank you for the blood you shed on the cross for my sins and for forgiving me every day. Help me to stand and boldly proclaim the truth of my salvation. Fill me with the passion of your Holy Spirit as I testify to a dying world that Your love is real. You are Living Water bubbling over in my soul. Amen.

DAY 3 | JANUARY 5

Key Thought: God's grace is greater than any sin we could commit.

²²Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her." ²³So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother, her brothers and sisters and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel. ²⁴Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house. ²⁵But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho—and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

Joshua 6:22-25 (NIV)

Have you ever felt like your past disqualifies you from being used by God? There are many times that we may feel like we have messed up too much to be accepted by God, and let us not talk about being used by him. The story of Rahab, however, shows us that the times that we feel like we cannot be used by God are the times he can use us the most. Rahab was a prostitute, yet she heard about the Amazing God who was with the children of Israel. Rahab was moved to help the spies God sent. She hid them and helped them to escape from the city without being harmed. Because of her obedience, her entire family was spared, and she was extended the hand of grace. Not only was Rahab forgiven of the sins of her past, she was strategically placed in God's plan for the Israelites. Rahab's life was turned from a life of sin toward God. In fact, she is a part of the lineage of David who is in the lineage of Jesus. Rahab's story reminds us to never let our past discount us from being accepted and used by God. God is calling you to have the faith to believe that he can forgive your past, use your present, and secure your future.

Reflection:

- Read the full story of Rahab (Joshua 2, Joshua 6:22-25)
- How would you define grace? Read Romans 8:1-2.
- How can you take the first step in faith to allow God to use your past for his purposes?
- How has God extended grace in your life?

Prayer: Lord, I thank you that you do not hold my past against me. Help me to recognize that your Grace has covered all my sin. Help me to have the faith like Rahab to serve you regardless of my past. Thank you Lord for your forgiveness and for the chance at a new life of serving you. Amen.

DAY 4 | JANUARY 6

Key Thought: Trust the sender.

¹⁰Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” ¹¹But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

Exodus 3:10-11 (ESV)

Moses was given a directive from God to return to the king who sought to end his life. God told Moses to demand the release of the people of Israel. Moses was well within his rights to be afraid, but he really needed to check the credentials of his sender. God was aware of the circumstances surrounding Moses' assignment. Many times, we question God. It is not because we believe God is inadequate, but because of our own inadequacies. Moses undoubtedly felt ill-equipped to handle this assignment because of his past as a murderer and his status as a Hebrew (Exodus 2). God gave Moses an assignment that could only be accomplished by faith in the One who sent him. Moses had to overcome his past, and trust that God would protect, guide, and ultimately keep him safe. When God sends us on assignment, he has a plan to ensure that all things work together for his glory.

Reflection: God sends us to unfamiliar and sometimes dangerous territory. He does so with His protection and guidance before us. Trust Him because His track record is impeccable!

- Name someone or something that God has sent you to that you have questioned.
- How did God reveal himself to you on your journey?
- Is it difficult for you to trust God? Explain?

Prayer: Lord God, I am apprehensive in serving you at times. I perceive that the threats before me are somehow greater than the God who made me. I need your courage to live without fear and doubt and to trust your will for my life. Guide my feet to travel into those areas that you have called me to. Allow me to have a boldness in you and trust your voice above all else. In Jesus name, I pray Amen!

DAY 5 | JANUARY 7

Key Thought: Jesus forgives because he loves us and his forgiveness empowers us to serve Him.

“A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.

John 21:17 (NLT)

Have you ever done something that you truly regretted? Certain things that we have done in the past tend to stick with us. Jesus told Peter that on the night he was betrayed, Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed twice. After Peter's three denials, he was deeply grieved. How could he deny even knowing someone whom he loved so deeply and spent so much time with? How could he deny the Messiah? Jesus, however, forgave Peter. Jesus's forgiveness empowered Peter to overcome his past and pursue God's plan for his life. God used Peter to establish the church, and Peter demonstrated his love for Jesus with his life. With Jesus, we can overcome regrets because He forgives and restores us to serve in His Kingdom. Reflection: There have been many times in your life when you have committed a regretful or shameful deed. Yet, Jesus forgave you and continued to give you assignments for His Kingdom, because you love Him. Take a look at some biblical characters who Jesus forgave.

Examples of people Jesus forgives and sends on...

- Peter (John 21:15-19)
- Sinful woman at the Pharisee's house who washed His feet (Luke 7:36-50)
- The woman who was caught in adultery (John 8:1-11)
- You! How has God used you in spite of your mistakes?

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for loving me despite my many sins. Even though I continuously fail, you forgive me and still use me for your glory. Although I make mistakes, I am still able to overcome my past through your power. Thank you for allowing my mistakes and your grace to work together for your glory. I praise you for the unmerited favor that you extend in spite of my past. Amen.

DAY 6 | JANUARY 8

Key Thought: The past is a process.

²He prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore, in order to forestall this; I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. ³Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life." ⁴The LORD said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?"

Jonah 4:2-4(NASB)

Jonah has just found out that God did the very thing that he did not want God to do. The passage concludes with God challenging whether Jonah has the right to be angry with God. Imagine if the canvas said to the artist you chose the wrong colors for me. What if the manuscript said to the author; you decided on the wrong book cover for me. This is what our conversation with God sounds like when we feel as though our decision is better, our choice is wiser, and our desires are more important than God's. How many times have you challenged God on what He allowed to happen in your life? To fully accept what has happened in the past is the equivalent of saying God I trust you as the artist of my dreams and as the author of my story. God has the ability to take the good, the bad, and the ugly in your life and create an amazing masterpiece. It is all a part of the process. God wastes nothing in our lives.

Reflection: Read Jonah 3:1-4:1

God, I accept what you have allowed to happen and because of it I am able to:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Prayer: Lord, I trust you with every area of my life. My past, present, and future. I pray for continued healing and the strength to walk through the process that you are taking me through. I fully accept what you are doing, and I thank you for providing me a different perspective on the experiences that you have allowed me to go through. In Jesus name, Amen.

DAY 7 | JANUARY 9

Key Thought: God has placed people in our lives.

¹⁶But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. ¹⁷Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me."

Ruth 1:16, 17 (NASB)

These words might be familiar to you if you have attended a wedding or you have used traditional vows as part of your own marriage ceremony. They communicate the loyalty of one human being to another. Ruth expressed this to Naomi after both of them had experienced a tremendous amount of loss. Often times we can let the loss of things and the loss of loved ones rob us of the desire to get close to anyone. Naomi was afraid that she might also lose Ruth, so she urged Ruth to just go back to her own people. Naomi could not bear another loss. Ruth, however, was unwilling to leave Naomi. Ruth was willing to risk loss for the chance of a better future with Naomi. This passage of scripture is a reminder of how valuable the people are that God gives us to create memories with. Begin this year by recommitting to the people God has placed in your life and treasuring every minute of every day that you get to spend with them.

Reflection: Read Ruth 1: 1-14

- Determine the people that are most important to you?
- Plan how you will spend your time this year with them?
- Schedule your time on your calendar in advance?

Prayer: Lord, help me to make the most of every moment I get to share with those that you have placed in my life. Help me to celebrate the memories of what I was blessed to have in the past with hope of an even better future. Thank you for the rich relationships that have shaped my life and made me who I am today. Show me how to value the people you have placed in my life. In Jesus name, Amen.

WEEK 2

DAY 8 | JANUARY 10

Key Thought: Our best response to temptation is to run away.

¹²She caught him by his cloak and said, “Come to bed with me!” But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

Genesis 39:12 (NIV)

In most cases, we have learned to run when we see DANGER approaching. If a scuffle breaks out, we know to run the other way. When we see flames, we need to run in the opposite direction. When a tornado is stirring, we run for shelter. In these situations, we flee immediately without even thinking twice. When it comes to sexual temptation, we should see it as DANGER approaching. It should be second nature to flee the scene of DANGER. After overcoming a multitude of obstacles, Joseph found favor with his master, Potiphar. He unintentionally found too much favor with Potiphar’s wife and she began to pursue him. After days of tempting him, she gave one last desperate attempt. However, Joseph saw nothing but DANGER and ran away. Although Potiphar was led to believe Joseph was in the wrong, thus sending him to prison, it all worked together for Joseph’s promotion to be second in command in Egypt. God takes note when we flee DANGER, and he rewards our obedience.

Reflection: In Matthew 4:1-11, Satan himself tempts Jesus in the wilderness.

How believers should react to temptation...

- Instead of feasting on the things of this world, we are to consume “every word that comes from God’s mouth.” Knowing His word will aid us in fighting the enemy’s attacks. v. 4
- Don’t put God to the test. We are to live by faith, not by magic. v. 7
- The things of this world are very appealing, but no one or thing should be sought after more than God. He is the only one we are to worship and serve. v. 10

Prayer: Heavenly Father, my aim is to seek your Kingdom! Turn me away from evil temptation and toward your righteousness. Give me strength as I face the allurements of the world each day. Bless me to pursue things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable. Regulate my thoughts and actions so that I may please you. Amen.

DAY 9 | JANUARY 11

Key Thought: He is enough!

⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not.

Scripture: Exodus 16:4 (ESV)

The Israelites were not exactly thrilled with how life had turned out for them after leaving Egypt. In fact, they were concerned that they had limited access to the bare necessities of life. They had to rely on God for everything. On several occasions, Moses grew weary because of their constant complaining and often wanted to quit as their leader. God intervened to test the physical and spiritual appetites of the Israelites as He provided “bread from heaven.” God provided just enough for each day in order that He might test their ability to depend on what they needed instead of what they wanted. God does the same with us. God provides for all our needs and, even so graciously gives us a few of our wants. We need to remember that our eyes will always desire more than what we truly need. It is God, however, who will direct our hearts to what He desires for us.

Reflection: Read Exodus 16:11-20

The Israelites became greedy in their desires to be compensated for more than what they needed daily. God tested their ability to depend on Him and Him alone for their needs.

List three areas that God might be asking you to trust that He is enough.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What will it take for you to depend solely on His daily provisions?

Prayer: God allow me to trust in you alone when it comes to my needs. Thank you for providing more than I need. You are faithful and just. Help me to trust that you will never leave me nor forsake me. Create a grateful heart in me, and help me to be content with what you have provided. Give me a generous heart so that I may freely give back to you in full measure how you have given to me. In Jesus name, I pray Amen!

DAY 10 | JANUARY 12

Key Thought: Our hearts are never hidden from God.

¹But there was a certain man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property. ²He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount. With his wife's consent, he kept the rest. ³Then Peter said, "Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. ⁴The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God!"

Scripture: Acts 5:1-4 (NLT)

Our desires for more of the world can cause us to play games with God. The dramatic account of Ananias and Sapphira immediately after the mention of Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37) draws a stark contrast between two kinds of people. On the one hand, Barnabas serves as a positive model of sincere faith, as evidenced by his "open" handed generosity. On the other hand, Ananias and Sapphira serve as negative models. They were willing to lie in order to appear generous. Externally, how do we appear? We appear to be generous, but internally we have a radically different commitment. Our hands are closed, and we are stingy. In fact, we are sometimes unwilling to give God all in spite of the fact that he gave us all!

Reflection: Where is there excess in my life? How can I be a blessing to someone else?

Challenge: This fast season consider cleaning out your closet and donating the clothes to an organization of your choosing.

Prayer: Lord, my heart is prone to wander from the God I love. I gravitate toward things and at times I am willing to go to great lengths to gain them. Lord, help me to be content with what I have and turn my heart toward you.

DAY 11 | JANUARY 13

Key Thought: Comparison to others leads to discontentment.

⁶When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with timbrels and lyres. ⁷As they danced, they sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." ⁸Saul was very angry; this refrain displeased him greatly. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?" ⁹And from that time on Saul kept a close eye on David.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 18:6-9 (NIV)

How often do you compare yourself to others - Comparing your swag, your height, weight, and even the lightness or darkness of your skin? We go on to compare our families, the size of our homes, careers, financial status, ministries and even our blessings. Theodore Roosevelt said, "Comparison is the thief of joy." Not only is it a sure way to discourage yourself, it opens the door for us to be tempted to respond with pride, jealousy, and envy. These are the very sins that feed into the hate-filled acts that plague our world today. Saul was not content with the blessings God gave him. Saul wanted David's blessing. God has a perfect plan for your life; don't miss it by looking at others. Count your blessings and not the blessings of someone else.

Reflection: Please read 1 Samuel 18:1-12 - See how pride turned love to hate

- In this passage how did Saul feel toward David in verses 1-5?
- What happened in verses 6-7 that caused such a change of heart in Saul in verses 8-12?
- Consider a time in your life when pride in one's success or good fortune got in the way of a good relationship or friendship. (Please read James 4:10)
- How can pride play a part in a broken relationship? (Please read James 4:6, 10)

Prayer: Lord, bless me with a thankful spirit, full of gratefulness and appreciation for all the things that you have done for me. Thank you Lord for loving and forgiving me despite my sinful nature. Give me a clean heart God, renew a right spirit within me so that I can love others, free from the ugliness of pride, jealousy, envy, and hatred. Amen.

DAY 12 | JANUARY 14

Key Thought: Let It Go!

Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." ²Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ³In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. ⁴And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

Genesis 4:1-5 (NIV)

Anger and jealousy are undesirable characteristics that most people do not admit that they possess. In Genesis ⁴, we recognize anger and jealousy in the midst of family drama. It is not just any family, but it's the first family. Adam and Eve's problems did not end when they lost their home in the Garden of Eden. Their son Cain killed his brother Abel because of jealousy and anger. God was not pleased with Cain's sacrifice and Cain could not let it go. The bible says that his countenance changed. He could have returned home and bought another sacrifice that was pleasing to God. But, he could not let it go and his anger grew. Sin has a way of spreading like wildfire. We can assume that we are managing sin, but before we know it, sin is managing us. We must learn to Let It Go! We are sinners saved by grace. We do not have to be prisoners of sin. We do not have to live with the guilt. We do not have to let the sins of our past cripple our future. We can Let It Go!

Reflection:

- How do I let sin go?
- Read Romans 6:5-14

Prayer: Lord, thank you for sending your son Jesus to conquer death, hell, and the grave. Because you died on the cross, I am more than a conqueror. Because you were raised from the dead, I have a seat in your kingdom. Thank you God that sin no longer controls me! Help me to learn to Let it Go! Lord help me to focus more on the plan you have for my future instead of the past that you saved me from. Thank you for saving me because I cannot save myself. Help me to understand that we are all equal at the foot of the cross and traits like anger and jealousy are not from you. Give me the wisdom to please you in all that I say and do. Amen.

DAY 13 | JANUARY 15

Key Thought: Manipulation is never the better choice.

⁴¹So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob." ⁴²Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, "Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you by planning to kill you. ⁴³Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban!

Genesis ^{27:41-43} (NASB)

These siblings have a strained relationship because one of them manipulated the situation for his benefit. It is often difficult to resist the temptation to take advantage of an opportunity, even if it is at the expense of those who are close to you. Especially, if you can reap all of the benefits. Before we make this decision, we must count the cost. What happens to the relationship? What happens to our character? What happens to our values? What happens to our morals? Is it really worth it? Perhaps there are other ways to get what you want that do not mean compromising who you are. Resist the temptation to take advantage of an opportunity at the expense of valuable relationships and most importantly your Christian witness. Manipulation never results in God's best for you. God's way is always the better choice.

Reflection: What areas are you tempted to manipulate?

- At Work
- At Home
- At School
- With Spouse
- With Friends

What must I do to avoid manipulating others?

Prayer: Lord, help me to be fully aware of moments when I am manipulating a situation for my benefit at the expense of others. Help me to focus on the necessary changes in my life to have an eternal focus. Replace my desire for earthly significance, with the desire for eternal significance so that I can be used to impact the world for you. In Jesus name, Amen

DAY 14 | JANUARY 16

Key Thought: Appearance over reality.

⁴⁷While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, ⁴⁸but Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" ⁴⁹When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" ⁵⁰And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. ⁵¹But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him. ⁵²Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? ⁵³Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour—when darkness reigns."

Scripture: Luke 22:47-53 (NIV)

Judas was a disciple and he was chosen by Jesus to be a part of the Twelve. He had all the appearances of a Holy life, yet his heart was not right. The part of his life that was seen in public looked great, however, he was a different person behind closed doors. His actions led others to believe that he was with Jesus, but Jesus clearly knew his intentions. Social media is a vehicle by which we can appear to be better than we really are or more right with God than we actually are. Judas walked with Jesus, yet he still betrayed Jesus. His heart was not right. We must remember that integrity matters. We should be the same person in public that we are behind closed doors. We may lie to others about who we really are because of the image we create, but Jesus knows who we really are. Judas struggled with having good integrity. He pretended to love Jesus, yet he lied to Jesus. This may be your struggle as well. We all struggle with sin. When we are open about our struggles, God can use us to help someone else.

Reflection: Read Luke 22:1-6

- What are some things that you struggle with that you would rather people not know about?
- What things do you say or place on social media to create an appearance that is not an accurate picture of who you really are?
- Ask God how he can use something that you are struggling with to help someone else and write it down here.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the many lessons I can learn in your word. Help me to be open about the struggles I face in this life. Help me to not hide my sins or try to appear perfect because I know I need your amazing grace and mercy. Thank you Lord that you always know my heart. Create in me a clean heart Lord so that I may truly worship you. Amen

WEEK 3

DAY 15 | JANUARY 17

Key Thought: Fear is False Evidence Appearing Real.

⁵Then Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground before the whole community of Israel. ⁶Two of the men who had explored the land, Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, tore their clothing. ⁷They said to all the people of Israel, "The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land! ⁸And if the LORD is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. ⁹Do not rebel against the LORD, and don't be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the LORD is with us! Don't be afraid of them!"

Numbers ^{14:5-9} (NLT)

While the other ¹⁰ spies were paralyzed by fear, doubts, and visions of a negative outcome; Joshua and Caleb believed God's Word. Joshua and Caleb refused to allow fear of the people in the land to override God's promise to his people. In fact, they were the only two of the original two million people who succeeded in entering the Promised Land. There were consequences to Israel's fear: ¹) Fear took them longer to reach the promised land, and ²) Fear caused many people to never see God's promised plan for their lives. We can learn a great deal from Joshua and Caleb. ¹) Fear may cause you to stand alone at times, ²) Pushing past fear grows us and provides blessings, and ³) Choosing God's promise over your fear opens the door for a miracle.

Reflection:

- Read Numbers 13:25-33
- How does our view of ourselves affect whether we become fearful or confident?
- What do you think gave Joshua and Caleb the courage to go against the majority?

Prayer: Lord, help me to push past being frightened and paralyzed about failing. Lord reveal your words of affirmation and assurance when I encounter fear. When I do fail, help me to fail forward and learn the valuable lessons you want to teach me for your glory. Amen.

DAY 16 | JANUARY 18

Key Thought: Fasting and Prayer opens doors.

¹⁰Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, ¹¹"All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king." ¹²When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, ¹³he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. ¹⁴For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" ¹⁵Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶"Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

Esther 4:10-16 (NIV)

In the Bible, we can learn very important lessons from Esther regarding fasting and prayer. Esther knew that she needed to hear from God, and she was desperate to hear from him. When we are in a time of fasting, it is important to quiet all the distractions in our lives so that God can have our undivided attention. We must also come to God with the expectation of hearing from him and a willingness to obey his response. Esther realized that God was the only one who could respond to the crisis she was facing. Sometimes, we need others to join us in a time of prayer and fasting so that we can make the right decision. God is speaking today just as he was in Bible times. What are you willing to give up so that you can hear from God? Will you risk rejection to hear from God? Esther risked her life for the sake of her people, and she risked rejection from the King. As a result of her fasting and praying, God responded and He used her to save an entire race of people. God may be urging you to move in a certain direction or perhaps it is a closeness with the Father that you need. No matter what it is, take this time of fasting and prayer to hear from God. He is speaking!

Reflection:

- Is there anything you feel God urging you to do right now? Write that down here.
- List the things that you need to quiet in your life to receive clear direction from God on how to proceed?

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for this time of prayer and fasting. I come to you with a desire to hear a word from you. Speak to me Lord. Lead and guide me on this life's journey and help me to know the plans you have for my life. Help me to be in your will and to obey what you have called me to do. Amen.

DAY 17 | JANUARY 19

Key Thought: We never lose when we are obedient to God.

¹Sometime later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. ²Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." ³When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. ¹²"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." ¹³Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

Genesis 22:1-2, 9-14 (NIV)

Can you imagine how Abraham must have felt? God was asking him to sacrifice the son he waited ¹⁰⁰ years to have. Why would God do such a thing? Have you ever wanted something so bad from God and when he finally blessed you, somehow you begin to worship the gift instead of the Giver? God knew how long Abraham and Sarah had waited to have a son of their own. He knew that they loved Isaac and Isaac loved his parents. I am sure that as Abraham was traveling to Moriah all types of fear welled up on the inside of him, and he was probably feeling sad that he was about to lose his son. Nevertheless, Abraham stayed focus and responded in obedience to God's instructions. He did not allow his fear to override the voice of God. God does not expect us to never feel fear, but he does expect us to allow our faith to overtake our fear.

Reflection:

- Can you name something that is so precious to you, that you cannot fully enjoy it for fear of losing it? (Read Luke 9:25, Matthew 6:19-21)
- Share your testimony of God's grace in the face of loss? How can your story of surviving loss help encourage others? (Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Prayer: God of compassion, God of mercy, I trust you. Help me to trust You Father with my fears. Lord, help me to be obedient. Help me to place your will for my life above my desires. Allow me to hear your voice and to act on your directions. Amen.

DAY 18 | JANUARY 20

Key Thought: Growth can occur in unlikely places.

⁵⁴Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" They asked. ⁵⁵"Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home."

Matthew 13:⁵⁴⁻⁵⁷ (NIV)

Tupac Amaru Shakur wrote a famous poem entitled "The Rose that Grew from the Concrete." No one expected such a miracle to occur. How did this rose sprout up out of conditions that were not at all conducive to life and growth? Sometimes, people expect your beginning to dictate your conclusion. They will try to find the smallest way to dismiss your fruitfulness. Even Jesus faced rejection in his own hometown when people could not believe this was Mary and Joseph's boy preaching truth so profoundly. They figured since he came from a humble start, he could not possibly have the authority to be great. They rejected Jesus! Boy, were they wrong! Just like Jesus, we will experience rejection because we may not look, act, or think the way others think we should. Take pride in where you started and grow from where you are planted! As long as you are where God has placed you, he will bless you to bear fruit.

Reflection: Read Joshua 1:⁵⁻⁹ and face the fear of rejection in this way...

- Be s_____ and c_____.
- Do not be a_____.
- Do not be d_____.
- For the LORD your God will be with you w_____ you go.

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for how you created me and for my beginning. You made me in a unique way. Help me to not be concerned with how others view me. Let me be concerned with seeking acceptance from you alone. Help me to find comfort in knowing that I am loved and accepted by you! Amen

DAY 19 | JANUARY 21

Key Thought: God's grace covers our inadequacies.

¹⁵When the water was gone, she put the boy in the shade of a bush. ¹⁶Then she went and sat down by herself about a hundred yards away. "I don't want to watch the boy die," she said, as she burst into tears. ¹⁷But God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, "Hagar, what's wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. ¹⁸Go to him and comfort him, for I will make a great nation from his descendants." ¹⁹Then God opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw a well full of water. She quickly filled her water container and gave the boy a drink.

Genesis 21:15-19 (NLT)

Hagar was out of options. The water was gone and her baby was crying. She felt alone, unloved, unwanted, and forgotten. But, God. It is in the "But God" moment that Hagar's feelings of inadequacy fade away because she realizes that God has not forgotten about her. He cares and He meet her needs. What is interesting is that God had to open Hagar's eyes so she could see what was in front of her. Sometimes our vision can be clouded by the negative things that people have said about us, and God clears up our vision by whispering that we are the apple of his eye. People or comments on our social media page can make us feel like we do not belong or measure up, but God confirms that we do. God had a plan to bless Hagar and her son. He has plan to bless you as well. Make a commitment to move beyond your feelings of inadequacy to embrace God's truth which clearly declares you are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm ^{139:14}).

Reflection:

- Read Genesis 21:8-14
- What role did Hagar's mistreatment by Sarai have in Hagar feeling inadequate?
- Think about a time that you felt inadequate. Did you choose what God says about you over what someone else said? Why or Why not?

Prayer: Lord, at times I feel I am not good enough. Open my eyes to see myself as you see me. Lord, help me to believe what you say about me over what others say about me. Help me to turn to you for reassurance when I feel I am inadequate. Amen

DAY 20 | JANUARY 22

**Key Thought: Fear, I'm sorry but I must evict you!
Faith lives here now.**

¹³One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, ¹⁴a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, ¹⁵and the Sabeans attacked and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" ¹⁶While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" ¹⁷While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and made off with them. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" ¹⁸While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, ¹⁹when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!" ²⁰At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship.

Job 1:13-20 (NIV)

Trouble is like an uninvited guest. It comes into our lives unexpectedly and lingers far too long. Every decade or so we live in real fear of losing it all. There are others who fear that they are just one phone call away from losing it all. Is it healthy for us to live in fear of losing it all? Job, was a blameless and upright man who lost everything. But Job's suffering was a part of God's plan. Although Job was faithful to God, he still endured hardships and sufferings. God does allow bad things to happen to good people, but it does not mean that they are being punished for some indescribable sin. It may mean that God provides opportunities for us to demonstrate our trust in him. God allowed Satan to turn Job's world upside down and shake all the attractive elements out. God wanted to know what was the foundation and structure of Job's faith. Job wrestled with his condition and even questioned God. But it was his faith in God, not in things, that revealed what was in Job's heart.

Reflection:

- Read Job 1:6-11
- God wants us to understand that all that we have, he gave it to us, and if we lost it all we would still have Him.

Prayer: Father, teach me to put my trust in you and you alone. Help me to not fear losing anything but your presence. Remind me that in you I have all that I need. There is no insufficiency in you. Teach me that suffering for righteousness sake allows you to get the glory and my tests to become testimonies. In Jesus name, Amen!

DAY 21 | JANUARY 23

Key Thought: Take Courage!

¹Then Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the people who were with him rose early and encamped beside the spring of Harod. And the camp of Midian was north of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. ²The LORD said to Gideon, "The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.' ³Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home and hurry away from Mount Gilead.'" Then ^{22,000} of the people returned, and ^{10,000} remained. ⁴And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people are still too many. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there, and anyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' shall go with you, and anyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' shall not go." ⁵So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself. Likewise, everyone who kneels down to drink." ⁶And the number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was ³⁰⁰ men, but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water. ⁷And the LORD said to Gideon, "With the ³⁰⁰ men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home." ⁸So the people took provisions in their hands, and their trumpets. And he sent all the rest of Israel every man to his tent, but retained the ³⁰⁰ men. And the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

Judges 7:1-8 (ESV)

On the eve of war, Gideon found himself fearfully comparing the number of men in his war post to that of the Midianites. Gideon followed God's instructions to reduce his army size to a mere three hundred soldiers which paled in comparison to the opposing army. After following God's instructions, doubt began to seep into Gideon's mind. He wondered if he could win the battle with the three hundred men. Gideon did not realize that God was about to do a miracle. God wanted Gideon's army to be so small to ensure that when he gave Gideon the victory, no one else would be given the credit except God. In our own lives, God will ask of us the impossible to make known His mighty power and greatness. He does this because he wants those who oppose us to know his might and that we will too. Christians must know that the God we serve is able and willing to fight on our behalf. Fear has no place in a believer's heart! Be strong and courageous!

Reflection: Read Judges 7 and 8

- What do you find most encouraging about Gideon's story?
- What was God looking for in the men he chose to be a part of Gideon's final army of 300?

Prayer: God, there are obstacles and barriers in my life today that I am afraid to face. I need you to give me your spirit of courage. I have tried to make this "thing" go away and yet it remains so God today by your power remove my fear. I need new eyes to view you through, and a new perspective to witness your hand at work. Allow me to accept your plan of protection for everything in my life. The battle is yours. In Jesus' name, I pray Amen!

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