

The
PRAYER COVENANT
for **Teens**

UNSHAKEABLE TRUTHS FOR TEENS

Candy Marballi

THE PRAYER COVENANT INC.

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Dedicated to....

Every teen who reads this book.

**There is no greater purpose,
no greater adventure
than knowing God
and making Him known.**

As you begin your journey remember,

The Lord your God is with you,
The Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
In his love he will no longer rebuke you,
But will rejoice over you with singing.

—Zephaniah 3:17

Table of Contents

Endorsements
Acknowledgements
Foreword by Newt Crenshaw
Introduction
Prayer

Getting Started

Day 1 — You Can Change the World
Day 2 — Why Teens Are Leaving the Church
Day 3 — Discovering Your Purpose
Day 4 — Teach Me to Pray
Day 5 — Prayer—the Great Adventure
Day 6 — Prayer Is Power

Unshakeable Truth - Grace

Day 7 — Unmerited Grace
Day 8 — The Prodigal
Day 9 — Peter Wasn't Perfect
Day 10 — The Epitome of Grace
Day 11 — Saul: The Conversion of a Religious Terrorist
Day 12 — Making Prayer a Priority

Unshakeable Truth - Love

Day 13 — The Love Chapter
Day 14 — Perfect Love
Day 15 — Outdoing One Another
Day 16 — The Perfect Father
Day 17 — Love & Obedience
Day 18 — Do Everything in Love

Unshakeable Truth - Compassion

Day 19 — Loving Others
Day 20 — Homeless & Hungry
Day 21 — Mother Teresa
Day 22 — Making a Difference
Day 23 — Praying for Others
Day 24 — The Soup Kitchen

Unshakeable Truth - Repentance

Day 25 — Far From Perfect
Day 26 — Porn & the Sex Trafficking Industry
Day 27 — Don't Defile Your Body
Day 28 — The Unforgiving Servant
Day 29 — The Power to Forgive
Day 30 — Prayer, Your Greatest Defense

Unshakeable Truth - Worship

- Day 31 — Design of DNA
- Day 32 — DNA—Random Chance?
- Day 33 — Creation or Evolution?
- Day 34 — Origin of the Universe
- Day 35 — Let Your Light Shine
- Day 36 — Whole Life Worship

Unshakeable Truth - Commitment

- Day 37 — Remove This Cup
- Day 38 — Running the Race
- Day 39 — Prepared for Greatness
- Day 40 — Knowing Christ
- Day 41 — Follow Me
- Day 42 — Anxious for Nothing

Unshakeable Truth - Dependence

- Day 43 — The Promise
- Day 44 — Wordless Groans
- Day 45 — The Gift
- Day 46 — The Fruit of the Spirit
- Day 47 — The Presence & Power of the Holy Spirit
- Day 48 — Total Dependence

Unshakeable Truth - Influence

- Day 49 — What Would Jesus Do?
- Day 50 — Walk the Walk
- Day 51 — Hypocrisy & the Early Church
- Day 52 — A Force for Good or Evil
- Day 53 — Godly Character
- Day 54 — Poverty & Justice

Unshakeable Truth - Discipleship

- Day 55 — Reaching the Last
- Day 56 — Let Your Light Shine
- Day 57 — 24/7 Prayer and the Modern-Day Missions Movement
- Day 58 — Influencing a Nation
- Day 59 — Missionary to China
- Day 60 — LQE

Unshakeable Truth - Authority

- Day 61 — God's Authority Over the Universe
- Day 62 — The Authority of the Bible
- Day 63 — Claiming Christ's Authority
- Day 64 — Authority Over Sickness
- Day 65 — The Names of God
- Day 66 — Conclusion

Endorsements

Having worked with students for many years, one thing I love about them is their inherent passion—for causes, people, events. But nothing is more beautiful than a teen's passion for Jesus. So, how do we help them walk out their eagerness to pursue more of life in Christ? *Unshakeable Truths: The Prayer Covenant for Teens* provides a daily, practical, step-by-step approach to constructively unleashing the spiritual energy of youth for the glory of Christ. At the same time, it helps them discover how a rich and fulsome prayer life is foundational to everything else. There really is no other book like *Unshakeable Truths*. Clearly, its time has come!

—David Bryant, President, Proclaim Hope!, Director, ChristNow.com, Author, *Christ is NOW!*

As the grandfather to several teenagers, I understand the challenges our youth face today. With social media, the Internet, and peer pressure, youth today must deal with obstacles I never could have imagined when I was a youth leader in the 1970s. Candy Marballi's book *Unshakeable Truths: The Prayer Covenant for Teens* is wonderfully remarkable. It provides teenagers with a tool for using prayer as a weapon in a 66-day devotional to intercede with purpose through employing practical biblical insights in areas like grace, compassion, commitment, repentance, discipleship, and many others. In these pages, Candy inspires and equips teens to overcome the negativity that surrounds them daily. As Candy contends, Jesus offers a completely different worldview of life—that of wholeness, purpose, and security. This book is truly a "Heaven-sent" guide that every Christian teenager ought to have to navigate the challenges of today's anti-biblical culture. Seriously, get this book in the hands of every Christian teenager you know! They need it to survive these trying times!

—Dick Eastman, International President, Every Home for Christ, President of America's National Prayer Committee

In Candy Marballi's book *Unshakeable Truths: The Prayer Covenant for Teens*, mobilizing children and youth may be a word from the Holy Spirit in this hour to the church in America. I'm listening!! And I'm joining in urgent prayer with all of you for a majestic, all-consuming, tsunami of God's Spirit to sweep across our nation and the nations of the world. 'Come Lord Jesus, come. Give us a holy dissatisfaction with the status quo.'

—Dr. Jeff Farmer, President Emeritus, NextGen Cohort Chair, PCCNA (Pentecostal Charismatic Churches of North America)

Unshakeable Truths: The Prayer Covenant for Teens is the perfect tool of inspiration for this impressionable generation. I truly appreciate Candy's leadership and heart for young people as they navigate through this changing culture. Youth will be blessed by her concrete instructions on how to commit to pray over themselves as well as a friend each day. In this book, Candy also provides scripture-based daily devotions that speak to some difficult but necessary subjects that all youth and teens face today.

—Pastor Dave Gibson, Pastor of Missions and Evangelism, Grace Church, Eden Prairie, MN, Go Movement, USA Director

Candy Marballi has captured the power of praying the Prayer Covenant daily in such a way that I believe will inspire you, and this next generation of young people, to follow Jesus together. If that is the goal of your life or that is the vision for your ministry to young people, this tool is for you. Praise be to God! It will encourage you. It will empower you. Don't miss this opportunity to multiply the impact in your life and in your sphere of influence. To God be the glory!

—Dr. Jerry Kirk, Founder, The Prayer Covenant

Prayer is essential for spiritual growth towards maturity and *Unshakeable Truths: The Prayer Covenant for Teens* is thoughtfully structured and designed for young people who are seeking to dive deeper into the discipline of prayer while being rooted in God's Word. This 66-day journey encourages the reader to be attentive to the Word of God as s/he engages in prayer and provides clear and simple steps that connect the prayer life to praxis. It is a solid resource for the emerging generation and will prove to be effective for those who apply themselves.

—Reverend Lisa Pak, Global Strategist for *Finishing The Task*

After reading this book, *Unshakeable Truths: The Prayer Covenant for Teens*, every teen can be standing on a firm foundation with a sure and steady hope, anchored in God's Word. Candy Marballi gives guidance on how to start a lifestyle of prayer and become dependent on God alone. This book, designed for 66 days, is a game-changer to become more like Jesus, and a must-read for every teen.

—Werner Nachtigal, Founder & Intl. President, GO Movement

It is a joy to recommend *Unshakeable Truths: The Prayer Covenant for Teens* by Candy Marballi, a dear colleague in the International Prayer Council. What a magnificent manual for discipling youth to become great for God through prayer and the actions that flow out of connecting with Him through daily prayer! How I wish someone had given me such a rich, practical, and inspiring daily resource to navigate through those insecure, often confused teen years as a new believer

in Jesus, trying to find identity and purpose in life. Unshakeable Truths, through daily meditation and prayer, will help you discover your unique life calling, gifting, and destiny and do something great for the Lord and others. You will be blessed, encouraged, and excited to use this wonderful resource!

—John Robb, Founder, International Prayer Council and National Prayer Assembly (USA)

Our teenagers live in a world today that most of us could have never imagined when we were teenagers. Candy speaks to these teens in a very real and very biblical way. She gives real answers to some of the many questions teens struggle with today. If they read this book and use The Prayer Covenant, I'm very confident it will have a significant impact in their lives, and just might change their life!

—R. Philp Sarnecki, CEO-RPS Financial Group, Inc., Chairman-Board of Trustees, Athletes in Action

A refreshingly practical direction-setting road map for any teen around the world who's saying "yes" to Jesus in their hearts and with their lives. Powerful, practical, dynamic, and rhythm-setting for any teenager.

—Nate Vander Stelt, Executive Vice President, GACX: a global alliance for church multiplication

In less than seven years, the Prayer Covenant for Children has impacted 7 million children in 70 nations, and Candy Marballi has now completed her third book, *Unshakeable Truths: The Prayer Covenant for Teens*. This book has incredible potential for youth to both experience and be on mission with their heavenly Father. The ten prayer points that make up Unshakeable Truths provide an on-ramp into a lifestyle of prayer and mission. Teens will experience the reality of God's grace, love, and compassion in a life fully surrendered to Christ.

If your passion is to see teens become "prayer saturated Christ followers" who multiply in their families, their schools, their communities, and their world, Unshakeable Truths is for you!

—Tom Victor, Founder/Servant, The Great Commission Coalition, Executive Committee, International Prayer Council, Facilitator, Go 2020 Decade Children's Team

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Many thanks to Steven Eyre for his theological review and my dear friend, Tom Victor, for his unwavering support of The Prayer Covenant since the children's book was first released and his passion to empower children and youth to know Christ and make Him known.

Foreword

Since joining Young Life staff over four years ago, one of the best things that has happened to me is receiving a call from Pastor Jerry Kirk early in my tenure. Jerry is the founder of the 40 Day Prayer Covenant that is the basis for Candy Marballi's powerful book introducing adolescents to the practice of covenant prayer. For me, Jerry has become a prayer partner, a spiritual mentor and an encourager extraordinaire. His love of our Lord Jesus and desire to see others come to know and love Him is unlike anyone I have ever met. And, worthy of note, Jerry met Jesus through Young Life and became a leader and staff person with our ministry before his call to become a pastor. Needless to say, we are very proud to have people like Jerry as Young Life alumni!

Through Jerry, I know Candy to be a remarkable kingdom leader as the President/CEO of the Prayer Covenant, with a passion for young people following Jesus and utilizing the powerful practice of prayer to grow in their faith.

Whether you are 15, 25 or 55 as you read *Unshakable Truths: The Prayer Covenant for Teens*, you will be richly blessed. There are four reasons that cause me to be confident in this assertion:

- 1. Jesus is at the center.** "Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want." This specific prayer at the center of the Prayer Covenant is a life-changing prayer for anyone who engages it earnestly. We learn from the Apostle Paul *"that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Philippians 2:10-11). The most fundamental truth in human existence is that Jesus is Lord. The question we each of us must answer is, will we follow Him as Lord, or go our own way? Either way, on that Great Day, our tongues will confess and our knees will bow before Him alone.
- 2. Prayer is our primary and most intimate connection to our God.** Jesus routinely modeled this truth in His earthly life. The Gospel of Mark tells us that *"very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed"* (Mark 1:35). He

taught His disciples how to pray the “Lord’s Prayer,” when and where to pray, examples of people to imitate and those to avoid, and even modeled prayers of intimacy and anguish while in the Garden of Gethsemane before His crucifixion. R.A. Torrey, in his classic book *How to Pray*, gives 11 reasons for the importance of prayer. For the 11th reason he says the following: “There is one more reason for constant, persistent, sleepless, overcoming prayer, and it is a mighty one: BECAUSE OF WHAT PRAYER ACCOMPLISHES.” Torrey continues to lift up the importance of prayer by reminding us that it “promotes our spiritual growth, brings power to our work, avails for the conversion of others, and brings blessings to the church.”

3. The content of this book is deeply relevant for young people around the world. In *Young Life* we have the amazing privilege to walk alongside adolescents in friendship in over 100 countries, becoming acquainted with their hopes and fears, their plans and distractions, their sense of self, and their perceptions of the world in which they live. Young people desperately need to be given an opportunity to make prayer a foundation in their lives—lives that are often filled with pressure, uncertainty and loneliness as they transition into adulthood. Candy speaks to young people with relevant examples and without sugar-coating the reality that they face every day. Young people, like all of us, are asking questions about identity, purpose and belonging on a regular basis, as Kara Powell and Brad Griffin point out in their most recent book, *3 Big Questions That Change Every Teenager*. Prayer—alongside God’s Word within a community of loving relationships—provides the best context for the next generation to answer these crucial questions that will determine their future, for the coming years and for eternity.

4. The Prayer Covenant is a tool for long-lasting transformation. I know this to be true, because it has transformed my prayer life. Praying with Jerry has been life-changing for me. It has inspired me to invite others to join me in the Prayer Covenant and then continue to pray for those whom the Lord has given me long after the initial 40 days are over. The Prayer Covenant itself is simple and comprehensive, easily understood and profoundly deep. It is beautifully focused on the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—meeting us in different ways each day. The Prayer Covenant invites us to remember that we are children of the Living God, fully known and fully loved.

I pray that you will dive into *Unshakable Truths: The Prayer Covenant for Teens* with great expectations that the God of the Universe will bless you in unmistakable ways as you commit with others to pursue Him in prayer. Although there is very little in this world that is a 100 percent guarantee, if you will allow Candy Marballi to be your guide for the next 66 days, I believe with all my heart that your life will be changed for the better—because our Lord Jesus is full of unfailing love and faithfulness for people just like you and me!

Newt Crenshaw
President/CEO
Young Life
February, 2021

Introduction

How often do you walk into a room full of friends or people from school and start to compare yourself? Though we may not even recognize it, we are all slaves to the world and its changing expectations, demands and norms. We compare our appearance, athleticism, personality, GPA, friend group, body type and social media following. It happens in a room full of people, and it happens when we're alone and scrolling Instagram. Within seconds, without even realizing it, a deep and lonely part of us is flooded by insecurity and longing for a sense of worth. We feel inadequate and discontent. We live so much of our lives like we are impoverished, desperate for the world to bestow a bit of affirmation onto us. With hands held out, we ask the world to measure our value. We look to the scale to tell us if we're skinny enough or strong enough, or the boyfriend or girlfriend to prove that we are loved and seen, the coach to give us a spot on varsity, or the college acceptance that finally proves we're smart enough. We act like we are truly bankrupt, and we are hardly aware that it's happening. We let our insecurities, fears and anxieties spiral in our minds, suffering silently behind flawlessly curated Instagram posts, waiting for the world's approval that is never quite enough.

Here's a hard truth: This is not unique to the teen years. Waiting endlessly for the world's approval will follow us to the grave if we let it.

But Jesus offers a completely different life. He offers wholeness, purpose and security. There is unequivocally no room for a life marked by comparison, insecurity or emotional poverty when we walk with Jesus. He has already answered the deepest questions of our hearts, so we can stop asking the world for answers.

He has replaced insecurity with a firm foundation, and an anxiety-inducing unknown future with a sure and steady hope. The Word of God defines our hope as an anchor for our souls, firm and secure (Hebrews 6:19). Because of this hope, you can be anchored and unmoving.

Let me be clear. It isn't a hope that you will get your dream job. It isn't a hope that you will find the perfect spouse. It isn't a hope that you will get into a prestigious university. It's way better.

It is a hope that bears no uncertainty. It is a hope in Jesus alone. It is a sure and unchanging hope in the reality that despite your unfaithfulness to a righteous God, He loves you with such an intense love that He sent Jesus to suffer beyond what you can imagine, so that you could not only experience joy and purpose in this life, but also experience a glorious eternity with Him that you couldn't have earned if you tried.

Letting the hope of Christ sink deeply into your heart will change everything. It will fill you with a joy and a purpose that will cause you to laugh without fear of the future (Proverbs 31:25) and to view all things as worthless in comparison to knowing Christ (Philippians 3:8). The most seemingly perfect of circumstances cannot hold a candle to the inexpressible joy that is afforded you in knowing Christ. When you walk with Him, there is no time to worry about the things of the world. There is too much to rejoice in, and too many greater and eternal things that God has called you to do.

Unshakeable Truths: The Prayer Covenant for Teens will prepare you for a life of walking with Jesus. It will set your eyes on Him and guide you into a lifestyle of prayer and dependence on the only One who gives freedom, hope, purpose and joy, not only in this life, but for the eternity to come.

What if you could be assured that God hears and answers your prayers? Would it strengthen your faith and cause you to pray even more? The Prayer Covenant is a prayer strategy that equips you to effectively pray all that God desires for you and for those for whom you pray. You first begin praying this prayer by yourself for 10 days. Then it is time for you to invite someone else into a Prayer Covenant whereby you commit to pray for a particular person by name for an agreed number of days. Most often it is 40 days. The number 40 has great significance in the Bible. Here are a few examples:

Genesis 7:12 *During the flood it rained for 40 days and 40 nights.*

Exodus 24:18 *Moses was on Mt. Sinai for 40 days and nights when receiving the 10 commandments.*

Luke 4:1-2 *Jesus was tempted by the devil for 40 days while He was fasting.*

Acts 1:3 *There were 40 days between Jesus' resurrection and ascension.*

When you pray the first five themes of the Prayer Covenant, **grace, love, compassion, repentance** and **worship**, you are asking God to do something within you. When you pray the final five, **dependence, commitment, influence, discipleship** and **authority**, you are asking God to do something in and through you.

Grace ▪ Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Love ▪ Help me love you with my whole heart.

Compassion ▪ Empower me to love others the way you love me.

Repentance ▪ I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Worship ▪ Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Commitment ▪ Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Dependence ▪ Fill me with the presence and power of your Holy Spirit.

Influence ▪ Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Discipleship ▪ Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you as Lord.

Authority ▪ Father, I pray in the name of Jesus and in the power of your Holy Spirit, Amen.

As you begin praying, you will notice amazing doors of opportunity—God showing up unexpectedly throughout your day. You will find yourself focusing more on Jesus and less on yourself. And even more importantly, you will find yourself being transformed—becoming more like Jesus: more loving, compassionate and forgiving. Knowing and becoming more like Jesus is the goal.

The book is designed to be read over 66 days, one lesson each day. Take time to look up the Scriptures, to pray and ask God to show you what He wants you to know. Each day's lesson will end with a section that helps you reflect on what you just learned.

Meditate & Memorize - Here you will find the memory verse for each Unshakeable Truth or theme. Take time to meditate on the passage and then memorize it. It is helpful to write out the verse you are trying to memorize. Post it on your mirror, desk, wherever you will find it most helpful. Hiding God's word in your heart will help you not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11).

Pray - This is where you will find one line of the Prayer Covenant prayer that correlates to the Unshakeable Truth.

Consider - This section invites you to reflect on the devotional and consider what it means for you personally.

Act - This is where you can apply what you learned in a practical way.

Research has shown it takes 66 days to form a habit. As you work through each lesson, my prayer is that you will grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18) and be empowered to press on to know Him more (Hosea 6:3).

The PRAYER COVENANT for Teens

GRACE ❶ Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

LOVE ❷ Help me love you with my whole heart.

COMPASSION ❸ Empower me to love others the way you love me.

REPENTANCE ❹ I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

WORSHIP ❺ Help me praise you with all that is within me.

COMMITMENT ❻ Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

DEPENDENCE ❼ Fill me with the presence and power of your Holy Spirit.

INFLUENCE ❽ Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

DISCIPLESHIP ❾ Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you as Lord.

AUTHORITY ❿ Father, I pray in the name of Jesus and in the power of your Holy Spirit, Amen.

Getting Started



YOU CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

2 Corinthians 4:18, So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.



Do you have a desire to be part of something greater than yourself, but you really don't know how or where to begin?

Is there something burning within you that says, "I want to make a difference. I want to accomplish something of great significance?"

Let's travel back to A.D. 27. It is when Bible scholars agree that Jesus began his public ministry.

I've often closed my eyes and imagined what it must have been like to have been one of the twelve disciples Jesus chose to be part of his earthly ministry. What qualifications did he look for? What would be required of them? And what was their response when invited to be part of this group of world-changers?

Did you know that most of the disciples were teenagers? Look up and read Matthew 17:24-27:

After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?"

"Yes, he does," he replied. When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak, "What do you think, Simon?" he asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from others?"

"From others," Peter answered. "Then the children are exempt," Jesus said to him. "But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

According to Jewish law, any and every male over 20 years of age was required to pay an offering of one-half shekel when visiting God's temple. The equivalent of one shekel was one four-drachma coin.

Let's read together Exodus 30:13-15:

Each one who crosses over to those already counted is to give a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. This half shekel is an offering to the Lord. All who cross over, those twenty years old or more, are to give an offering to the Lord.

So if Jesus just paid one four-drachma coin, we can assume that of the twelve disciples, only He and Peter were over the age of 20.

Why is this important?

Because if Jesus could empower a group of teens to love, follow, and serve Him to help lead a movement still impacting the world 2,000 years later, He can do the same today. He can do the same with *you*. He used a youth group to change the world.

Do you want to be part of an inner circle of Christ-followers today? Following Jesus wholeheartedly allows you to embark on an adventure of a lifetime.

My prayer is that this book will help you refocus your priorities from the temporal—the here-and-now, what we see with our eyes—to the eternal—what awaits us and is yet unseen.



Meditate & Memorize

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
-2 Corinthians 4:18



Pray

Heavenly Father, use me to do great things for your kingdom like you used the disciples long ago.



Consider

God used ordinary people to change the world.



Act

Purpose in your heart and mind to follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

WHY TEENS ARE LEAVING THE CHURCH

Research has revealed a host of disturbing statistics that reflect a crisis occurring among **churched** kids. Can you guess what this crisis might be?

Churched teens are leaving the church in droves.



Pinetops Foundation and The Veritas Forum examined various report and survey data on the millennial perspective of faith and found the following: About 35 million youths raised in Christian homes will depart from their faith over the next 30 years. In fact, the number of young people leaving the church could reach 42 million.¹

“There appears to be no shortage of teenagers who want to be inspired and make the world better. But the version of Christianity some are taught doesn’t inspire them ‘to change anything that’s broken in the world.’ Teens want to be challenged; they want their tough questions taken on. ‘We think that they want cake, but they actually want steak and potatoes, and we keep giving them cake,’ Churches, not just parents, share some of the blame for teens’ religious apathy.”²

We have failed you in so many ways. The Church, as the above paragraph suggests, is partly to blame for the current crisis we find ourselves in.

We will go into more specifics of the *whys* later, but I want you to know first and foremost, before going any further, this book is not for those looking for easy answers to maintaining a lukewarm version of Christianity that you may be experiencing or have experienced growing up. Rather, it is a tell-it-like-it-is overview of what true Christianity looks like—and what Jesus’ followers endured when they chose to follow in His steps.

¹ *The Great Opportunity*, Pinetops Foundation (2019); Youth Theological Initiative at Emory University in Georgia, Elizabeth Corrie.

² <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/are-young-people-really-leaving-christianity/>

Barna Research Group has done a lot of research among teens as to why they choose to walk away from their faith. Here are a handful of those reasons, and they're not new to this generation³:

- Why would God allow so much evil and suffering in the world?
- The Church is full of hypocrites.
- Science and the Bible don't add up.
- The church is overprotective of teens.
- One cannot safely express doubt.
- Their experience of Christianity seemed shallow.
- Church rituals felt empty.

Each one is worthy of response. Over the course of this book, we'll dive into a few of these, but we will also lay a foundation from which to address these topics that will give you confidence as questions arise in your own life. For today, focus your prayers on simply asking God to help you stand firm and hold fast to the hope you possess in Christ.



Meditate & Memorize

*Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.
-Hebrews 11:23, 24*



Pray

Heavenly Father, make me faithful in loving, serving and following you.



Consider

God has called you and wants you to succeed.



Act

Connect with your Christian friends-- meet together often and encourage each other in your faith.

³Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation, Barna Research Group (2018).

DISCOVERING YOUR PURPOSE

It's been said numerous times by many that "we won't know who we are until we understand Whose we are." Foundational to each one of us is a sense of **purpose and identity.**



The teen years are fraught with discouragement, insecurities, questions and doubt. Unfortunately, many go looking for their answers in all the wrong places. Instead of "tasting and seeing that the Lord is good," they often find themselves looking to the world for answers or remedies to brokenness. I can assure you it will lead you down a path of ruin, sorrow and emptiness.

Our Creator, the God of the universe, made you in His image. He knows you better than you know yourself.

- You were created by God for a purpose.
- You were created by God to accomplish great things.
- You were created by God to glorify Himself.

The question "What would Jesus do?" cuts to the heart of true Christianity, challenging each one of us to reassess our own level of commitment and decision to radically pursue obedience to Christ's commands or settle for a mediocre faith experience. But here's the thing: It's mediocrity that is not sitting well with the young people of this generation. Going through the motions of church without experiencing God in a deeper and authentic way, as well as witnessing hypocrisy at every corner, sends a message that it's not worth fighting for.

What did Jesus think about mediocre Christianity? Let's look together at the third chapter of Revelation, verses 14 through 17. John, while being banished to the island of Patmos, received a vision from God about the end times. It offered warnings to seven churches at that time. One of the churches was Laodicea.

To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

This is as relevant today as when it was written. Simply put, lukewarm, mediocre, easy Christianity makes Jesus sick—provokes him to vomit. So what does Jesus want? He is looking for passionate, obedient, fully committed followers willing to do whatever it takes to run the race with endurance and win the prize.



Meditate & Memorize

So because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. —Revelation 3:16



Pray

Heavenly Father, make me a passionate follower of Jesus.



Consider

You were created by God for a purpose.



Act

Purpose in your heart to do great things for God.

TEACH ME TO PRAY

Luke 11 verse 1 reads,

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray..."



The disciples wanted to model themselves after Jesus, and Jesus spent a lot of time praying to His Father. He would often go off by Himself simply to pray.

Did you know that Luke portrayed Jesus as the praying Messiah? There are more references to Jesus praying in Luke than the other three gospels combined (Matthew, Mark and John). Let's review Luke's accounts.

Jesus prayed at His baptism. Luke 3:21,

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Jesus prayed after performing miracles. Luke 5:16,

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Jesus prayed before choosing His disciples. Luke 6:12,

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

Jesus prayed before Peter's confession of faith. Luke 9:18,

Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?"

Jesus prayed at the Transfiguration. Luke 9:29,

As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.

Jesus prayed after the 70 returned. Luke 10:21,

At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do."

Jesus prayed when teaching the disciples how to pray. Luke 11:2-4,

When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation."

Jesus prayed during His crucifixion. Luke 23:33-34,

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Jesus prayed on the Mount of Olives. Luke 22:39-46,

Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. "Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."

Jesus modeled prayer for His disciples. By all accounts, Jesus was always praying, seeking His Father's face at every juncture. The disciples saw in Jesus everything they wanted to be or emulate. So, they asked Jesus, "We want you to teach us how to pray so we can also pray."

Prayer requires discipline, intentionality and, simply, desire. We want to pray because Jesus prayed. We want to pray because prayer changes us and prayer changes those for whom we pray. Prayer is a secret weapon for all believers if we are willing to make it a priority in our lives.

M&M

Meditate & Memorize

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

-Luke 5:16

P

Pray

Lord, teach me to pray.

C

Consider

Prayer can change you and it can change the world.

A

Act

Be intentional about choosing a time each day to set aside and pray.

PRAYER—THE GREAT ADVENTURE

The Prayer Covenant is a tool that God is using in 70 countries around the world. It started when one man was challenged to make Jesus the Lord of his life every single day and pray this simple simply prayer over himself and another person, "Jesus, be the Lord of my life in new ways and change me any way you want." Decades later, at age 92, Jerry Kirk, a former pastor, is still praying that prayer and has prayed it for over 9,000 individuals. He calls me often and shares, "Candy, I'm falling more and more in love with Jesus every day through prayer. He's changing me. I feel the power of His Holy Spirit within me. It's the most exciting time of my entire life!"



The Prayer Covenant is comprised of 10 unshakeable truths:

- Grace
- Love
- Compassion
- Repentance
- Worship
- Commitment
- Dependence
- Influence
- Discipleship
- Authority

Each unshakeable truth has a prayer and a corresponding memory verse. We call them unshakeable truths because they are centered around who Jesus is and lay a foundation for our faith. A strong foundation is very important. In Matthew 7:24-29, Jesus explains why a strong foundation is needed: *Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.* Jesus went on to explain that if there is not a strong foundation and the winds and rain come and beat upon the house, it will fall with a huge crash.

If we have a firm foundation, when trials and persecution come, we will remain faithful.

Many of you may already be devoted to prayer. Whether you are just beginning or a prayer warrior, prayer is a continuous journey of discovery; a great adventure.

Jeremiah is the 24th book of the Old Testament, written by Jeremiah, one of the major prophets. He is referred to as “the weeping prophet” as he foretold the captivity that would overcome Judah. His heart was burdened for the people, but Jeremiah 33:3 is a verse of hope, an invitation to pray. It reads, *Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.* It came to Jeremiah directly from God himself. As someone who has experienced this over and over in my own life, I challenge you to take God up on His offer and see what happens.



Meditate & Memorize

Call to me and I will answer and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.
-Jeremiah 33:3



Pray

Father, thank you that when I call to you, you answer. Please show me things I do not know.



Consider

Prayer is a great adventure with the living God.



Act

Pour your heart out to God. You can journal your prayers or verbalize them, but pray and don't give up. And listen for His answers.

PRAYER IS POWER

Prayer is a muscle that needs to be exercised and strengthened. The more you pray, the more you will want to pray, and the more you will experience the power of prayer.



The Prayer Covenant may be one tool God uses to empower you to pray and spend time in His Word regularly as well as equip you to serve in ministry. God has given you gifts that when offered back to Him can impact the world for Christ, just like His disciples long ago.

Jesus has invited each one of us to be His disciple. It is not about going through the motions. If your heart is not in it, your prayers will bounce off the walls. It is not about a religious checklist of empty rituals. Prayer is power—inviting the living God to take control of your life and change you any way He wants. It is a journey that requires discipline, commitment, devotion and passion to succeed.

You begin the Prayer Covenant journey by simply praying the prayer each day over yourself for 10 days and then asking God to show you who He would want you to invite into a prayer covenant so you can begin praying for each other by name for an agreed period of time to 40 days. When the time is up, you move on to another person, or you may choose to continue to pray for that person every day.

A covenant is a promise—you are promising to pray for someone each day. You may forget to pray one day for that person; it's OK, don't beat yourself up, but the more you do it, the sooner you will develop a habit or lifestyle of prayer.

I am not sure there is a more powerful way to show you care for someone than by praying for them. Why? Because God moves mountains when we pray. Because He modeled prayer, designed prayer and inclines His ear toward us

when we pray.

As the writer E.M. Bounds notes, “God is so much involved in prayer and hearing and answering that all His attributes and His whole being are centered in that great fact. It distinguishes Him as wonderfully good... God’s truthfulness is at stake in the engagements to answer prayer. His wisdom, His truth, and His goodness are involved. God is Truth—and He always answers the prayers of His children who earnestly seek His name.”⁴

Are you ready to begin a journey of prayer?



Meditate & Memorize

*Pray continually,
—1 Thessalonians 5:17*



Pray

*Jesus, give me the
desire to follow you
wholeheartedly.*



Consider

*Are you ready to
follow Jesus no matter
what?*



Act

*There are 66 lessons—
one for each day.
Set a reminder on
your phone each
day to pause and be
still before the Lord,
asking Him what He
wants to teach you.*

⁴E.M. Bounds, *The Power of Prayer*, Christian Art Gifts (2007, 2013).

Unshakeable Truth

Grace

UNMERITED GRACE

Today you begin praying the Prayer Covenant by yourself for 10 days. Although this prayer can be prayed in under a minute, don't rush. Set aside time where you can just be with Jesus. Imagine Lazarus or Mary, His close friends, often just sitting and talking with Him, sharing a meal, enjoying His presence. It's fun to imagine what that might have been like.

Approach prayer with expectation and wonder. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. Listen. As one writer put it, "Sometimes He whispers, sometimes He roars." He often speaks to us through His word, in a still small voice. But if we are hurried or always talking, we miss out. Take time to meditate on the memory verse—try to understand its meaning to you personally. Praying Scripture is also a rewarding prayer strategy.

**Dear Heavenly Father, thank you
for your grace that has made me
one of your dearly loved children.**

Help me love you with my whole heart.
Empower me to love others the way
you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean
heart.

Help me praise you with all that is
within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my
Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy
Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace,
truth, forgiveness, righteousness and
justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite
others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

It all begins with grace! Miriam-Webster defines grace as "unmerited divine assistance given to humans for their regeneration or sanctification."⁵

Our memory verse is found in 1 John 3:1, *See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!*

Simply put, grace is something gifted to us that we do not deserve. It is unmerited. Jesus, God's only Son, innocent, blameless, holy, pure—a lamb sent to be slaughtered on our behalf—was crucified and dying on the cross.

⁵<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/grace>

There were two criminals suffering this same fate, but guilty of crimes worthy of their punishment. One begins to mock and hurl insults at Jesus, "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal recognizes his own unworthiness, "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:39-43)

Jesus, while suffering an agonizing death, ignored the scoffer, but responded with profound grace and mercy to the one calling out to Him in sorrow and humility.

Jesus was the epitome of grace. 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that He is *not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance*. Why else would He have endured the torture and humiliation of the cross?

Remember the verse of the weeping prophet? Jeremiah 33:3, *Call to me and I will answer...* The repentant criminal cried out to Jesus, and Jesus answered.

What might you be facing that is keeping you from receiving God's unconditional gift of grace?



Meditate & Memorize

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

-1 John 3:1



Pray

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.



Consider

If there was one question you could ask Jesus, what would it be?



Act

Receive Jesus' gift of grace and share it with others.

DAY 8

THE PRODIGAL

Begin your day by praying the Prayer Covenant. Ask God to help you receive His lavish love and amazing grace. Remind yourself it is nothing you have done to earn His love; it is simply His grace that makes you a child of God.

**Dear Heavenly Father, thank you
for your grace that has made me
one of your dearly loved children.**

Help me love you with my whole heart.
Empower me to love others the way
you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean
heart.

Help me praise you with all that is
within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my
Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy
Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace,
truth, forgiveness, righteousness and
justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite
others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Jesus was one of the greatest storytellers. He told stories that helped people understand more about His Kingdom. One such story or parable is found in Luke's gospel (Luke 15:11-32).

There was a father who had two sons. The younger son asked his dad for his inheritance. The father loving his sons and wanting to be generous, gave each son his share. It wasn't long afterward that the younger son left home, moving to a country far away where he began squandering his inheritance—every penny of it, pursuing a wild lifestyle of partying and prostitutes. A famine came upon the land. He found himself, once rich and fully fed, starving and penniless. Desperate for food, he searched for a job. The only one he could find was feeding pigs. Imagine the condition of this kid when the food the pigs were eating looked good to him. It was abundantly clear no one cared about this wayward boy.

In his desperation, he thought of home. Realizing how well his father cared for their servants, ensuring they always had an abundance of food, he thought to himself, "I've done a terrible thing. I foolishly squandered my entire inheritance. Although I no longer deserve to be my father's son, maybe if I go back home and repent of what I've done, he will make me one of his servants, and I will at least have enough food to eat."

This is where grace kicks in. When he was close to home, his father looked up and saw his son. He was overcome with joy and excitedly called to his servants to prepare a huge feast so they could celebrate his son's return. His father exclaimed, "My son was dead and is now alive. He was lost but now is found!"

Grace is receiving what you have not earned and what you do not deserve. The young man in the story did not deserve his father's forgiveness, but it was his lavish love for his wayward son that caused him to welcome him home with open arms.

It's the same with God. We are recipients of His lavish, unconditional love. We did nothing to merit His favor, yet He declares us righteous, adopting us as His children, not because of who we are or what we have done to deserve His love. He declares us righteous because He is the righteous One.

When you consider your own failures, weaknesses, insecurities, sinful thoughts and desires, you realize your unworthiness to be a child of God. But that's when Jesus sees you and declares, "You are mine!" That is grace—undeserved, unearned and unmerited.

The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17).

M&M

Meditate & Memorize

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

-1 John 3:1

P

Pray

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

C

Consider

It is nothing we do that makes us worthy to be a child of God.

A

Act

Receive Jesus' amazing grace with a grateful heart.

PETER WASN'T PERFECT

Let's begin! Ask specifically for the Holy Spirit to fill you and empower your prayer time. Begin asking God to show you who with whom you should enter into a Prayer Covenant. Start keeping a prayer journal so you can record names of those for whom you pray, your prayer requests and a place to record answers to prayer. Be sure to include a date! There's no greater faith-strengthening exercise than experiencing the power of answered prayer.

**Dear Heavenly Father, thank you
for your grace that has made me
one of your dearly loved children.**

Help me love you with my whole heart.
Empower me to love others the way
you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean
heart.

Help me praise you with all that is
within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my
Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy
Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace,
truth, forgiveness, righteousness and
justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite
others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

As we continue with the unshakeable truth of grace, let's look at Peter. Throughout the gospels, you find he was the leader of the 12. His name is always mentioned first when listing the disciples. He was in Jesus' inner circle with James and John. But Peter was far from perfect. As a leader of leaders, he was impetuous, rash, at times even reckless.

Remember when Peter denied knowing Jesus? In Luke 22, Jesus tells Peter that He is praying for him that his faith will not fail. Remember Peter's response? *Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death* (Luke 22:33). Then Jesus warns, *Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.*

Peter is still one of the bravest of the disciples because he at least followed Jesus to the house of the high priest where Jesus was being questioned. But suddenly several people began recognizing Peter saying, "This man was with

Jesus," "He speaks like a Galilean." Peter's reaction wasn't one of his greatest moments that's for sure. In fact, the Bible tells us that Peter began cursing and swearing repeating, "I do NOT know that man!"

Then the rooster crowed, and Peter realized he had done exactly what Jesus had predicted. He was crushed, running away in tears, no doubt feeling like a total failure.

Even well-intentioned disciples of Jesus are going to make mistakes and at times fail. It is part of the journey that Peter wrote about when he admonished believers to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Peter 3:18). God uses these opportunities to teach us and to strengthen our walk with Him. His grace is sufficient in every area of our lives. His grace steps in, picks up the broken pieces of our lives and says, "Try again. I love you. I chose you."

Have you ever done something that made you feel ashamed and even shocked that you would ever fail in that way? Have you ever felt crushed in your spirit with no way to redeem yourself? That's exactly how Peter felt.

But then grace stepped in. After Jesus was resurrected, He had breakfast with His disciples on Lake Tiberias. Jesus specifically directs a question to Peter, not once, not twice, but three times. "Peter, do you love me?" Each time Peter's answer was the same. "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Each time Jesus responded, "Feed my sheep."

Was Peter perfect? Far from it. Did Jesus still use him? Yes, and He can still use you too. Paul said it so well, Where sin increased, grace increased all the more (Romans 5:20).

It is important to note that Peter never denied Jesus again. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:21, *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.* Peter followed Jesus not just in life but in death. He too was crucified just as Jesus had predicted (John 21:18-19).



Meditate & Memorize

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

-1 John 3:1



Pray

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.



Consider

Peter wasn't perfect.



Act

Write down one way you have experienced grace after messing up.

THE EPITOME OF GRACE

Beginning your day in prayer is awesome, but it doesn't have to be limited to just the morning. Praying before you go to sleep and throughout the day is a great way to remain focused on Jesus. The more time you spend with Jesus, the more you will become like Him.

2 Corinthians 8:9, *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

**Dear Heavenly Father, thank you
for your grace that has made me
one of your dearly loved children.**

Help me love you with my whole heart.
Empower me to love others the way
you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean
heart.

Help me praise you with all that is
within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my
Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy
Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace,
truth, forgiveness, righteousness and
justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite
others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Jesus was the epitome of grace. He was God incarnate, stepping down from His heavenly throne to enter our world, becoming like you and me. Although a King, He came as a helpless baby, born in poverty in a stable. When He began His public ministry at 30 years old, He chose to minister to the poor, the sick, the lame, the hopeless and the helpless. He treated women, who were often mistreated and overlooked, with respect and dignity. He welcomed and blessed children even when His own disciples tried to keep them away from Him. He was fully God and fully man. His humanity understood our weaknesses and our desperate need for a Savior that would bring hope and peace.

Grace is timeless. It manifests itself today in the same ways it did when Jesus walked this earth. The writings of grace in every century speak of its marvel. *Marvelous Grace* was a hymn written in 1911 by Julia Johnston. She was born

in Ohio in 1849 and began writing when she was nine. "Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace, freely bestowed on all who believe...Grace, grace, God's grace, grace that will pardon and cleanse within. Grace, grace, God's grace, grace that is greater than all my sin."⁶

You may be a student already sold out for Jesus, desiring to grow in the grace and knowledge of who He is. Or you may have a troubled past that you are running from, trying to find an escape. Maybe you have been hurt by someone calling themselves a Christian only to witness anything but Christ-like character, or maybe you have doubts and questions about faith that you are afraid to ask. You are not alone. Just like followers long ago, countless continue to come to Jesus with their questions, problems and burdens, knowing He will respond with compassion, mercy and infinite grace.



Meditate & Memorize

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!
-1 John 3:1*



Pray

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.



Consider

Jesus chose to die on your behalf.



Act

Ask God to make you a channel of His grace to everyone you meet.

⁶ Robert Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul*, Thomas Nelson (2006).

DAY 11

SAUL: THE CONVERSION OF A RELIGIOUS TERRORIST

As you begin your day in prayer, anticipate God showing up in unexpected ways. Maybe you have an exam, or you're meeting up with your friends. Invite God into whatever your plans are for the day, asking that He be glorified in all you do.

**Dear Heavenly Father, thank you
for your grace that has made me
one of your dearly loved children.**

Help me love you with my whole heart.
Empower me to love others the way
you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean
heart.

Help me praise you with all that is
within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my
Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy
Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace,
truth, forgiveness, righteousness and
justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite
others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Paul, author of 13 books in the New Testament, understood the grace of God intimately. Before becoming a Jesus follower, he was a persecutor of the Christians in Jerusalem. His hatred and brutality were known far and wide. He was a brilliant scholar but also what some would call a religious terrorist. In Acts 8 you read, *But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.* He was known and feared. Yet what happened on the road to Damascus?

In Acts 22:7-9 comes Paul's account: *I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, "Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" I asked. "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting," he replied. Saul is blinded by the bright light sent from heaven. His friends had to take him to Damascus where he met a man named Ananias, who told him, "The God of our ancestors has chosen you... You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard."*

Because of Paul, families were torn apart. He was vicious, brutal, merciless and had blood on his hands for the countless Christians he had tortured and murdered. Paul admits, “...intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it (Galatians 1:13). Yet the overwhelming power of God’s grace transformed Paul, taking him from murderer to missionary overnight. Only Jesus can do this, and if He can do it for a blasphemous murderer, He can do it for anyone.

Paul wrote, *In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God’s grace* (Colossians 1:6).

Paul became one of the greatest missionaries in the entire world. That’s the transformative power of gospel grace.



Meditate & Memorize

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God
—1 John 3:1*



Pray

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.



Consider

Is there someone you know who has not yet understood God’s grace? Pray for them right now by name.



Act

Write the name of one person you know who doesn’t know Jesus and ask God for an open door to share His message of grace.

MAKING PRAYER A PRIORITY

Mark 1:35, *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*

It takes discipline to meet Jesus each day, a willingness of heart and mind and determination. I know from personal experience it is so easy to get distracted, to grab your phone and start checking your messages and get dragged into the hurriedness of daily life.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart.
Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Purpose in your heart to set a time each day to pray, and stick with it like you would a social event or sports activity and watch what God does.

Hebrews 4:16, Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Today we wrap up the unshakeable truth, grace. Grace is a gift. It is not to be abused. In other words, we can't go out, intentionally sin, and then say, "I'm saved by grace, God will forgive me."

John 15:16 says, You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that

whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. We can only bear fruit if we are abiding in Christ and walking in obedience. We can only abide if we are spending time in His presence.

E.M. Bounds, who lived in the 1800s, wrote many wonderful books on prayer that are still being used today. But it is important to note that he didn't only write about prayer, he prayed.

"Prayer honors God, acknowledges His being, exalts His power, adores His providence and secures His aid."⁷

If you have come this far, you have done well. Don't give up. Keep going. Remember Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:24, *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.*

So like Paul, let's press on and pray on! *I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus* (Philippians 3:14).

⁷ Leonard Ravenhill, *A Treasury of Prayer: The Best of E.M. Bounds*, Broadstreet Publishing Group (1961), p. 85.



Meditate & Memorize

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

-1 John 3:1



Pray

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me your dearly loved child.



Consider

Are you confident that God will hear and answer your prayers?



Act

Be intentional about your prayer time. Choose a time and stick with it each day to meet with God.

NOTES ON GRACE

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

Unshakeable Truth

Love

THE LOVE CHAPTER

Come before the Lord today with an open heart ready to receive all He has for you. As we begin the second unshakeable truth, love, begin by praying through the Prayer Covenant, asking God specifically to help you love Him with your whole heart. It is a prayer that He will quickly answer because it is His will for you to love Him fully and completely and grow in the knowledge and understanding of His all-consuming love.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart.

Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

What is love? The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 13,

*Love is patient,
love is kind.
It does not envy,
it does not boast,
it is not proud.
It does not dishonor others,
it is not self-seeking,
it is not easily angered,
it keeps no record of wrongs.*

*Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
It always protects,
always trusts,
always hopes,
always perseveres.
Love never fails.*

Referred to as the love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13 takes love to a whole new level. Not proud. Not boastful. Not envious. *Always* rejoices in the truth. *Always* hopes and perseveres. *Never* fails.

This passage does not simply define love, but thoroughly instructs us on how we ought to live and walk in genuine, Christ-centered love. A pure, guileless love—sacrificial and unconditional—the kind of love Jesus modeled for us when He walked this earth. The kind of love that sent Him to the cross because He loved the Father and He loved you and me.

Let's be real, this way of loving is not the way the world loves. "I love you" are words too often used to manipulate a person in order to get what one wants, the complete opposite of the way Jesus loved: *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends* (John 15:13).

True biblical love is hard and requires intentionality and Christ-like commitment.



Meditate & Memorize

*I have loved you with
an everlasting love; I
have drawn you with
unfailing kindness.
—Jeremiah 31:3*



Pray

**Help me love you with
my whole heart.**



Consider

**If you purpose in your
heart to love God
more than anyone or
anything, you will love
like Jesus loved.**



Act

**Are you willing to
commit to loving like
Jesus?**

DAY 14

PERFECT LOVE

As you begin another day, pause and be still before the Lord. Pray the Prayer Covenant and ask Him to guide you through the day. Keep your eyes focused on Jesus, reflecting Him in all you do and say.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart.

Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Do you ever feel afraid? Fearful of what others think of you? Fearful about your past? Fearful of what the future may hold?

The Bible tells us that there is no fear in love. *But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love* (1 John 4:18).

God's remedy for fear is simply love. Perfect *agape* love swallows up fear; it evaporates in its presence. Agape love is a Greek term and is the highest form of love—undefiled, unconditional love. It is defined as God's love for mankind and our love for God.

When you begin to know and understand the depth of God's love, when you realize the value He has placed on you, His overwhelming, all-consuming,

lavish love, every megabyte of brain space should not be used to worry about what others think of you, but to revel in God's amazing love for you that fills you from the soles of your feet to the top of your head. The kind of love that makes you want to scream and shout, "World, I am loved, truly loved, by the God of the universe, my Creator. I am loved with an everlasting love. I am loved with a genuine, sacrificial, life-giving, perfect love found in the person of Jesus Christ—my Savior, my God, my King; my Abba! And I belong to Him. I am His child, His workmanship."

I know it is not easy to comprehend, but it is true. It is why Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:17-19, *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

My prayer for you is that you may truly know and understand how much you are loved by the greatest Lover of all time, Jesus himself—a love that surpasses knowledge, that heals, that shields, that strengthens and protects, that always trusts, always hopes and always perseveres. A love that *never* fails.



Meditate & Memorize

*I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.
-Jeremiah 31:3*



Pray

Help me love you with my whole heart.



Consider

God's perfect love for you.



Act

Ask God to overcome your fears and insecurities by filling you with His perfect love.

DAY 15

OUTDOING ONE ANOTHER

As you begin your day, ask that Christ's love rule and reign in your heart, and for His love to guide your words, thoughts and actions.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart.

Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Love *must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.* (Romans 12:9-10)

Healthy competition is good. It challenges us to do our very best, to pursue excellence, whether it is competition in sports, the arts or academics. We do not think about competition in our Christian walk, but we should. Maybe we would then rise to the standard Jesus called us to in our thought life, in our actions and in how we speak to others.

Paul exhorts us in Romans 12 to *outdo one another in showing honor*. That is a tall order. Think about it, we are always concerned about how we look, right? Will people think I am a great athlete, that I am the best on the team? Will I brag

about my own accomplishments or lift up others on the team that are needing encouragement? Showing honor means recognizing the contributions others have made.

We all know showoffs in our lives; they go around bragging on themselves, seeking attention and draining the life out of a room. Would you rather be around a showoff or someone who may be equally gifted but quiet about their success?

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus... Read through Philipians 2. Jesus, God Himself, did not use it to His own advantage. Instead, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness...he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death.

We love well when we walk in humility, honoring and valuing others above ourselves.



Meditate & Memorize

*I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.
-Jeremiah 31:3*



Pray

Help me love you with my whole heart.



Consider

Jesus, God's Son, royalty, willingly came as a helpless baby and then a servant, humbling himself to death on a cross.



Act

Intentionally find ways to value others above yourself.

THE PERFECT FATHER

This makes day 10 of daily praying the Prayer Covenant. I hope you are experiencing God working in your life in new ways. If you are ready, it's time to invite someone into a Prayer Covenant with you. Following Jesus together is both rich and rewarding, it strengthens your relationship with God and with those for whom you pray. It may be a friend, a parent, a teacher or sibling...whoever God lays on your heart. Just step out and begin a prayer journey with that person and watch how God blesses in you, through you and between you.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart.

Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness. (Jeremiah 31:3)

To personally know God's love, the depth of love that overcomes guilt, uncertainty, fear and insecurity, is to know the love of a perfect father. Some of us have been blessed to be born into a family where God's love is modeled in your father or mother, but many have not had that privilege. It is hard to imagine the love of our Abba, our heavenly Father, if we have been hurt or felt unloved by our earthly father.

Take heart. Do you know the darkest moment in the life of Jesus? When He hung on the cross taking on the sins of the entire world, in that moment He was

separated from the Father's love crying out in a loud voice, *My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?* (Matthew 27:46).

Maybe you have felt forsaken, unloved and deserted. You are not alone.

Jesus felt the agony of rejection amidst inconceivable physical pain. Isaac Watts captured the essence of what Jesus endured when writing "love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all" (*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*)⁸. Isaac Watts was a pastor, theologian and a hymn writer, writing approximately 750 hymns in his lifetime. Although written in the 1600s, they are still being sung today, enduring the test of time.

Church history is fascinating. Check out some of the church fathers that have gone before us. You will be inspired to do something great for Jesus and carry the torch for your generation.



Meditate & Memorize

*I have loved you with
an everlasting love; I
have drawn you with
unfailing kindness.
-Jeremiah 31:3*



Pray

**Help me love you with
my whole heart.**



Consider

**Jesus felt forsaken
by His Father on
the cross.**



Act

**Purpose in your heart
to receive the Father's
love and help show
that same love to
others.**

⁸Robert Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul*, Thomas Nelson, (2006).

LOVE & OBEDIENCE

What a joy to be able to meet with Jesus before the day begins, ends and even in-between. Prayer is a lifestyle. You can pray anytime and anywhere throughout the day. Prayers can be one word, "Help!" or "Bless so and so," or "Thank you Jesus!"

Paul wrote in Ephesians 6 to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests... to be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Writing down your prayers in a journal is another way you can pray and make your requests known to God. Whether spoken or written, prayer is power. Let's get started.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart.

Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Love and obedience are intricately linked and vitally important in our walk with Jesus. Jesus Himself said, *Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them* (John 14:23).

An expression of our love for God is shown in the way we obey Him by loving others. God has not given us an impossible to-do list. 1 John 5:3 reads, *This is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome...*

John wrote since God loves us, we are to love others. *If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us* (1 John 4:12).

Loving others may not always be easy. It takes investment of time and resources. It takes being intentional about caring for the needs of others more

than our own, putting others first and inviting the Spirit of God to love through us. That is why we pray, "Help me love and obey you and empower me to love others the way you love me."

These prayers are in accordance with God's will for you, so expect immediate answers when you pray them. God shows up when you call out to Him asking for what He wants to give you in abundance: His amazing grace, His perfect love and His compassion.



Meditate & Memorize

*I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.
-Jeremiah 31:3*



Pray

Help me love you with my whole heart.



Consider

The outcome of love is obedience.



Act

Love your parents by obeying them.

DAY 18

DO EVERYTHING IN LOVE

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love. (1 Corinthians 16:13)

It is always great to begin your day with prayer and Scripture. It enriches your time with Jesus—talking to Him, learning from Him and listening for what He might be telling you. If you like music, include that in your time as well. I love music and can't imagine my time with Jesus without it.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart.

Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Today we conclude our study on love. 1 Corinthians 16:13 warns us that we need to be on guard. Do you know why? Because Satan is *walking around like a roaring lion seeking whom he can devour*. He does not want you to pray. He does not want you to read your Bible. He does not want you to love God and love others. In fact, in the most subtle ways, he will bring distractions—busyness, even “good” busyness—that will keep you occupied and doing rather than simply being.

If you are not praying, reading your Bible or obeying God's commands, you will NOT bear fruit. In John 15 Jesus is teaching about the requirement of being a fruitful Christian: *Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in*

me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. Read the full chapter. Jesus warns that if you do not remain in Him, you will wither away like a dead branch that gets thrown into the fire and burned.

Think about what happens when you don't eat or drink anything for an entire day. What happens to your body physically? How do you feel? Weak, tired, unable to work. What happens after several days?

Well imagine what happens to you spiritually when you stop spending time with Jesus. You become prey for Satan who has a three-fold agenda: to seek, to kill and to destroy, and he will stop at nothing. That is why you must *be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love* (1 Corinthians 16:13-14).

When you are committed to obeying the greatest commandment--loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength--your priorities will reflect His. Your passion for prayer and for God's Word will continue to grow and produce life-giving fruit.

M&M

Meditate & Memorize

*I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.
-Jeremiah 31:3*

P

Pray

Help me love you with my whole heart.

C

Consider

God's love working in and through you makes you strong.

A

Act

Do everything in love.

NOTES ON LOVE

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.



Unshakeable Truth

Compassion

LOVING OTHERS

When you love like Jesus, it becomes a testimony to the whole world. Jesus said, *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another* (John 13:35). Compassion flows from love.

Today we begin our focus on the unshakeable truth, compassion.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart.

Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

If we are going to follow in Jesus' steps, we too must show compassion to those we meet. As you ask God to empower you to love others the same way He loves you, He will answer your prayer and open up doors of opportunity for you to minister to someone. It may seem insignificant to you, but to the person on the receiving end of your kindness, it is invaluable.

When you care for someone who is sick or help a homeless person on the street, you are showing compassion. Christ has called His disciples to both love Him and love others. *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, "Love your neighbor as yourself"* In Luke 10:27, He made them of equal importance.

In 1 John 4:20 we are warned that, *Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.*

Jesus went from town to town healing the sick, feeding the poor and preaching the gospel to crowds of people. The Bible tells us He was moved with compassion because He saw firsthand the helplessness of their condition (spiritually and physically). He said they were like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:35-36).

To whom might you show compassion today?



Meditate & Memorize

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.
-1 John 4:7*



Pray

Empower me to love others the way you love me.



Consider

To whom might you be able to show compassion?



Act

Reach out to that person no matter how inconvenient it may be—and watch God work in and through you.

HOMELESS & HUNGRY

As you begin your time with Jesus today, remember His words, *Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth (1 John 3:16-18).*

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart.

Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Ally is a college student with a big heart for veterans. Her dad is a police officer and fought in the Gulf War. She shared a story with me that beautifully illustrates compassion.

On Christmas Eve of 2019, Ally was driving home after a long day. She passed a homeless man standing outside of the grocery store where she worked as a pharmacy assistant. She had seen him many times during the past year but never spoke to him. As soon as she passed him her heart was telling her to turn around and help him, but she was cold, tired and just wanted to go home. As she arrived home, the feeling became very strong, so she turned around and went back to find him. She prayed as she walked toward him and was confident that God would give her the right words.

She asked if he was hungry, and when he responded, “Yes,” proceeded to the deli to get him something to eat. While he ate, he told her that he had been a plumber in the Navy and served on an aircraft carrier in the first Gulf War. He got injured in the Navy and had to be medically retired. Although he received disability money, it wasn’t enough to live on, and to make matters worse, his wife got sick and died a few days later.

He explained that he gives half his disability money so his 10-year-old daughter could be cared for by his sister. He wanted desperately to see her for Christmas and was missing her. He asked Ally to check how much a Greyhound bus ticket would cost. Ally purchased a gift card for the amount that was needed and said, “You get to see your daughter tomorrow.” The man burst into tears and thanked her profusely. Before parting, the man asked Ally her name. When she told him, he replied, “That’s my daughter’s name, Allison Marie.” Ally knew at that moment why God told her to go back. She shared that this would be a Christmas memory that would stay with her forever.

As Christ followers, we have an obligation to be His hands and feet, to show His love and compassion to whomever He puts in our path. Ask Him for opportunities to minister and bless those around you.



Meditate & Memorize

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.
-1 John 4:7*



Pray

Empower me to love others the way you love me.



Consider

Then you pray for opportunities to show compassion, God will provide them.



Act

Respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit even if it may seem inconvenient at the time.

MOTHER TERESA

As you begin your prayer time, focus specifically on asking God to help you love as He loves. Ask Him for opportunities to share His love with others. Spend some time in silence just listening for what God may be saying to you.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart.

Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, which she accepted on behalf of the impoverished and the unloved around the world. She began the Missionaries for Charity in Calcutta in 1950, which grew to an order active in over 130 countries—serving orphans, the poor, the sick, building hospitals and orphanages.

In 1982 she gave the commencement address at Harvard University:

“As the new graduates go out, I thought that the prayer of Cardinal Newman is most fitting for them, so that, in going into the world, they go with Jesus, they work for Jesus and serve him in the distressing guise of the poor. Dear Jesus, help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go. Flood our souls with your spirit and life. Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly that all our lives

may only be a radiance of yours. Shine through us and be so in us that every person we should come in contact with may feel your presence in our soul. Let them look up and see no longer us, but only Jesus.”⁹

Mother Teresa was only 12 years old when she understood her calling to help the poor. She said she knew then God wanted something from her.

You can watch this video on the YouTube channel of ChristNow to hear what Mother Teresa said about her relationship with Jesus, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBXwqaqBl_U.

What might God be preparing you for? Know that He has a plan and purpose for your life. He created you for a purpose—to know, love, follow and obey Him. When you do, blessings follow.

Jesus gives life meaning. He orders steps and opens doors of opportunity you could never imagine.

Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this. (Psalm 37:5)



Meditate & Memorize

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.
-1 John 4:7*



Pray

Empower me to love others the way you love me.



Consider

God created you for a purpose. He already knows the plan for your life.



Act

Ask God to reveal His plan for you and then follow it wholeheartedly.

⁹ Carol Kelly-Gangi, *Mother Teresa: Her Essential Wisdom*, Fall River Press (2006).

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Be sure to check in with your prayer partner on a regular basis to see how he or she is doing. Ask questions like, "How is God changing you?" Openly share how He is working in your own life. Share opportunities, God surprises or a word of encouragement.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart.

Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

I have had the privilege of traveling to over 40 countries around the world. I have stood in the midst of the largest slum in all of Asia: Dharavi, located in Mumbai. The Oscar-winning Hollywood movie *Slumdog Millionaire* was filmed on location at Dharavi. It opened many eyes to the painful reality of how 35 percent of families in India live.¹⁰

The poverty is so extreme when standing in Dharavi, you wonder how they are even alive. The children play in piles of garbage. They are dressed in rags or naked, barefoot with no food and no hope. There is no sanitation. Imagine one toilet for every thousand persons; it is why most everyone defecates outdoors. The smells and filth make it unbearable to breathe let alone live. Can you imagine

¹⁰ <https://tradingeconomics.com/india/population-living-in-slums-percent-of-urban-population-wb-data.html>

when the rains come, and they do, their roofs are nothing more than rags sewn together?

Our Prayer Covenant missionary partners in India wanted to make a difference. They had served with Campus Crusade for Christ for many years. After visiting a slum in New Delhi, situated behind a five-star hotel, Anuja's heart was moved with compassion and she took action. She began by asking God to show her how she could make a difference in the lives of these little ones without resources or expertise. While praying, God gave her the vision to work with the children of the garbage collectors. Anuja shared, "We rented a small room in the slum and began with fifteen kids. We taught them hygiene, gave them nutritious meals, medical aid and a basic education for two years. After that we helped get them the proper papers needed to gain admission into the local government schools." Today they have 130 centers where more than 4,000 children come for two hours to receive a good education and experience God's love.

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"
(Matthew 25:37-40)

It is interesting to note that Mother Teresa said she ministered to the poor because she saw Jesus in their faces. She took Him literally at His word when He said *whatever you do for the least of these you do for Me*.

God opened up a huge ministry opportunity for Anuja when she simply prayed.

What might God be wanting to do through you?



Meditate & Memorize

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.
-1 John 4:7*



Pray

Empower me to love others the way you love me.



Consider

God can use you to bring hope and love to someone today.



Act

Pray, listen, act.

DAY 23

PRAYING FOR OTHERS

Fall in love with prayer, then God's love will fill you and overflow into love and compassion for others. Be devoted to prayer, constant in prayer, faithful in prayer. God draws near to those who draw near to Him (James 4:8).

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart.

Empower me to love others the way

you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

For several years I led an after-school tutoring program for at-risk kids. Our church provided voluntary tutors (adults and teens) to serve the students at the local elementary school. We had tutors willing to give up two hours each week to help a child develop reading skills and improve their grades. We served the second and third graders. Several of these children had one parent in prison; they had parents who for one reason or another could not keep their jobs; they were assured of eating two meals a day (breakfast and lunch) because the school provided meals freely to them. They also had a "secret" food pantry that would allow the principals to provide needed groceries without the family feeling ashamed. It was a school in an upper middle-class suburb. Kids who were wealthy were going to school with kids who didn't know if they would be able to eat dinner that day.

The sadness in the children's faces we were ministering to in the program was often visible. They longed for hope and peace. I remember leading prayer for the class when it first began. A few kids started laughing and interrupting, "Mrs. Candy, who are you talking to?!" It only took a few weeks before the kids would shout out, "Mrs. Candy, you haven't prayed yet. Please pray!"

Why do you think they wanted to pray? Because when we pray, we are inviting Jesus to be right there with us (Matthew 18:20). His presence is life-giving. He brings peace, hope and love.

When you pray for someone, you are showing compassion for them. When God lays on your heart to pray for someone, simply ask, "Can I pray for you?" Don't worry if you feel intimidated or nervous. We all do from time to time. Just be bold and pray, and then watch their face light up. It's as if a burden begins to lift and a smile crosses their face, knowing you took the time to listen and approach God on their behalf.

The more you pray for others, the easier it gets.



Meditate & Memorize

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.
-1 John 4:7*



Pray

Empower me to love others the way you love me.



Consider

God draws near to those who draw near to Him.



Act

Pray! Pray! Pray!

THE SOUP KITCHEN

As you begin your prayer time, concluding our focus on compassion, ask God to clearly show you how you might serve those less fortunate than yourself. Ask for an open door, for clarity and for Jesus to guide your steps.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.
Help me love you with my whole heart.

Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

In 1997 our family moved to Kobe, Japan, after having lived four years in the Philippines. In 1995 the Great Hanshin earthquake shook Kobe. Japan to its core. It registered at 7.3 on the Richter scale, lasting 20 seconds. Those 20 seconds brought utter devastation with a death toll of 6,400 persons, 40,000 injured and 300,000 made homeless. Millions of homes lost power and water.

Although much had returned to normal when we moved there, what was ongoing was the homeless crisis caused by the earthquake.

Our son was in high school at the time. He came home from school one afternoon in November and said, "Mom, there's a soup kitchen close by our house and I thought it would be a good idea if we could provide a Thanksgiving meal for the 300 who come every Saturday." I remember thinking November

was such a busy time for us, where were we going to find enough turkeys to feed 300 when they don't even make turkeys in Japan—they have to be imported from the States. But he was determined, and we found a store that was able to order enough quantities to meet the need.

He invited his youth group at church to take part. Everyone contributed in some way. The church choir even came and sang Christmas carols.

That day there was joy not only on the faces of the recipients of the feast but on the faces of those who served them. Luke's gospel says, *Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you* (Luke 6:38).

Purpose in your heart to give generously, give boldly and give willingly, then watch what God does.

*Give and it will be given,
Pressed down,
Shaken together,
Running over and,
Poured into your lap!*



Meditate & Memorize

*Dear friends, let us
love one another, for
love comes from God.
Everyone who loves
has been born of God
and knows God.
-1 John 4:7*



Pray

*Empower me to love
others the way you
love me.*



Consider

*Living widely opens
the door of blessing.*



Act

*Gather some friends
and come up with a
way you can minister
to a group that needs
to be shown God's
love and compassion.*

NOTES ON COMPASSION

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.



Unshakeable Truth

Repentance

FAR FROM PERFECT

As we begin the next unshakeable truth, repentance, let us begin by meditating on our memory verse found in Psalm 51:10, *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

As you pray the prayer, focus on the line, "I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart."

Like King David, we must confess our sins before the Lord if we want Him to hear and answer our prayers.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

King David is referred to in the Bible as *a man after God's own heart*. He loved God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. He trusted God, ascribing attributes worthy of his Name: *my Fortress, my Refuge, my Hightower, my Rock, my Shield* (see Psalm 18:2).

But David was far from perfect. He was tempted when looking at a woman bathing from his palace. One temptation led to another, and David soon found himself guilty of adultery, lying and murder. You can read the story of what happened in 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12.

God sent a prophet, Nathan, to confront him for the evil he had done. David confessed his sin and asked for forgiveness. He wrote Psalm 51, a prayer of repentance. It is a prayer you can include daily in your time with the Lord.

*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.*

*For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.
Against 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...*

*Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter
than snow...*

*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.*

Confessing our sin is vitally important if we want to be a follower or a disciple of Jesus. Because He is holy, pure and without sin, if you allow unconfessed sin to remain and fester, it will create a barrier in your relationship with Him. Your prayers will bounce off walls and go unanswered. You will be neither fruitful nor useful for the Kingdom. God demands obedience and holiness. Thankfully He does not demand perfection; that's why *if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9).

So, make it a habit that whenever you sin, you repent, pray and turn away!



Meditate & Memorize

*Create in me a pure
heart, O God, and
renew a steadfast spirit
within me. -Psalm 51:10*



Pray

*I repent of my sin.
Create in me a clean
heart.*



Consider

*God will not hear our
prayers if we have
unconfessed sin in our
hearts.*



Act

*Always come before
God confessing any
wrong thoughts,
words or actions.*

DAY 26

PORN & THE SEX TRAFFICKING INDUSTRY

Approach God in the awesomeness of His holiness and in the splendor of His majesty. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, our Creator and Sustainer. It is only in His presence that you will find perfect peace.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

The teen years can be quite challenging. You have growing responsibilities at home and school. You may be learning how to drive a car, getting your first job, serving in a leadership position at your school or youth group. These are all great things. But at the same time, you may be confronted with temptation, unlike anything you have ever experienced. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:13, *No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*

Jesus Himself was tempted but was without sin. In Hebrews 4:15, we are given comfort by the fact that Jesus does understand and sympathize with us

when we are tempted. *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.*

Pornography is a temptation that may suddenly pop up on your computer screen. Technology has made it so easy to have access to what at one time would have been unheard of. Pornography is a sin. It may seem like harmless fun, but did you know that when you view porn you are actually supporting sex trafficking?

Did you know porn is a multi-billion-dollar industry?

All over the world human trafficking, sexual exploitation and pornography are all integrally linked and on the rise. It is one of society's greatest human crises. As of 2016, the Walk Free Foundation's Global Slavery Index estimates that there are almost 45.8 million people living in slavery around the world today.¹¹ The sad reality is that the majority of them are forced into labor and approximately 10 percent or 4.5 million are slaves in the sex industry.¹²

When you view porn, you are actually fueling the demand for sexual exploitation. Huge profits are made from the exploitation of women and children who are forced and/or tricked into performing sexually explicit acts on camera.¹³

Did you know that upwards of 17,500 women are being trafficked each year into the American sex industry?¹⁴ The actors in the porn films are most often those who have been sex trafficked, including children.

As followers of Christ we must pursue purity. In 2 Timothy 2:22, Paul tells us to *flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*

The Bible instructs us to hide God's word in our hearts so that we won't sin against Him. Memorizing Scripture and praying, even one-sentence prayers, can keep you from falling into temptation (Psalm 119:11).

¹¹ The Global Slavery Index 2016, accessed November 9, 2017, <https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/findings/>

¹² "Sex Trafficking," Polaris, accessed November 9, 2017, <https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/sex-trafficking>

¹³ "Pornography Harms: A Capitol Hill Briefing," Enough Is Enough, June 15, 2010, accessed November 10, 2017, <https://enough.org/news/cal-19>

¹⁴ Heather J. Clawson, Nicole Dutch, Amy Solomon, and Lisa Goldblatt Grace, "Human Trafficking Into and Within the United States: A Review of the Literature," U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, August 30, 2009, accessed November 10, 2017, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/07/humantrafficking/litrev/#How>



Meditate & Memorize

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. –Psalm 51:10



Pray

I repent of my sin.
Create in me a clean heart.



Consider

When you watch porn, you are supporting the sex trafficking industry.



Act

When tempted, pray and turn away.

DON'T DEFILE YOUR BODY

As you begin your time in prayer, know that whatever problems or challenges may be facing you today, you have been invited by God Himself to *boldly* approach His throne to find grace whenever you need it. Let that promise guide you throughout your day.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

When we sin, the Bible tells us we have an advocate with the Father. John shares these reassuring words in 1 John 2:1, *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

Merriam-Webster defines advocate as one “who pleads the cause of another.”¹⁵

That is exactly what Jesus has done. Our sin demands penalty, but Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin (took on human form and the sin of all mankind and died on the cross) so that we might be made holy and righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus pleaded your cause!

¹⁵ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/advocate>

In other words, when we sin, because Jesus is faithful and just, He will forgive our sins and wash us clean (1 John 1:9). This verse does not mean we can *willfully* choose to sin against God and then ask for forgiveness. Repentance means truly being sorry for your wrongdoing and committing to turn away from a particular action or activity that displeases God.

Daniel lived during the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar. He had been taken from his homeland, along with his friends, by the Babylonians. Because they had come from nobility, they were well cared for, well fed, received the best education and trained to be in service of the king.

Daniel was a teenager at that time, and the Bible tells us that Daniel and his friends purposed in their hearts not to defile their bodies (Daniel 1:8). They were given food from the king's table but refused because it was food that had been offered to idols. They did not want to sin against God by eating the king's food. They made up their minds that they would remain faithful to God by specifically avoiding food offered to pagan gods and requesting a special diet of water and vegetables. The king's helpers said, "If you don't eat the king's food you will lose weight and not be healthy." Daniel suggested a 10-day trial period. At the end of 10 days, they assessed how Daniel and his friends looked after eating simply vegetables and water, and to their surprise they looked even better than those on the king's rich diet!

Daniel and his friends were focused solely on pleasing God and committed to do whatever it took not to sin, and God blessed their obedience. In Daniel 1, verse 17, we read, *To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.*

When we choose not to sin, God blesses in supernatural ways.



Meditate & Memorize

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. -Psalm 51:10



Pray

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.



Consider

Commitment to not sin means putting God first in your life.



Act

*Purpose in your heart to *not* defile your body.*

THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

As your day begins, focus on not only asking for forgiveness if you have sinned against God, but being sure you forgive others that may have hurt you or sinned against you.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Repentance and forgiveness are integrally linked. The parable of the unforgiving servant really drives home the importance of both. Let's read through Matthew 18:23-35. Peter was asking Jesus how many times we should forgive someone who sins against us. Do you remember Jesus' reply? Seventy times seven. In other words, always be willing to forgive. Then He told this story.

Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

At this the servant fell on his knees before him. "Be patient with me," he begged, "and I will pay back everything." The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me!" he demanded.

His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, "Be patient with me, and I will pay it back."

But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

Then the master called the servant in. "You wicked servant," he said, "I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

The clincher is Jesus' clear warning in verse 35, This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.

But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (Matthew 6:15)

Have you been holding a grudge against someone that needs your forgiveness? It can be something as petty as not having been invited to someone's party. It may be that someone lied about you or posted something on social media that really upset you. Maybe you have committed an offense toward someone and have not asked for their forgiveness. Whether you are needing to forgive or receive forgiveness from someone else, you know how difficult it can be. But as difficult as it is, it must be done. Why? Because when we do not forgive, Jesus will not forgive us. Period.

Ephesians 4:32 sums it up this way, *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Prayer helps us live like Jesus, love like Jesus and forgive like Jesus.



Meditate & Memorize

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. -Psalm 51:10



Pray

I repent of my sin.
Create in me a clean heart.



Consider

Jesus will not forgive you if you do not forgive others.



Act

Always forgive!

THE POWER TO FORGIVE

In the book *Soul Keeping*, Ortberg wrote, “In order to make your prayer more profitable, it would be well from the beginning to picture yourself as a poor, naked, miserable wretch, perishing of hunger, who knows but one man of whom he can ask or hope for help. ... These are true pictures of our condition before God. Your soul is more barren of heavenly treasure than the poor beggar is of earthly possessions.”¹⁶

And yet, God in His infinite mercy calls us His children and invites us to enter into His presence.

Let us pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

It is sin that makes us “poor, naked and miserable” before a perfect and Holy God. Yet it is because He is perfect and holy that we can receive forgiveness and be made righteous.

Whenever we sin, we must repent and ask forgiveness from those we have offended and from God himself. When others seek forgiveness, we must always be willing to forgive like Jesus. Remember the sobering words of Jesus in Matthew 6, *But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins* (Matthew 6:14-15).

C.S. Lewis, author of the *The Chronicles of Narnia*, in his book *Mere Christianity*, wrote what he believed to be the most unpopular Christian rule:

¹⁶ John Ortberg, *Soul Keeping*, Zondervan (2014).

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” He explained, “Because in Christian morals ‘thy neighbor’ includes ‘thy enemy,’ and so we come up against this terrible duty of forgiving our enemies. ... Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive.”¹⁷

One of the most powerful stories of forgiveness was shared by Corrie Ten Boom many decades ago in her book titled *Reflections of God's Glory*. Because she helped protect Jewish people in her home in Amsterdam during World War 2, she and her sister Betsy were sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp. Although her sister died, Corrie survived and lived to tell her amazing story. She shared that when speaking at a church in Munich, Germany, a former SS officer who had guarded her in the concentration camp began walking toward her. As he extended his hand what flashed before her were the horrors of her time at Ravensbrück, and the memory of the intense pain and suffering he had caused her and her sister.

Because God knows our hearts—even our deepest secrets and sorrows—He knew what Corrie was battling within: “How can I forgive this man? Do I reach out and shake his hand? Am I able to do the seemingly impossible in order to obey God?”

As she stretched out her hand to receive his, her anger and pain dissipated to joy, and through the power of the Holy Spirit she was able to miraculously forgive the one who had brought indescribable sorrow.¹⁸

The Holy Spirit, who Jesus sent to be our *Comforter*, our *Teacher* and our *Guide*, helps us do what seems impossible in our own strength. When we desire to please God, to do what He asks, He steps in and does the rest. Corrie wrote, “When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself.”¹⁹

Is there someone who has deeply hurt you? Do you need God's help in order to forgive them? Don't try to forgive in your own strength. You won't be able to do it. Talk to God, let Him know you need His help, and trust Him to forgive through you. Remember, God is forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call out to Him (Psalm 86:5).

¹⁷ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. (1943, 1945, 1952), p. 97.

¹⁸ Corrie ten Boom, *Reflections of God's Glory*, Zondervan Publishing House (1999).

¹⁹ Corrie ten Boom, *Reflections of God's Glory*, Zondervan Publishing House (1999).



Meditate & Memorize

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. –Psalm 51:10



Pray

I repent of my sin.
Create in me a clean heart.



Consider

We cannot forgive in and of ourselves, we must invite the Holy Spirit to forgive through us.



Act

Is there someone you need to forgive?

DAY 30

PRAYER, YOUR GREATEST DEFENSE

“When your soul is at rest, your will is undivided and obeys God with joy. Your mind has thoughts of truth and beauty. You desire what is good and wholesome.”²⁰

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

As you spend time with Jesus today, think about His love, purity and holiness, and ask that it flow through you, enabling you to love what He loves and hate what He hates. When you draw near to God, He will draw near to you! (See James 4:8.)

Every day we are confronted with choices: what to wear, what to eat, what activities to pursue, where we will hang out, who we choose to hang out with. And our choices have consequences.

You must choose your friends wisely because you become like those you hang out with. That's why it is critically important that we spend time with Jesus every day. The more time we spend with Jesus, the more we become like Jesus and the greater impact we can have on the world.

²⁰ John Ortberg, *Soul Keeping*, Zondervan (2014).

Ask yourself these questions:

When you hang out with friends, are you gossiping? Are you putting others down? Are you using foul language? Would you use those same words if Jesus were right there in the room with you—if you could see Him?

Are you viewing porn on your computer or cell phone? Are you meddling in witchcraft or those things that the Bible tells us are an abomination in God's eyes?

Praying, memorizing Scripture, hiding God's word in your heart will help shield you from Satan's attacks. Ask Jesus to "deliver you from evil" whenever you feel like you are going to fall into temptation.

The Lord's prayer helped the disciples understand early on that God Himself would help keep them from sin and temptation, but they needed to ask. (See Matthew 6:9-13.)

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ... The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:16, 19-21)

Whatever temptation you may be confronted with, prayer is your defense, so use it. Be intentional about choosing friends who want to follow Jesus. Hold yourselves accountable to each other. James tells us to *confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective* (James 5:16).

In contrast, Paul exhorts us on what we should focus our minds on, *Finally, brothers and sisters, 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* (Philippians 4:8).



Meditate & Memorize

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. —Psalm 51:10



Pray

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.



Consider

Prayer is your greatest defense.



Act

Make careful choices, often asking, "What would Jesus do?"

Unshakeable Truth

Worship

DESIGN OF DNA

A natural response to forgiveness is worship. What better way to worship than by speaking of God's awesome creation? David wrote, *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands* (Psalm 19:1).

Many students begin doubting their faith when they enter high school, often because of teachers touting there is no God, that the earth came about by random chance, and that scientific theories are fact and the Bible is fiction.

Yet the universe screams of *intelligent design*, a Creator who supernaturally brought the earth into existence by His very words. Ask God to reveal the truths of His Word to you. Take time to study science and the Bible and discover the awesomeness of God's creation.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit. Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice. Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Our memory verse is found in Psalms 139:14 and says, *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

Let us first consider the DNA in our bodies. Did you know that it contains the instructions or "codes" to build all the proteins our body needs? How can DNA, a chemical molecule, possess detailed instructions?

DNA is a molecule with a double spiral structure containing different types of chemical bonds between the two spirals. The exact sequence and nature of

these bonds provides a road map and a set of instructions that the cell is able to use to build the proteins it needs for survival, growth and reproduction. Not only is it amazing that DNA has these instructions, but that this occurs in DNA at a very microscopic scale.

Did you know there is DNA in every one of our cells, and trillions of cells in our bodies?

DNA molecules are so intricately designed they could not have been the result of random chance or evolution. An intelligent designer must have designed the codes into the DNA molecules to build proteins. DNA is so intricate, microscopic and exquisitely made that it is mind blowing.

In *The Case for a Creator*, Lee Strobel writes, "Geneticist Michael Denton said the information needed to build the proteins for all the species of organisms that have ever lived—a number estimated to be approximately one thousand million—'could be held in a teaspoon and there would still be room left for all the information in every book ever written.'"²¹ Yet another incomprehensible fact!

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. (Psalm 139:14)

M&M

Meditate & Memorize

*I praise you because
I am fearfully and
wonderfully made; your
works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
—Psalm 139:14*

P

Pray

*Help me praise you
with all that is within
me.*

C

Consider

In our reality and experience, the DNA code can only be caused or brought about by conscious, intelligent activity. It is never created out of chaos or randomness, especially with its level of detail, complexity and intricate design. The only rational explanation is that this is the work of an intelligent designer.

A

Act

Spend time reflecting on the mystery and intricacy of the DNA molecule and try to share it in your own words with a friend or family member.

²¹ Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*, Zondervan (2004), p. 220; Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, p. 334.

DNA—RANDOM CHANCE?

As I enter your presence, Lord Jesus, help me to focus on *proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds* (Psalm 26:7).

Prayer is worship. Ask God to receive your prayers as an offering of worship to Him.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit. Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice. Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

As we continue to discover more about what the Bible has to say about science, let us consider the origin of life: created or not? *Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them* (Psalm 111:2).

It is good to spend time discovering more about science and the Bible so you can *always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have* (1 Peter 3:15).

Scientists have been trying for hundreds of years to explain how life originated on this earth. Until now, there isn't a single plausible explanation. All the best explanations have significant weaknesses and require giant leaps of faith in order to believe them. Before we look at these, let us take some time to understand what a protein is and how it functions.

One of the leading theories is that DNA was created by random chance. Scientists have asked what would it take to form a protein molecule by chance? In *The Case for a Creator*, Lee Strobel writes,

“Now consider what you’d need for a protein molecule to form by chance. First, you need the right bonds between the amino acids. Second, amino acids come in right-handed and left-handed versions, and you’ve got to get only left-handed ones. Third, the amino acids must link up in a specified sequence, like letters in a sentence. Run the odds of these things falling into place on their own and you find that the probabilities of forming a rather short functional protein at random would be one chance in a hundred thousand trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion. That’s a 10 with 125 zeroes after it!”²²

Scientific facts and mathematical probabilities support the logical explanation that DNA and proteins must have been the work of a Creator who brought them into existence by miraculous and supernatural activity. We do not know *how*, but this is the most viable explanation for what we know about the science of DNA and proteins. DNA and proteins could not have evolved or formed as a result of random chance. These scientific facts should strengthen our faith in an intelligent Creator and give us reason to pause, pray and worship Him every day throughout the day.



Meditate & Memorize

*I praise you because
I am fearfully and
wonderfully made; your
works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
Psalm 139:14*



Pray

Help me praise you
with all that is
within me.



Consider

Atheists and
evolutionists require
far more leaps of faith
for their beliefs than
Christians do.



Act

Reflect on the
impossibility of DNA
and proteins coming
into existence by
random chance. Does
this strengthen your
faith in an intelligent
Designer and Creator?
Are you able to
worship and praise
God with greater
faith?

²² Lee Strobel, *The Case for A Creator*, Zondervan (2004), p. 229.

CREATION OR EVOLUTION?

The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad! (Psalm 118:24) As you focus your prayer time on worship, come to Jesus with a thankful heart—thankful that the Creator, the God of the universe, created you to worship Him.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit. Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice. Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

In order to worship the God of the universe as our Creator, we must wrestle with the dilemma of evolution versus creation; science and the Bible. Understanding the God of the Universe as our Creator begs the question, "Did living creatures evolve or not?"

In the first chapter of Genesis we read, So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good (Genesis 1:21).

This verse is in direct opposition to the core belief of the theory of evolution that all living species have descended from a common ancestor. Further, that one species evolved into another species because of favorable mutations passed to their offspring.

In answer to the question “Did living creatures evolve or not?” we must look at fossil evidence. If the theory of evolution was true, we would find fossils of many transitional forms—intermediate species that existed and evolved into another species.

It is estimated that the total number of species that have ever lived on the earth is about 8.7 billion. If the theory of evolution is true, for every one of these 8.7 billion unique species, there should be many transitional or intermediate forms between these unique species to show how these species evolved.

While paleontologists have found millions of fossils of unique species, they have not found many millions of fossils of transitional forms. Unfortunately for evolutionists, this evidence is sorely missing. This in fact utterly falsifies the theory of evolution.

In *Darwin on Trial*, Philip E. Johnson writes, “Darwin posed the question himself, asking, ‘Why, if species have descended from other species by insensibly fine gradations, do we not everywhere see innumerable transitional forms? Why is not all nature in confusion instead of the species being, as we see them, well defined?’”²³

Darwin’s theory predicted that a truly complete fossil record would have mostly transitional forms. This prediction is not supported by fossil evidence and has not come true because the theory of evolution is false.

Science supports the case for an intelligent Designer and Creator who has created each of us with a purpose. We can only find this purpose in His special revelation, the Bible.

Take time to enjoy God’s creation. His eternal power and divine nature are visible by what He has created. (Romans 1:20) And He has created everything for your enjoyment. Many people love praying while they take walks - worshipping God - as they soak in the warmth of the sun or a cool autumn breeze. You can simply look up at the sky and pray, “Thank you Father for all that you have made! Thank you for the wonder of your creation. May your glory be seen throughout the whole earth.”

²³ Philip E. Johnson, *Darwin On Trial*, InterVarsity Press, 2nd Edition (1993), p. 46.



Meditate & Memorize

*I praise you because
I am fearfully and
wonderfully made; your
works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
-Psalm 139:14*



Pray

Help me praise you
with all that is
within me.



Consider

You have not evolved
from apes but have
been created for a
purpose.



Act

Take time to read
Darwin on Trial or other
books to find scientific
evidence about the
origin of life.

DAY 34

ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE

As we focus our prayers on praise and worship, let's reflect on Psalm 19:1,

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

As you worship God, reflect on the beauty of the universe and the amazing God who created it. Name a few things you are specifically thankful for in His creation.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Universe: Created by God or by Laws of Science?

Genesis 1:1 we read, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

In the last 75 years, scientists have come to the conclusion that our universe had a definite beginning. They call it the 'big bang,' when space, time, energy and matter came into existence. The best and most widely accepted models of the universe point to this definite beginning. Since the universe could not have caused itself, this implies that the cause must transcend or be outside of the universe itself. We also call this 'first cause' by the name of God, who not only transcends the universe but also says in Genesis 1:1 that He created something from nothing!

We read in Hebrews 11:3, *By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.
(Revelation 4:11)

We worship an amazing God! And the best scientific evidence regarding the beginning of the universe points to God!

Some physicists suggest that the laws of gravity and quantum theory allow universes to appear spontaneously from nothing. This is a theory with no evidence to show that it has occurred or can actually occur. We know in our reality that something never comes from nothing! The fact is that laws never create anything, they only describe what happens under certain conditions. You would need a huge leap of faith to believe in spontaneous creation of the universe! It is so much more reasonable to believe in the God of the Bible, given how strongly the scientific and cosmological evidence points to Him.

Do you know the laws of the heavens? (Job 38:33) Not only did God create the universe but He set the earth in motion in such a predictable way that we can count on the sun rising and setting each day.

It is important we understand that our Christian faith is based on scientific evidence. None of the theories from scientists have shaken the foundations of our faith. In fact, the more scientific facts we discover, the more they point to the God of the Bible.

As you focus your prayers on the wonder of all that He has created, ask Him to teach you everything He wants you to know from His word. Ask for wisdom and understanding, for divine revelation and the courage to share His truths with others.



Meditate & Memorize

*I praise you because
I am fearfully and
wonderfully made; your
works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
-Psalm 139:14*



Pray

*Help me praise you
with all that is within
me.*



Consider

*Imagine how powerful
is the God that we
worship who created
something out of
nothing!*



Act

*In your own words,
explain how the latest
scientific evidence
is consistent with
Genesis 1:1 and
Hebrews 11:3.*

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

It's always good when you begin your time with Jesus to pray, "Lord Jesus, please accept my prayers today as an offering of worship." Then,

Pray believing that He will hear you!

Pray believing that He will answer you!

Pray believing that He loves you! and

Pray believing that He will do a work in and through you and those for whom you are praying!

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

As we celebrate God's creation, and the gift of you, His masterpiece, we must stop and think about whole life worship. Everything we do should be done for God's glory—singing, running, working, studying, praying, even eating and drinking! Paul wrote, *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God* (See 1 Corinthians 10:31).

In Colossians 3:17 and 23-24, we find similar instructions: *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. ... Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

When we do everything for God's glory, we are inviting Him to shine through us—through our words and our actions. Jesus said it perfectly in Matthew 5:16, *In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

You may have a part-time job bagging groceries—do it as unto the Lord!

You may be a great athlete on your school's team—play as unto the Lord!

You may be a volunteer—serve as unto the Lord!

You may be a talented musician—perform as unto the Lord!

You may be a straight-A student—study as unto the Lord!

When you offer your time, your treasure and your talents to Jesus, they become an offering of immeasurable worth. It is better to offer whole-heartedly to Jesus what you might believe to be the most insignificant, unimpressive, unimportant activity, than to be the superstar football quarterback on a team solely for the praise of peers, parents or one's self.

Do you know one of the most mind-blowing attributes of Jesus? His humility. He *willingly* chose the humble stable, the poor family, the ministry serving the poor and sick, and ultimately the cross—the cruelest, most reviled form of execution. Why? Because He loved and worshipped His Father with everything within Him. He gave all He had.

As a follower of Jesus, you have been called to the ultimate standard of worship. In response to all Jesus has done for you, worship wholeheartedly, love unconditionally and obey unreservedly. In doing this, you will make every second count for eternity.



Meditate & Memorize

*I praise you because
I am fearfully and
wonderfully made; your
works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
-Psalm 139:14*



Pray

**Help me praise you
with all that is
within me.**



Consider

**Everything has value
when it is offered to
Jesus.**



Act

**Purpose in your heart
to do everything for
His glory alone.**

WHOLE LIFE WORSHIP

As we finish up our theme of worship, let's focus on whole-life worship and how God wants each of us to worship Him. Remember your prayers are a form of worship. Praise Him with all that is within you. God inhabits your praise!

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

In the gospel of John, Jesus shares the hope of His gospel with the Samaritan woman. He closes His conversation with her as He defines true worship:

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

How do you define worship? Is it merely singing songs in church on Sunday or attending church? Although these are forms of worship, it is not the worship to which Christ is speaking. True worship embraces Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It involves coming before Him with your whole heart and mind, acknowledging His lordship over your life. True worship is born out of our love and devotion to the living God.

True worship says, "I am so thankful and grateful for who you are and all that you have done for me. I want you to be the center of my life. I want you to rule and reign in my heart. I want you to guide my decisions and order my steps. I want you to speak through me, bless through me and love through me so that the world may know you and know that you live within me."

May the words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)

When you go about your day, is Christ in your thoughts, words and actions?

- Do you spend time with Him in prayer each day?
- Do you spend time reading His words, searching the Scriptures so you can know Him more?
- Do you love Him more than anything or anyone in the whole world?
- Do you trust in His forever and always kind of love?
- Do you trust that He will guide your steps?
- Do you take Him at His word when He says He *will never leave you nor forsake you* (Deuteronomy 31:6)?

If you can answer "yes" to these questions, you are learning to worship the living God *in spirit and in truth*.

As you pray for yourself and your prayer partner, ask specifically that God will reveal the truths of His words and that your worship will be found *pleasing in His sight*.



Meditate & Memorize

*I praise you because
I am fearfully and
wonderfully made; your
works are wonderful,
I know that full well.*

-Psalm 139:14



Pray

**Help me praise you
with all that is
within me.**



Consider

**True worship comes
from the heart.**



Act

**Choose to worship
Jesus in spirit and in
truth.**



Unshakeable Truth

Commitment

REMOVE THIS CUP

As we begin our next unshakeable truth, commitment, let us focus in on the prayer, “Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.”

This is the crux of the Prayer Covenant. It is the hardest of all the lines to pray because we are intentionally relinquishing control, trusting in God to fulfill His ultimate purpose in each one of us. Remember the Lord’s prayer, *not my will, but yours be done* (Luke 22:42).

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

Jesus did not want to go to the cross. We are told He pleaded with the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane to *take this cup from me*. The cup was the cross He was about to endure. *And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground* (Luke 22:44). Jesus prayed and pleaded with His Father from the very depths of His soul. He knew what lay ahead—the torture, the pain, the cross—yet what ultimately guided Him was obedience—doing the will of His Father, *not my will, but yours be done*.

Following Jesus is not always easy. It doesn’t mean you will not face trials, challenges or pain. But you can be confident knowing that whatever trials God allows in your life, He will be right there with you.

In the garden where Jesus prayed, His Father sent an angel to comfort and strengthen Him (Luke 22:43). God may choose to send an angel, a friend or a teacher with a word of encouragement or guidance. He may bring to your memory a particular verse or passage. No matter what you might be going through, find strength knowing you are not alone. Isaiah 41:10 is a powerful verse to commit to memory: *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

One thing you can count on, Jesus wants you to succeed. He has called you to be an overcomer. *In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world* (John 16:33). Because Jesus overcame the world, you too can overcome even the greatest challenges. Why? Because He lives inside of you. Because He has given you the gift of His Holy Spirit to guide you and sustain you through the good and the bad. And because nothing can separate you from Christ's love—not hardship, not persecution, not poverty, *nothing*. It is why we can declare with confidence, like Paul, *in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us* (Romans 8:37).

Are you feeling alone in the midst of a difficult situation? Are you struggling with decisions that are testing your faith commitment and walk with Jesus? Are you facing overwhelming challenges in your life? Model your life after the Great Teacher. During Jesus' darkest hours spent on this earth, He chose to pray. And He didn't just mumble off some words, He prayed through the night earnestly, passionately from His heart straight to the heart of the Father.

Prayer is not for wimps. There is a level of intentionality and commitment that says, "God, you are my highest priority. I commit to following you as Lord of my life. Teach me to pray and receive my prayers as an offering of worship." Are you willing to make that commitment?



Meditate & Memorize

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. —Romans 12:2



Pray

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.



Consider

Jesus did not want to go to the cross. He begged the Father to *remove the cup*.



Act

Would you be willing to do something you did not want to do if you felt God wanted you to do it?

RUNNING THE RACE

As you begin your time with Jesus, focus on commitment and what it truly takes to be a committed follower of Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27:

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Paul was referring to something called the Isthmian Games from ancient Greece. Greeks, in honor of the sea god, Poseidon, would hold athletic competitions every two years in the Spring on the Isthmus of Corinth. The winners would receive a wreath to wear on their head.²⁴

Paul's analogy helps readers understand the focus, determination and discipline needed to run well and *win* the most important prize of all, one that Jesus will one day reward to those who are committed to faithfully following Him.

²⁴ <https://biblearchaeology.org/research/contemporary-issues/3009-going-for-the-gold-the-apostle-paul-and-the-isthmian-games>

Eric Liddell was a missionary and an Olympic Gold medal runner in Scotland in the 1920s. He was born in China where his parents were missionaries. He received his education in England and also lived in Scotland, where he played rugby when attending Edinburgh University. It was there he trained to run in the Olympics.

Eric's life was an example of unwavering commitment to Jesus. Everything he did, he did for the glory of God—even his running. His inspiring story was captured in 1981 in the movie *Chariots of Fire*. The film won four Academy Awards including Best Picture. Eric's famous quote still inspires many today, "God made me fast. And when I run, I feel his pleasure."

He authored *The Disciplines of the Christian Life* while in a Japanese prison camp in China. He had later returned to China to minister and remained there even after the British government warned that British nationals should consider returning to England for safety reasons. Although his wife and daughters left, Eric remained with his brother during the Japanese invasion and died in the prison camp in 1945.

Eric Liddell understood commitment at all costs. He followed Jesus in life and in death. "As Christians, I challenge you. Have a great aim—have a high standard—make Jesus your ideal...make Him an ideal not merely to be admired but also to be followed."²⁵

M&M

Meditate & Memorize

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. -Romans 12:2

P

Pray

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

C

Consider

Would you be willing to die for your faith?

A

Act

Pray earnestly that you will follow Jesus at all costs.

²⁵ <https://gracequotes.org/quote/as-christians-i-challenge-you-have-a-great-aim-have-a-high-standard-make-jesus-your-idealmake-him-an-ideal-not-merely-to-be-admired-but-also-to-be-followed/>

DAY 39

PREPARED FOR GREATNESS

"If you are not guided by God, you will be guided by something or someone else."²⁶

Remember earlier in this book we spoke of the importance of knowing your identity and purpose. To truly know who you are, you need to know Whose you are. Peter eloquently wrote, *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light* (1 Peter 2:9).

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

You have been chosen. And as children of God, as part of His royal family, you have been called to follow Jesus. Not simply with words but with your actions.

As you pray for yourself and your Prayer Covenant partner, choose to wholeheartedly follow Jesus and to be guided by Him as you go throughout your day.

The Apostle Paul wrote, *For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do* (Ephesians 2:10).

When you recognize you have been created by God for a specific purpose—to glorify Him and to do good works—it brings clarity and focus, sets boundaries, and defines your steps.

²⁶<https://www.azquotes.com/quote/851336>

What might God be wanting you to do? We know He wants you to love Him first and foremost and love others as yourself. We know God wants you to glorify Him in everything you do. But what specific gifts has He given you that you can give back to Him?

Eric Liddell was a great runner—he ran for God’s glory. Why? Because Eric was a devoted follower of Jesus and knew the purpose for which he was created.

Tim Tebow is a professional athlete who played for the glory of God and unashamedly used every opportunity to praise Him—whether on the field or off. Why? Because Tim is a devoted follower of Jesus and knows the purpose for which he was created.

Not everyone can be an Olympic runner or an all-star athlete. Whatever your gifts, you too are His masterpiece! His creation! His handiwork! He wants to bless you beyond anything you could ask or imagine. He asks you to give your very best—it may be serving other students in the cafeteria, or helping tutor younger kids in their studies, or working after school to help your family. Whatever it is, do it for God’s glory. He takes our gifts, no matter how small, and multiplies them, just like He did when the small boy offered his five loaves and two fish to Jesus. (See John 6:1-13.) The point isn’t what we have been given, rather what we give back to God.

The world is vying for your attention. Satan is working overtime to get you to lose focus, bring confusion and uncertainty, and get you off track. Do you know your greatest defense against these onslaughts and distractions? Prayer!

As you spend time in prayer, thank God for the talents and abilities He has entrusted to you. Ask God to help you steward them wisely and to change you any way He wants so His ultimate plans and purposes will be accomplished in and through you.



Meditate & Memorize

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. –Romans 12:2



Pray

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.



Consider

You are God’s masterpiece, His workmanship prepared to do good works.



Act

Ask God to clearly show you what good works He wants you to do, and then do them.

DAY 40

KNOWING CHRIST

If you have made it this far, you have done well. Remember, prayer is like a muscle that grows stronger the more it is used. As you pray, jot down how God is changing you, how He may be speaking to you. Catch up with your prayer partner and let them know you are praying for them. Invite them to share how God is working in their life. Prayer is an inward journey of growth and discovery. Prayer changes things, and it changes people.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Earlier we read about God's amazing grace on Paul's life and how he drastically changed from being a persecutor of the Church to becoming a sold-out follower of Jesus.

In 2 Corinthians 11:23-33, Paul openly shared all he had to endure as a follower of Jesus:

He was thrown into prison on numerous occasions.

He was severely flogged.

He was repeatedly exposed to death—being hated by both the Jews and the Gentiles.

Five times he received 40 lashes minus one.

He was pelted with stones.

He was beaten with rods three times.

He was shipwrecked three times.

He had to be constantly on the move and was in danger whether on land or sea in different cities and countries where he ministered.

He often worked so hard he went without sleep.

He suffered from hunger and thirst and was many times cold and naked, no doubt due to the times he was imprisoned.

What caused Paul to give up his status as a well-respected religious leader of influence and choose to become a persecuted follower of Jesus?

Paul answers that question himself in Philippians 3:7-11, *But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him... I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*

Paul did it for the sake of knowing Jesus. He called everything else garbage. The only thing of value to Paul was knowing Jesus and making Him known. That's commitment. Paul didn't just talk the talk, he walked the walk, exhorting believers *to follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ* (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Paul was radically changed by God and chose to follow Him even in death. It's recorded by an early church historian that Paul was beheaded for his faith.²⁷

In 1563 John Foxe wrote *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, recording how Christians in the early church were martyred, beginning with Stephen—the very first martyr. It is a challenging, gripping and inspiring read. It powerfully illustrates the face of unwavering commitment and will challenge you to surrender everything to Jesus.



Meditate & Memorize

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. —Romans 12:2



Pray

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.



Consider

What Paul endured for the sake of the gospel.



Act

Read Foxe's Book of Martyrs.

²⁷ "How Did the Apostle Paul Die." <https://www.gotquestions.org/how-did-Paul-die.html>

DAY 41

FOLLOW ME

This may be the most challenging chapter in the entire book. Commitment is an unshakeable truth that helps build a strong foundation in your walk with Jesus, but it doesn't come easy. There is always a cost. As you pray "Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want," you are praying a prayer of surrender. You are inviting Jesus to take control of your life, to form Himself within you and shine through you. Don't doubt for a second that your prayers will be answered. Jesus wants this more than you do because it is His Father's will that you love Him, follow Him and obey Him.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Jesus made it very clear when He told His disciples, "*Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me*" (Luke 9:23). Jesus gave three directives:

Deny yourself.

Take up your cross.

Follow Me.

Remember the story about Ally and the homeless person? She wanted to go home after a long day, but the Holy Spirit nudged her to go back and engage the homeless man who needed help, and she did. Ally *denied herself* the comfort and convenience of returning home in order to obey Jesus.

We take up our cross when we crucify the flesh—our desires—to follow Jesus. When Jesus had to carry His cross to Golgotha He fell under the weight of it, and so Simon of Cyrene carried it the rest of the way. Jesus was then nailed to the cross and hung in agony and shame. Why? Because it was the will of His Father to offer a sinless sacrifice on our behalf. Jesus bore the cross out of obedience to His Father, as well as love for you and me. He invites each one of us to take up our cross and follow Him. Sometimes that means death. Jesus Himself said, *“Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me”* (Matthew 10:38). There are at least 50 nations in the world where the gospel is restricted, and many followers are suffering and being martyred for their faith.

True, biblical Christianity requires that we desire to know Jesus and follow Jesus. Paul wrote in Philippians 3:10, *I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.*

Your time on this earth is short compared to eternity. When you choose to follow Jesus, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain in the life hereafter. *The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever* (1 John 2:17).



Meditate & Memorize

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. –Romans 12:2



Pray

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.



Consider

This world will soon pass away.



Act

Take up your cross and follow Jesus.

DAY 42

ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING

Today is our final day focusing on the unshakeable truth, commitment. You have done well. Be encouraged that God is hearing your prayers as you choose each day to follow Him as Lord of your life.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

As we conclude this chapter, what is God revealing to you that needs to be changed in your life? Are you a person that wants to always be in control? Do you have a list of demands you include in your prayer time because you feel you have got everything figured out? Do you feel frustrated if you have not received answers to specific requests?

Maybe you are applying to colleges and you really want to go to a specific school, but you might not have gained admission. Maybe it's someone you want to date but they have no interest. Maybe you're a great athlete and are looking for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to really shine and develop your abilities.

Whatever it is, the Bible tells us to be anxious for nothing. Nada. Not a single thing.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God,

which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

There is a caveat. You are *not* to worry about anything—and this is critically important—but in *every* situation—college, dating, careers—come to God by *prayer and petition*, that means asking God for His guidance and direction. But note the next word, *with thanksgiving*. That means we don't come to Jesus with our wish lists or treat Him like a genie in a bottle. We first come with our worship, praise and thanksgiving. "Father God, thank you for making me one of your dearly loved children. Thank you that you invite me to come to your throne of grace when I need help. Thank you that you care for me and want the very best for me. Show me your very best. If it be your will, open the door for this or that college, or this or that relationship or career, but Jesus, I want what you want. Have your way in me."

Then what does the passage tell us? What is everyone in the whole wide world looking for and desiring? *Peace!* This is so good. The peace of God—so amazing we can't even comprehend it—will *guard* your heart and your mind *in Christ Jesus*. It is important that you guard your heart. Why? Because everything flows from the heart. *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it* (Proverbs 4:23).

Solomon was one of Israel's kings. He was King David's son. He was not only the richest man who ever lived but the wisest. He wrote most of the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is like a handbook for life. It is loaded with nuggets of truth. There are 31 chapters in Proverbs. You can read one each day and have read the entire book in one month. It contains valuable life lessons still applicable today.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6). Who will make your paths straight? Jesus. But you need to ask. That is how God designed it. *Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete* (John 16:24).

Here is the million-dollar question. Do you *trust* Jesus with your life? Do you trust Him with your career? Do you trust Him with your life partner? Do you trust Him with your finances? Are you willing to relinquish control and make Him Lord of your life?

Think about it. He created you. He formed you in your mother's womb (Psalm 139). He knows the number of hairs on your head (Luke 12:7). He has carved your

name on the palm of His hand (Isaiah 49:16). You are His masterpiece created to do great things (Ephesians 2:10). Too often we think we know what is best and will do whatever it takes (right or wrong) to make it happen, only to find ruin.

No one has ever loved you like Jesus, and no one ever will. Trust Him to do the very best for you. Trust Him in every area of your life. Take your desires to Him but follow His leading, His Divine purpose and plan for your life. The result will be unthinkable joy, peace and blessing.

Choose to follow Jesus wholeheartedly and never look back.



Meditate & Memorize

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. -Romans 12:2



Pray

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.



Consider

When you acknowledge Jesus as the Lord of your life, He will make your paths straight.

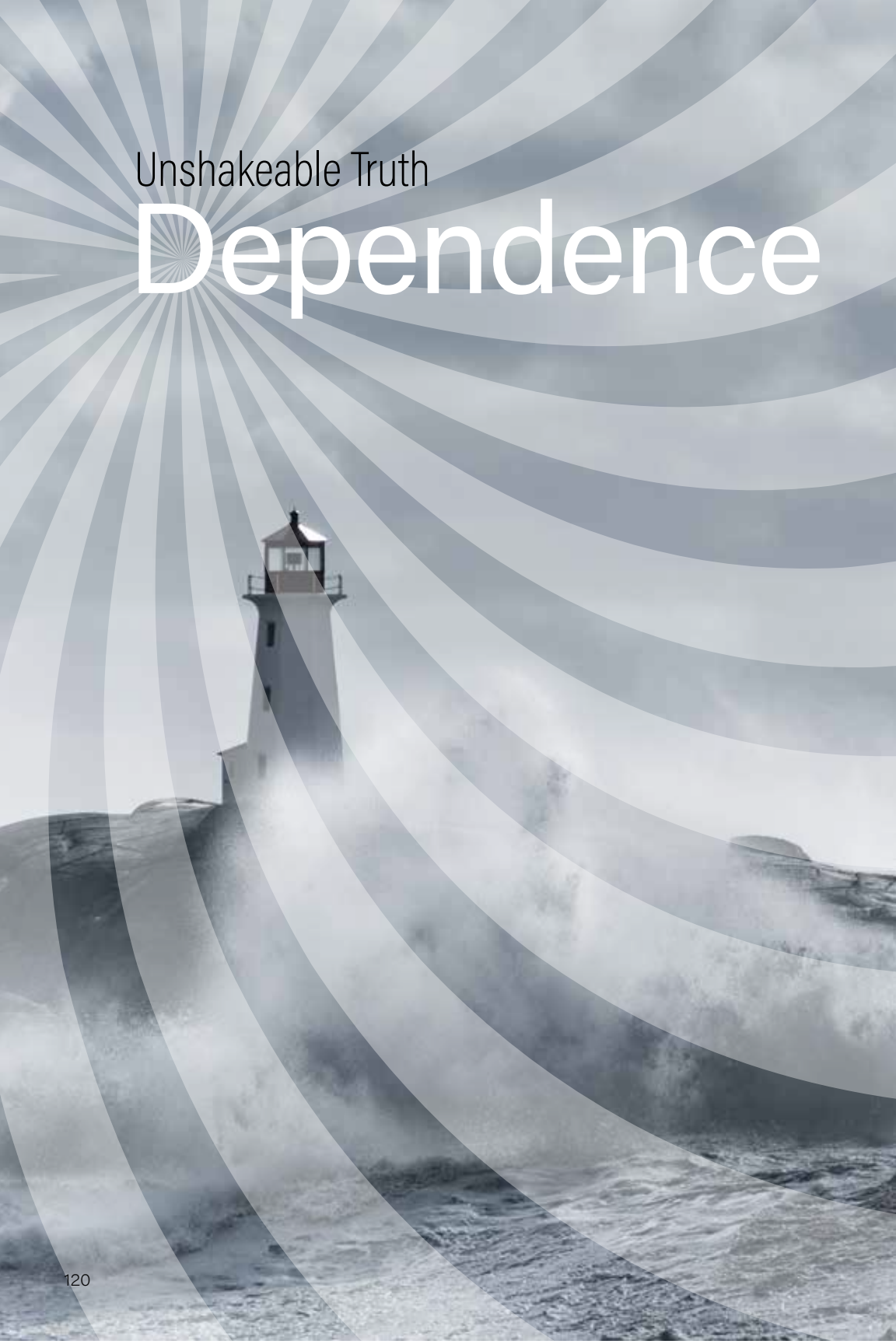


Act

Write down your requests and take them to Jesus. Ask Him to show you His perfect plan by opening the right doors. Let Him know you want His will above everything else, and trust Him to give you His very best.

Unshakeable Truth

Dependence



THE PROMISE

Today we begin the unshakeable truth, dependence. Merriam Webster defines dependence as “relying on another for support.”²⁸

We are dependent upon the Holy Spirit when we pray because He teaches us to pray and often prays His prayers through us.

As you begin your prayer time, invite the Holy Spirit by simply praying, “Empower my prayers by your Holy Spirit.”

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Jesus desires to fill you with the gift of His Holy Spirit. *If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!* (Matthew 7:11).

In John 14, Jesus promised His disciples the gift of His Spirit that would come as their Comforter, Teacher and Guide. *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth* (John 14:16-17).

The Holy Spirit has been given to you to teach you all things. Jesus Himself said, *“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things* (John 14:26).

²⁸ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dependent>

Just as Jesus promised, after ascending to His Father in heaven He sent the Holy Spirit to fill and empower them:

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:1-4)

Peter then shared the gospel message with the crowd that had gathered. Many accused them of being drunk as they saw them speaking in other languages. But Peter assured them, *“These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning!”* He reminded them of what the prophet Joel wrote in Joel 2:28-29: God says, *“I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.”*

Peter assured the crowd that the crucified Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah (Acts 2:36). Three thousand people chose to follow Jesus that day! *And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

Since Pentecost, believers have prayed for Acts 2 revivals in their cities and nations, and God has answered. When societies and cultures witness moral and spiritual decay, it fuels focused, intentional and passionate prayer. In response God sends an outpouring of His Holy Spirit—often in supernatural ways—that both glorifies Himself and draws multitudes to follow Jesus.



Meditate & Memorize

*Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.
—Ephesians 5:18-19*



Pray

Fill me with the presence and power of your Holy Spirit.



Consider

Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to teach us all things.



Act

Be alert and always be praying.

WORDLESS GROANS

Holy Spirit, I ask that you fill the reader right now as they begin their time with you. Empower them. Bless them. Fill them with your peace and presence. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice. Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

John Ortberg shares a profound truth in his book *Soul Keeping*: "Jesus depended on God's acceptance because he faced massive human rejection. God's acceptance is stronger than human rejections, but it was not just for him. Jesus realized that his acceptance was not just for his own sake. When the soul is with God it doesn't matter if you are a dishwasher or a president. The soul thrives not through our accomplishments but through simply being with God."²⁹

This is as good as it gets. *Your soul thrives not on what you can accomplish but simply by being with God.* Have you ever considered that God's acceptance of you is greater than any human rejection? *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Romans 8:31). Think about this the next time a friend has ostracized you for whatever reason or you feel left out and all alone. Ponder this when you are

²⁹John Ortberg, *Soul Keeping*, Zondervan (2014).

working your part-time job or babysitting and thinking it's of no value. Remember the value God has placed on you and thrive in His presence.

As you spend time in prayer, know that the Holy Spirit is not just praying through you, He is praying for you. Romans 8 is a favorite passage of many because it reveals how much we are loved by God, the unfathomable depth of love He has for each one of us.

There are going to be times you struggle to pray. God knows that. He knows when you have suffered a setback, lost a loved one, witnessed a tragedy. It is in those times, when you feel at a loss—weak, empty, even angry—that the Holy Spirit comes to your aid, helping you in your weakness by praying for you, interceding to the Father with *wordless groans*. Paul put it this way:

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God (Romans 8:26-27).

It is pretty amazing to know the Holy Spirit is praying for you. And not just praying, but passionately interceding on your behalf to the Father.



Meditate & Memorize

*Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.
—Ephesians 5:18-19*



Pray

Fill me with the presence and power of your Holy Spirit.



Consider

The Holy Spirit is praying for you.



Act

As you pray for your prayer partner, think about others you will want to invite into a Prayer Covenant. Choose an agreed number of days you will pray for each other. Be sure to set reminders on your phone and regularly connect with that person.

DAY 45

THE GIFT

It is fair to say at this point you are an intercessor! That simply means you are praying for the needs of others. You are lifting them to the Father, much the same way the Holy Spirit is interceding for you. Prayer is a privilege and a responsibility. Carve out a set time each day and stick with it. Check in regularly with those you are praying for with a word of encouragement. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your conversation and give you the words to say.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice. Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Luke 11:5-13 is a wonderful passage. Easy to read and understand, it illustrates the incredible gift of the Holy Spirit in our lives with profound clarity.

Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me and I have no food to offer him.' And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

You most likely have a mom or dad that loves you and desires good things for you. They may or may not be wealthy, but their love for you is shown in ways they are able to afford.

Most parents I have met want their kids to be happy. They are willing to make sacrifices in order to give them the very best. And Jesus points out that if human beings do their best to give good things to their kids, how much more will your Heavenly Father—the One who is *compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love* (Psalm 103:8)? He isn't just loving. He is *abounding in love*—overflowing with love, for you and me. Now keep in mind this is in relation to the gift of the Holy Spirit. If there is one prayer to pray that will 1) empower you, 2) strengthen you, 3) equip you, and 4) encourage you, this is the one. Why? Because it is a *supernatural* gift. It is outside of our human realm. Who doesn't want that level of power in our lives?

You want to give someone a God-sized prayer that will encourage them to their very core? Pray Romans 15:13 over them, *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

M&M

Meditate & Memorize

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.
—Ephesians 5:18-19

P

Pray

Fill me with the presence and power of your Holy Spirit.

C

Consider

Our Heavenly Father generously gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask.

A

Act

Find someone to bless by praying Romans 15:13 over them. Text it or give them a call. Either way you can be confident they will be encouraged and thankful.

DAY 46

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

As we continue our focus on being filled with the Holy Spirit, I pray that you are experiencing an abundance of His joy, peace and hope!

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, what flows naturally in our attitudes, behaviors and thoughts are the fruit of God's Spirit within us.

Paul wrote, *But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* (Galatians 5:22-23).

Christ's love, joy and peace are yours for the asking. We are dependent upon the Holy Spirit to help us develop Christ-like character—kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control.

Jesus speaks about what is required to bear fruit in John 15, *Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the*

branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:4-5). When we pray, we are abiding in the presence and person of Jesus.

We all possess different strengths and weaknesses—areas we need to grow in order to develop godly character. The Holy Spirit comes as our Teacher, transforming us to be more like Christ in our words, thoughts and actions.

Paul spoke of the *manifestation of the Spirit* given to believers for the good of the Church as a whole.

To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:8-10)

When you become a child of God, the Holy Spirit indwells you. Remember Jesus' words, *we will come to them and make our home with them* (John 14:23). The Holy Spirit imparts different unique gifts. It is up to you to develop and use those gifts for His glory. As you daily pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit, He will bring clarity and opportunity to use your gifts.

Some are given the gift of teaching, healing, leadership, prophecy or speaking in tongues. In your prayer time, ask specifically for the Spirit to reveal what your particular gift(s) may be. Quite often He speaks through those around you—your teacher, pastor or parents. Be sure your time in prayer includes silence—waiting on the Lord, listening for Him to reveal certain things to you. Sometimes He speaks to you through a particular Bible verse; sometimes He lays something on your heart or places an idea in your mind. If you are unsure, ask Him to give you clarity. Then act on it. Begin finding ways to use your gifts for the good of the body and the good of God's kingdom.

As you cultivate the gifts that God has given you, you will grow in love, joy, peace, self-control and gentleness. The fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit are synergistic—one building upon the other.

You already possess gifts—leadership, athletic ability, academic and/or musical skills are just a few that you may have begun to develop. It will be most effective to build on what God has innately given you and channel those gifts in a way that brings Him glory.

Spirit-led and Spirit-filled prayer will open up doors of opportunity you could never imagine!



Meditate & Memorize

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.
-Ephesians 5:18-19



Pray

Fill me with the presence and power of your Holy Spirit.



Consider

God uses prayer to change us.



Act

What fruit of the Spirit do you desire more of? Write it in your journal. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you grow in that area. Record any specific changes you have experienced.

DAY 47

THE PRESENCE & POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

You and I have received the same access to the Holy Spirit as Jesus' disciples did in Acts 2. Each time you approach Him in prayer, you can experience His presence and power.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart.

Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord.

Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your

Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Jesus promised His Holy Spirit to the disciples. They were grieved when Jesus told them He was going away and they wouldn't be able to follow Him. They had been with Jesus for three years in His public ministry and wanted Him to remain with them just as before. But it was time for Jesus to return to His Father, and His gift to His disciples would be the Holy Spirit as promised in John 14.

Jesus assured them they would not be left alone because He would send an Advocate, or a Comforter (in the King James version), that would be their Teacher. *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you* (John 14:26).

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it

neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them. (John 14:16-21)

Jesus was full of compassion for His disciples who had followed Him so faithfully. He understood they were losing their best friend. The promises He gave to His disciples He has given to you too.

- I love you.
- I am in you.
- I will show myself to you.
- I will give you an Advocate to help you.
- I will give you an Advocate to be with you forever.

And what does Jesus ask in return? *Show you love Me by keeping My commands.*

When you pray Christ-centered prayers, praying everything that He desires for you, by the power of His Holy Spirit—His gift to you and me—you will be empowered to keep His commands. *In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome* (1 John 5:3).



Meditate & Memorize

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.
—Ephesians 5:18-19



Pray

Fill me with the presence and power of your Holy Spirit.



Consider

God is always with us and abides in us as we abide in Him.



Act

In the last week, how have you felt God's presence in your own life?

TOTAL

DEPENDENCE

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. (John 16:13)

As you begin your time with Jesus, invite the Holy Spirit to guide you not only in your prayer time but throughout your day.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

All *this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 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. (John 14:25-27)*

What unlocked the power of prayer in my own life was intentionally praying through the unshakeable truths each day. I will level with you—there is no way to love like Jesus, show compassion like Jesus, offer forgiveness or effectively channel His grace to others without the help of the Holy Spirit. That is why this line of the prayer is so important. You and I are dependent upon His doing a perfect work in us and through us.

If you are part of a team, whether sports, leadership or otherwise, what is required of each member? No doubt you can list some obvious expectations:

- Show up for practice or for meetings.
- Give 100 percent.
- Encourage other team members to do their best.
- Is it easy? No. Nothing worthwhile ever is.
- Does it require discipline? Yes.
- Can you accomplish it on your own? Of course not.

It takes the entire team working together—efficiently and effectively—to accomplish winning results. In effect, you are dependent upon each other to do well.

Our Christian walk is no different. On your own, you will fall flat on your face. You may think your faith is strong, your knowledge of God's word solid—that's all good; but Satan's full-time job is to make sure you fail. And he will do it subtly in ways you most likely would not be able to recognize and prevent. He's got every trick in the book; even distracting you from praying by putting good things into your schedule that will keep you so busy you won't have time to pray. Do you know what the great Reformer Martin Luther was known to have said? When he was busiest is when he devoted three hours in the morning to prayer.

Be fully dependent on God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—stay in close contact through prayer every day. That is the secret to building an unshakeable foundation for your faith.



Meditate & Memorize

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.
—Ephesians 5:18-19



Pray

Fill me with the presence and power of your Holy Spirit.



Consider

It is easy to get distracted and lose focus. Be intentional about your time with Jesus each day.



Act

Be intentional. Choose a specific time each day to pray and stick with it.

Unshakeable Truth

Influence

WHAT WOULD**JESUS DO?**

Jesus wants us to pray with passion—just as He prayed—from the very depths of our soul. Approach God this way and He will answer.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

When I was 12 years old, I read a book that had a significant impact on me. It is still in print since its first publication in 1896. *In His Steps* by Charles M. Sheldon sold over 30 million copies. You may not be old enough to remember the rubber bracelets everyone wore that asked the question, "What would Jesus do?" *In His Steps* sparked that poignant question. The story opens with a pastor who had been preparing his sermon being interrupted by a homeless man looking for work. The pastor apologized and said he was sorry and unable to offer him work. The homeless man walked throughout the town for three days looking for a job. On Sunday he visited their local church, which was large and impressive.

The pastor was very eloquent and the music, the best around; the congregation privileged and content. So, you can imagine their surprise when this homeless man approached the pulpit and began speaking.

"I'm not drunk and I'm not crazy, but I'm perfectly harmless," he began. "But if I die, as there is every likelihood I shall in a few days, I want the satisfaction of thinking that I said my say in a place like this and before this sort of crowd.

"Your minister said that it was necessary for the disciples of Jesus to follow His steps, and he said the steps were obedience, faith, love and imitation... I've tramped through this city for three days trying to find a job, and in all that time I've not had a word of sympathy or comfort except from your minister here who said he was sorry for me and hoped I would find a job somewhere... My wife died four months ago... My little girl is staying with a printer's family until I find a job... What does following Jesus mean?"³⁰

The book tells the story of how members of that congregation began living differently making decisions based on how Jesus would respond in any given situation in their work and personal lives. They had to decide whether they were going to continue in their nominal, comfortable Christianity or radically follow Jesus in their day-to-day.

The author, Dr. Charles Sheldon, was also a pastor of the Central Congregational Church in Kansas in the late 1800s. He wrote a weekly sermon series focused around the question, "What would Jesus do?" His weekly services, especially Sunday evenings, were packed with young people like you wanting to make a difference.

The result of praying Christ-centered prayers is transformation—becoming more like Jesus. In His earthly ministry, Jesus was an instrument of grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.



Meditate & Memorize

Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.
—Romans 6:13



Pray

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.



Consider

Do I want to become more like Jesus?



Act

As you go about your day, intentionally ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?"

WALK THE WALK

Praying God will guide you and open up opportunities to bless others as you ask Him to make you an instrument of His grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Research has shown that a significant percentage of teens left the faith because they witnessed hypocrisy within the church. Hypocrisy has existed since time began. It's why Jesus has called us to follow *Him*. We have not been called to follow anyone other than Christ himself, just like the early disciples.

We know Jesus, God's one and only Son, was perfect. He was the real deal. The disciples saw His perfection, holiness, passion and purity. He influenced countless for the kingdom. He was a leader of leaders, and it inspired them to try to be like Him.

We have all witnessed Christians in places of authority who know how to say all the right things but live out something entirely different. Sadly, many of us have even been abused by those who we thought could be trusted because they were

in positions of leadership within the Church and saw them get away with what should have been a prosecuted offense.

Let me assure you, as disgusting as it makes you feel, it disgusts Jesus even more.

If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. (Matthew 18:6)

In black and white, these are Jesus' own words warning those who in any way harm kids or cause them to stumble in their faith.

One day, we will all stand before God and give an account of everything we have done with what He gave us. The excuse "I left because of the hypocrites in the church" will not withstand, because He called you by name to be His follower. The hypocrites around you will need to give an account of themselves to God. They will be judged for having led many astray, but it will fall on *their* heads, not yours, *if* you choose to remain faithful to the One who created you, called you and challenged you to follow in His steps.

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:21)

Following in Jesus' steps means remaining faithful for the long haul, standing firm, standing strong, making obedience to Him your greatest priority.



Meditate & Memorize

Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.
-Romans 6:13



Pray

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.



Consider

The warnings Jesus gave to those who harm children and youth.



Act

Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

HYPOCRISY & THE EARLY CHURCH

I trust you are praying the Prayer Covenant with a friend or family member and feeling empowered on your prayer journey.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Let us continue where we left off yesterday since hypocrisy continues to be a hot topic today.

First, it is important that you know Jesus Himself hated hypocrisy. There was a group of religious leaders Jesus often rebuked because of their blatant hypocrisy—the Pharisees.

See for yourself His stinging words that cut straight to the heart—rebuking and tearing away at their deceptive, outward appearance of righteousness. Again, not for the faint of heart, but directly from the mouth of Jesus:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. (Matthew 23:23)

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. (Matthew 23:25)

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. (Matthew 23:27)

And if that weren't enough,

You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? (Matthew 23:33)

You are not alone in disliking hypocrites within the Church. They have been around since the days when Jesus walked the earth, and unfortunately remain within its walls today. All the more reason *not* to walk away from the faith. The Church needs godly, strong and fearless leaders, desiring to be instruments of God's grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice—what Jesus stressed were of great importance.



Meditate & Memorize

Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.
—Romans 6:13



Pray

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.



Consider

Hypocrites have infested the Church from the beginning and will exist until Jesus returns.



Act

Keep your eyes on Jesus.

DAY 52

A FORCE FOR GOOD OR EVIL

As you begin your day,
remember this day belongs
to Jesus, make every moment
count.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for
your grace that has made me one of
your dearly loved children.
Help me love you with my whole heart.
Empower me to love others the way
you love me.
I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean
heart.
Help me praise you with all that is
within me.
Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord.
Change me any way you want.
Fill me with the power of your Holy
Spirit.

**Make me an instrument of your
grace, truth, forgiveness,
righteousness and justice.**

Use me for your glory and to invite
others to follow you.
In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

As you focus your prayers on God using you to be an instrument of His grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice, it is important that you begin with clean hands and a pure heart. This will make you *useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work* (2 Timothy 2:21).

God cannot use you if there is sin in your heart and life. *For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.*

These are what defile a person (Matthew 15:19-20).

One reason prayer is so important is because it serves as a shield. It will protect and keep you from falling away. It helps you stay focused on Jesus. It is the reason why Satan will try everything in his power to keep you from praying. Focus is critically important. This means to have an effective prayer time, you need to

remove distractions: cell phones, TV, social media pings—whatever causes you to lose focus.

E.M. Bounds was born in 1835 and wrote volumes on prayer. He said, “God shapes the world by prayer. The more praying there is in the world the better the world will be, the mightier the forces against evil.”³¹

Purpose in your heart right now to be a force against evil, to walk in the light of God’s truth and to love justice. Justice flows from the heart of God, and if we are to be His followers, we must love what He loves and hate what He hates.

Paul wrote to young Timothy, his spiritual son, *Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.* This is a great verse to commit to memory and the reference super easy to remember—2 Timothy 2:22!

Timothy was a teen when Paul met him and began to invite him on his missionary journeys. He was a great student, learning from his teacher and running after Jesus.

Timothy became a great influence in the early church. You can too but just like becoming a great athlete or musician, it takes discipline, focus and unwavering commitment. Following Jesus requires no less; in fact, it requires even more.

Do you want to be used by God as an instrument of His grace, truth and justice? Give yourself fully to Him—your time, treasure and talent. He will open doors you never imagined. One thing is certain, you cannot outgive God.



Meditate & Memorize

Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

—Romans 6:13



Pray

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.



Consider

Timothy was a teen when Paul began mentoring him for ministry.



Act

Ask God to give you an opportunity to be an agent of His justice.

GODLY CHARACTER

When you ground your day in prayer, rest assured God's goodness—His grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice—will flow in and through you, impacting those around you in significant ways.

As a teenager, you might think you are unable to be an effective force for good, but God created you in His image. And when you offer yourself fully to God to use for His purposes, He opens doors that you never imagined.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord.

Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Paul mentored Timothy. He said to him, *Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity* (1 Timothy 4:12).

At any age, you can choose to be a force for evil or a force for good.

And folks are watching. You may not recognize it or give it much thought—but your family members, kids at school, your teachers, principal, coaches—could attest to your character based on your words, actions and how you treat others. Do you go out of your way to affirm and honor your peers? Do you show respect to those in authority? What would others say about your faith? Would they know you are a follower of Christ?

Many prominent leaders (including Margaret Thatcher, the former Prime Minister of England) have been credited with the following quote:

“Watch your thoughts, they become words;
watch your words, they become actions;
watch your actions, they become habits;
watch your habits, they become character;
watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.”

Godly character produces godly fruit. The Apostle Paul wrote in Colossians, *Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity* (Colossians 3:12-14).

The Prayer Covenant unshakeables that you are praying each day produce godly character, and a leader with godly character can change the world.



Meditate & Memorize

Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.
-Romans 6:13



Pray

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.



Consider

Remember others are watching you, including Christ himself.



Act

Model godly character.

POVERTY & JUSTICE

Continue to make prayer a priority in your everyday. It will not only strengthen your relationship with the living God, it will help you develop Christ-like character.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Jesus was perfect, sinless, God's one and only Son, sent from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Throughout His earthly ministry, He was used by God to be an instrument of His grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice. Most often Jesus ministered to those that others looked down on, the sick and the lame, the poor and needy, women and children.

Justice is at the very core of God's heart. Did you know there are 2,000 verses in the Bible that speak on the topic of poverty and justice? Check out *The Poverty and Justice Bible*. The Contemporary English Version makes it an "easy" read and will open your eyes to God's passion to help the oppressed, and His challenge to each one of us to make it a priority in our lives.

Let's look at Isaiah 58. God is saying He doesn't care about a religious checklist or rituals done to make people feel good about themselves or impress

others. Loving God means ministering to the poor and needy, helping those who have been treated unfairly and have been abused—that's what God desires.

I'll tell you what it really means to worship the Lord. Remove the chains of prisoners who are chained unjustly. Free those who are abused! Share your food with everyone who is hungry; share your home with the poor and homeless. Give clothes to those in need... Then your light will shine like the dawning sun...and the glory of the Lord will defend you from behind. When you beg the Lord for help, he will answer, "Here I am!" (Isaiah 58:6-9 Poverty & Justice Bible³²)

In other words, God responds to our prayers when we hear and respond to the cries of those who are hurting, hungry and oppressed. King Solomon—the wisest man who ever lived—wrote in Proverbs 21:13, *Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor will also cry out and not be answered.* In chapter 29:7 he declared, *The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.*

Do you want to make a difference? Do you want to impact the world? Then *don't mistreat others or falsely accuse them or say something cruel. Give your food to the hungry and care for the homeless. Then your light will shine in the dark* (Isaiah 58:9-10 Poverty & Justice Bible³³).

Jesus came, He lived, and He died for the weak, the needy, the vulnerable and the oppressed. He brought love, hope and peace. He held in esteem those the world overlooked and rejected, and He did it with grace and compassion.

Are you willing to do the same?

M&M

Meditate & Memorize

Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

—Romans 6:13

P

Pray

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

C

Consider

God won't hear and respond to our prayers if we ignore the poor.

A

Act

Get involved in a ministry that ministers to the poor and marginalized. Invite your family or youth group to help—it can be at a homeless shelter, an inner-city school, a pregnancy care center—God will show you, you need only ask.

³²Poverty & Justice Bible, Contemporary English Version, American Bible Society New York.

³³Poverty & Justice Bible, Contemporary English Version, American Bible Society New York.

NOTES ON INFLUENCE

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.



Unshakeable Truth

Discipleship

REACHING THE LAST

Today you begin the next unshakeable truth in the Prayer Covenant, discipleship. Discipleship is something that happens within you as well as through you. When you pray God's will for yourself and others, you are being disciplined—Jesus is forming Himself in you. You and those you pray for are growing in Christlikeness and developing character attributes that reflect Jesus himself. That is why discipleship is so important in our Christian walk. But that is not where it should stop. God wants you to make disciples of others—leading others to follow Jesus.

As you begin your time in prayer, focus especially on those you know that do not have a relationship with Jesus. Ask Him for open doors of opportunity to share your faith with those around you. Pray for them by name.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit. Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Jesus' final command to His followers—including you and me—was that we go and make disciples. Known as the Great Commission, Jesus instructed us all to *go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age* (Matthew 28:19-20).

Because of the digital age in which we live, many believe everyone in the entire world could be reached with the gospel by 2033. Finishing the Task is a movement of 1,600 churches and ministries to reach the least and the last—the unreached, unengaged people groups or UUPGs. These groups do not have a Bible in their language, a church to meet and grow in their faith, or even other Christ-followers.

Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church and author of the bestseller *The Purpose Driven Life* leads Finishing the Task. "Looking ahead, our aim is to raise up the global Church to adopt the mantle of reaching the unreached as we foster partnership across geographic and denominational boundaries. Our prayer is that God would use us to advance the spread of the Gospel, and that we would have the privilege of seeing in our lifetime a Bible in every language, a believer in the life of every person, and a body of Christ within walking distance of everyone."³⁴

There is no age limit to fulfilling the Great Commission. When you ask God to fill you with His Spirit and use you for His glory as you invite others to follow Him, you are praying exactly what He desires, and you are praying the kind of prayers He loves to answer.



Meditate & Memorize

Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
—Matthew 5:16



Pray

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you as Lord.



Consider

There are 3000 UUPGs (over 500 persons in each UUPG).



Act

Pray that these groups will be adopted and reached with the gospel message. Pray that God will prepare their hearts to receive the message, and ask God how He might use you to be part of Finishing the Task.

³⁴<https://finishingthetask.com/about-finishing-the-task/>

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Being used by God for His glory is the highest calling. It shapes and forms you. It sets your identity for life. It gives purpose and meaning, answering many of life's questions like, "Why am I here?"

Focus your prayers today on letting your light shine in and through you for God's glory today.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit. Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

There is no greater joy than sharing the gospel with someone and leading them to Christ. It is what we were made and designed for by God. In Matthew 5:16 Jesus said, *"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."*

In John 8:12 Jesus says of Himself, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* When you choose to follow Jesus as your Lord and Savior you have His light within you, and that light must not be hidden. In Matthew 5:15-17 Jesus explained that in your house you do not hide the light that comes from a lamp. You light up the room by putting the lamp on a table. It is the same with your faith whether you are 5, 15 or 105, as disciples of Christ we are called to let our light shine. By the power of the Holy Spirit within you, you can not only walk in that light but shine His light on everyone you meet.

Keep in mind you have been called to make disciples. *“Come, follow me,”* Jesus said, *“and I will send you out to fish for people”* (Matthew 4:19). Jesus still is the only way. *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved* (Acts 4:12). In the New York Times bestseller *Follow Me*, David Platt lays it out, “If you don’t desire to reproduce and if you don’t long to see people come to know Christ through your life, then I encourage you, in the words of 2 Corinthians 13:5, to ‘examine (yourself) to see whether you are in the faith.’” If we do not feel a sense of urgency to share the gospel and make disciples, it is probably because we are not living in the reality that Jesus is the only way.

Billy Graham, one of the greatest evangelists of all time, made a decision to follow Jesus when he was 16 years old. Did you know shortly before that, his dad had invited a few businessmen to their dairy farm to pray specifically that “God would raise up someone from North Carolina that would take the gospel to the ends of the earth?”

Billy Graham was the answer to their prayer. He was passionate about making disciples. He preached his first sermon when he was 19 and began leading crusades when he was 28. By the time he died, at 99 years of age, he had shared the gospel with over 200 million people in 185 countries³⁵. Billy Graham was a beacon of light to the entire world.

If you could accomplish anything you wanted in your lifetime, what would it be? To be a great evangelist like Billy Graham? An athlete? Physician? Pastor? Teacher? Remember, if your priority is to be used for God’s glory as you invite others to follow Him, *you will shine...like the stars forever and ever* (Daniel 12:3).



Meditate & Memorize

Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
-Matthew 5:16



Pray

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you as Lord.



Consider

You don’t hide a light, you put a lamp on a table where all can benefit.



Act

Let your light shine!

³⁵<https://billygraham.org/story/billy-grahams-father-prayer-heard-around-world/>

24/7 PRAYER AND THE MODERN- DAY MISSIONS MOVEMENT

As you pray, “Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you,” you will find unexpected opportunities to share God’s love and light. Be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and trust Him to give you the right words at the right time.

Remember Jesus’ promise, *I am with you always* (Matthew 28:20).

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.

Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me.

I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.

Help me praise you with all that is within me.

Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want.

Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

In Luke 10:2 we read, *The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.* This is a prayer being prayed by intercessors throughout the world. There are people dying every day without Christ. How can you help? Begin by praying for someone by name that does not know Jesus—a friend or family member. Show that person you care by reaching out and seeing how they are doing—if they need help with anything. Then share the gospel as the Spirit leads you. These are simply ways to let your light shine.

Did you know the modern-day mission’s movement was born out of 24/7 prayer that began in Herrnhut, Germany, in 1727 and continued for over 100 years? It all began with Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. He came from

noble birth, born in Dresden, Germany, in 1700 to a Lutheran family. He gave his heart to Jesus when he was 6 years old. After university, he purchased his grandmother's estate, which contained an entire village—Berthelsdorf. It was then that a leader of the Moravians approached Count Zinzendorf asking if they could live on his estate because they were facing persecution. The Count agreed and gave them a piece of land named Herrnhut, which means *The Lord's Watch*.

The Lutherans shared the same vision as the Moravians and came to live in Herrnhut as well. It grew to include Reformed and Anabaptists. By 1727 there were 300 living in Herrnhut, sparking divisions and disagreements as sometimes happens within churches.

Zinzendorf knew if this continued it would destroy them. He reorganized the adults into small groups where they would pray and encourage each other. One Sunday in August, the pastor of the Lutheran church preached to the congregation on the importance of communion. Just like Pentecost, there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the service. During the closing hymn, many began crying so loudly it drowned out the music. What happened next was heaven-sent restoration, repenting of the disagreements that tried to separate them.

Zinzendorf then began praying for unity among this group of believers. What followed was the first 24/7 prayer movement, which birthed the modern mission's movement. It is important to note that the prayer movement included children. It has been said that on August 23, there was such a spirit of prayer that gripped the boys and girls, no one could listen without being moved to the heart.

During Zinzendorf's lifetime, 226 missionaries were sent from Herrnhut to Africa, Russia and America—all born out of passionate, focused, intentional prayers of both adults and kids!³⁶

Find out more about the Moravian movement by watching this video by LifeNetMedia.org, *Reaching the Unreached: Prayer That Empowers Missions*—<https://vimeo.com/311342648>.

We serve a changeless God. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever* (Hebrews 13:8). He is right there with you when two or three are gathered praying together in His name (Matthew 18:20). Remember, He is empowering your prayers and interceding on your behalf.

³⁶E. Michael & Sharon Rusten, *The One Year Book of Christian History*, Tyndale House Publishers (2003); Janet & Geoff Benge, *Christian Heroes: Then & Now: Count Zinzendorf*, YWAM Publishing (2006).



Meditate & Memorize

*Let your light shine
before others, that they
may see your good
deeds and glorify your
Father in heaven.
-Matthew 5:16*



Pray

Use me for your glory
and to invite others to
follow you as Lord.



Consider

Prayer birthed the
Protestant mission's
movement.



Act

Ask God to show you
how He can use you to
impact the world for
Christ.

INFLUENCING A NATION

There have been many great heroes of the faith since the time of Christ. God continues to raise up men and women with no thought for their own lives, willing to sacrifice everything and simply go.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit. Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Born in 1761, William Carey was one such person, leaving the comforts of his home in England to serve as a missionary to India, confident that only the power of the gospel could set India free. His motivation and vision stemmed from the knowledge of what Jesus sacrificed, giving up His own life to save the whole world. And Carey was willing to follow in His Master's steps.

As one of the first modern-day Christian missionaries, Carey translated and/or published the Bible into 40 different Indian languages. "He was an evangelist who used every available medium to illumine every dark facet of Indian life with the light of the truth."³⁷ He understood Paul's message that *the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel*

³⁷ Vishal & Ruth Mangalwadi, *The Legacy of William Carey: A Model for the Transformation of a Culture*, Crossway Books (1993, 1999).

that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ... For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4, 6).

Carey wanted the people of India to see, and he loved them with Christ's love. His legacy still lives on today. He brought light into the darkest places of that country as an:

Industrialist—introduced the steam engine to India;

Economist—introduced the idea of savings banks to India;

Medical humanitarian—brought hope and care to those with leprosy;

Media pioneer—built what was then the largest press in India;

Agriculturist—founded India's Agri-Horticultural Society in the 1820s;

Crusader for women's rights—was the first man to stand against both the ruthless murders and oppression of women. For 25 years he fought the evil practice of sati—widow burning—which led to its being banished in 1829.³⁸

Carey offered everything to Jesus—his time, treasure and talent. He gave all he had for the sake of the gospel. His legacy still lives on today.



Meditate & Memorize

Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
—Matthew 5:16



Pray

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you as Lord.



Consider

The many ways God used Carey to influence and impact a culture.



Act

If there was one way you would want to influence a culture, what would it be? Ask God to open a door of opportunity.

³⁸Vishal & Ruth Mangalwadi, *The Legacy of William Carey: A Model for the Transformation of a Culture*, Crossway Books (1993, 1999).

MISSIONARY TO CHINA

Lord Jesus, I ask that you bless the reader today. Give them open doors to be channels of your love and grace. Use each one for your glory and to invite others to follow you. Give them boldness. Hear and answer their prayers. Give them joy as they go about their day. In Jesus' mighty name, Amen.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit. Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Do you think you are too young for God to use you? Think again. John Sung was an evangelist in China and Southeast Asia in the 1920s and '30s. He was born in 1901. His father was a Methodist pastor in China. When he was only 9 years old, he accepted Christ as his Savior and began serving with his father in ministry. Even as a teenager, he dedicated himself to his studies and evangelism.

By age 18 he had a dream that he would be an evangelist. That year he left for America to study physics and chemistry at Ohio Wesleyan University and then The Ohio State University. He was a brilliant scholar, earning his PhD in less than two years. From there he went on to seminary in New York but began falling away from his faith as he was studying other religions.

But God’s hand was on John. In February 1927, at a Baptist church, he heard a teenage girl reading from the Bible and sharing the gospel in a powerful way. He longed for the faith and passion she possessed. Her sharing inspired him to read Luke’s account of Jesus’ death, which led him to repent of his sins. A sense of joy and peace overcame him. He was so excited he began running through the campus singing and shouting. Sadly, the president of the seminary thought he had lost his mind and had him committed to a mental institution. Thankfully, the Chinese consul and a friend of his who served as a professor at Ohio Wesleyan had him released after six months with the promise that he would return to China, which he did. He was so passionate about sharing the gospel he travelled throughout China and Southeast Asia preaching and leading many thousands to Christ. Even after being diagnosed with cancer and tuberculosis, making him unable to preach, he remained joyful, singing, reading his Bible, and praying with family and friends.³⁹

His legacy lives on as some refer to him as the Billy Graham or John Wesley of China. He unashamedly and with great boldness “blazed a flaming trail of revival across China and most of Southeast Asia.”⁴⁰



Meditate & Memorize

*Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
-Matthew 5:16*



Pray

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you as Lord.



Consider

A 15-year-old girl’s sharing of the gospel ministered to John Sung and caused him to re-dedicate his life to Christ and become a great evangelist.



Act

Don’t hold back. Read scripture, lead a youth band at church, share your faith openly with others. Let God do a work in and through you that will impact others for Christ.

³⁹ E. Michael & Sharon Rusten, *The One Year Book of Christian History*, Tyndale House Publishers (2003).

⁴⁰ <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/the-billy-graham-of-china-john-sung>

LQE

Today is the final day focused on discipleship. My prayer is that God is speaking to you and showing you ways you can let your light shine.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit. Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Commit *to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.* (Proverbs 16:3)

The Prayer Covenant ministry is witnessing a first since the ministry started in 2013. What is unfolding on the African continent is a youth-designed, youth-led evangelistic outreach in 36 nations called Last Quarter Evangelism.

Our leaders had planned a special outreach in the month of May 2020, where children and youth were going to share their faith with one person in school each weekday for the entire month. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, schools shut down and the outreach was cancelled. God used this obstacle to raise up 750,000

children, youth and adults to pray specifically for Global Outreach Day and Go2020.⁴¹

Last Quarter Evangelism (LQE) was established as the result of their faithful praying. Proverbs 16:9 reads, *In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.* Although our leaders made plans for the Go2020 May outreach, God ordered their steps in an entirely different way. Through a partnership with All Africa Baptist Youth Fellowship and The Prayer Covenant, youth were invited to design and submit their own gospel flyers that they would then use in sharing the gospel. In five days, 127 submissions were received. The best were chosen to be professionally laid out for digital use as well as printed copies.

On one side of the flyer was the Prayer Covenant prayer and on the other a message of hope from the Bible. They planned multiple outreaches throughout October, November and December. Each outreach began with prayer as they headed to the streets to minister.

Over 14,000 churches participated in LQE with 264,771 persons (85 percent were youth) shared the gospel with over 5.8 million people and 301,907 committed to following Jesus as their Lord and Savior. That's 301,907 persons who would not have otherwise heard about Jesus were it not for the call of God on these teens.

What might God be laying on your heart to lead in your church or youth group? Working together with other churches across your city can be fun and effective. The more the body of Christ comes together in unity, the more effective and fruitful the outreach.

Ask God to give you His vision. Look for others to share that vision and begin praying over it. Ask Jesus to establish your plans and watch how He blesses. There is no greater joy than the joy that comes from serving Jesus.

Too often kids are viewed as objects of mission within our churches. Don't be a bystander. Let your teacher and pastor know you would love an opportunity to start a youth prayer group or an outreach. *Commit to the Lord whatever you do and he will establish your plans.*

⁴¹<https://www.go2020.world/en/go2020continues>



Meditate & Memorize

Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
-Matthew 5:16



Pray

Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you as Lord.



Consider

Over 4.5 million persons heard the gospel from a youth-designed, youth-led outreach on the African continent.



Act

Find a group of teens who want to make a difference. Begin by asking God to show you how you can lead an outreach or prayer meeting. Get started.

NOTES ON DISCIPLESHIP

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

Unshakeable Truth

Authority

GOD'S AUTHORITY OVER THE UNIVERSE

God declares His authority over us in Psalm 46:10, *Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.* When you pray, you are exalting God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. You are acknowledging His authority and supremacy.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children.
 Help me love you with my whole heart.
 Empower me to love others the way you love me.
 I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart.
 Help me praise you with all that is within me.
 Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord.
 Change me any way you want.
 Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit.
 Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice.
 Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

One way to acknowledge His authority is as your Creator, *Maker of heaven and earth* (Psalm 146:6).

For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. (Colossians 1:16)

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? (Psalm 8:3-4)

One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep.

A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement, they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him." (Luke 8:22-25)

Here you see the disciples freaking out because they were in the middle of a storm and thought they were going to die. Jesus on the other hand is sleeping soundly. In their panic they started yelling for Jesus. And what does Jesus do? He simply speaks. *Even the winds and water obey him.*

Oxford-educated John Leslie, who catalogues many anthropic examples in his eye-opening 1989 book *Universes*, said he believes that if ours is the only universe—and there are no scientific data proving any others exist—then the fine-tuning of the universe is “genuine evidence...that God is real!”⁴²

Robin Collins is an American philosopher, serving as Professor of Philosophy and Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Messiah College in Pennsylvania, who speaks about fine-tuning. He triple majored at Washington University in Mathematics, Physics and Philosophy. You can learn more about Dr. Collins and listen to some of his podcasts and videos here: www.closetotruth.com/contributor/robin-collins/profile, www.closetotruth.com/series/what-does-fine-tuned-universe-mean#video-2033

Dr. Collins says, “When scientists talk about the fine-tuning of the universe, they’re generally referring to the extraordinary balancing of the fundamental laws and parameters of physics and the initial conditions of the universe. Our minds can’t comprehend the precision of some of them. The result is a universe that has just the right conditions to sustain life. The coincidences are simply too amazing to have been the result of happenstance.”⁴³

Yet the miracle of it all is that God, infinitely perfect, timeless, radiant, all-knowing, always-present, Creator of this universe, wants to have a relationship with you and me. What king or president do you know who reaches out and says, “You are mine. I am with you always. I have created you for a purpose. You are a masterpiece. I love you with an everlasting love. I have written your name in the

⁴²Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*, Zondervan (2004), p. 128; John Leslie, *Universes* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 198.

⁴³Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*, Zondervan (2004), p. 130.

palm of my hand. I am your Defender, your Advocate, your Rock, your High Tower. I will be with you through the end of the age and you will be with Me, forever."

As you go about your day, recognize God's authority as your Creator and King. Shout it loudly or pray silently, "Father God, thank you for your creation. Thank you for creating me. Help me honor you in everything I do and say." Why? Because He is worthy.

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being. (Revelation 4:11)



Meditate & Memorize

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."
-Matthew 28:18*



Pray

Father, I pray in the name of Jesus and in the power of your Holy Spirit, Amen.



Consider

The coincidences of our universe are simply too amazing to have been the result of happenstance.



Act

Watch some of Robin Collins interviews using the links above.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

As you begin your prayer time, think about God's authority over the universe and the knowledge that He is always with you. If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ... If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day... (Psalm 139:8, 11-12).

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit. Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice. Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

The authority of Scripture is

foundational to our Christian faith. Without it we would know nothing of Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection. We would know nothing of His character, His grace, love, compassion and forgiveness. John begins his gospel by writing, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made* (John 1:1-3).

You might ask, why did John call Jesus *the Word*? John Piper gives a clear and logical explanation, "John calls Jesus *the Word* because he had come to see the words of Jesus as the truth of God and the person of Jesus as the truth of God in such a unified way that Jesus himself—in his coming, and working, and teaching, and dying and rising—was *the final and decisive message of God!*"⁴⁴

The writer of Hebrews wrote, *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper*

⁴⁴<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/in-the-beginning-was-the-word>

than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

The Holy Spirit brings understanding as we read God's word. It is alive because Jesus, the Word, is alive, and He gave us His Spirit to reveal the truths of His Word—the truths of who God is and how we are to live and walk in those truths.

Paul exhorted, *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

God-breathed means inspired by God. Peter addressed this with great clarity: *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit* (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in the New Testament speak of the authority of Scripture. Over 300 prophecies from the Old Testament were fulfilled in the New. One Brahmin Hindu has said, "I found the fulfillment of prophecies in the Bible very intriguing. Even if the probability of one prophecy coming true was as high as one hundred percent, I estimated that the probability of one hundred prophecies coming true was about one chance in a thousand billion billion billion. They could not have come true by chance unless someone had orchestrated the future so the prophecies could be fulfilled."

Some examples of the prophecies are:

- A virgin would give birth and her son would be called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23).
- The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:1-2 and Luke 2:4).
- He would come from the line of David (2 Samuel 7:12-13 and Matthew 1:1).
- Jesus would be despised and rejected (Isaiah 53:3 and Luke 4:28-29).
- He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12-13 and Matthew 27:6-10).
- Jesus would minister to the poor and the prisoners (Isaiah 61:1 and Luke 4:16-21).
- He would die for the sins of the world (Leviticus 17:11 and John 3:16).

There is no other book, except the Bible, that contains numerous prophecies

coming true in minute detail hundreds of years later.

The Bible has stood the test of time. It is the best-selling book in the history of the world. Reading and praying through Scripture will reveal its truth and profundity, its significance and relevance with accuracy and power.

Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path. (Psalm 119:105)



Meditate & Memorize

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."
-Matthew 28:18*



Pray

Father, I pray in the name of Jesus and in the power of your Holy Spirit, Amen.



Consider

According to Business Insider, the Bible is the number one most sold book in the entire world.⁴⁵



Act

Download YouVersion onto your phone, then find a One Year Through the Bible reading plan to begin.

⁴⁵<https://www.businessinsider.com/the-top-10-most-read-books-in-the-world-infographic-2012-12>

CLAIMING CHRIST'S AUTHORITY

As followers of Christ, we have access to His authority. As you pray, believe that in the name of Jesus, He will hear and answer your prayers.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit. Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice. Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

When Jesus was preparing to go back to His Father, He gave the disciples authority and told them they would do even greater things. *Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father* (John 14:12).

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. (Luke 10:19)

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases. (Luke 9:1)

A missionary friend of mine powerfully shares what God's authority means to her.

“When I behold this Man I tremble, and I recognize that by His Authority I will say ‘yes’ every time. And in His authority, I will cast out demons, heal the sick and feed the poor. I will go. I will leave my home. I will leave my family. I will go to the ends of the earth declaring His goodness. His staggering kindness and the audacity of a God who left Heaven—Heaven!—to come to our rescue. I will go until everyone, everywhere, hears this marvelous and glorious news!

“When He called me, He asked that I give Him everything. His authority begs a response of total, absolute abandonment and surrender. And His lovingkindness, His sacrifice, His beauty and His mercy ensure that He is worth it, and that when I lose my life to Him—in Him—I will actually find it (Matthew 10:39). He imparts His goodness to me. He gives me His authority. When I move in Him, by Him, through Him and for Him, He moves mountains and raises the dead. He fulfills every single promise and every desire of my heart—even those desires I never knew I had. His authority actually changes my heart. When this Man calls, what answer could there possibly be other than, ‘Yes!’ And so the adventure begins.”

I was a girl when my parents had a prison ministry in Virginia. One of the inmates that had become a believer shared with my parents about how God miraculously intervened when a prisoner attacked him with a knife. He looked straight at him and said, “He that is in me is greater than he that is in the world.” His attacker immediately ran away. The prisoner found safety when he claimed Christ’s authority.

The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. (1 John 4:4)



Meditate & Memorize

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”
—Matthew 28:18



Pray

Father, I pray in the name of Jesus and in the power of your Holy Spirit, Amen.



Consider

Christ has given you access to His authority.



Act

What challenge is in your life that you need to claim Christ’s authority to overcome?

AUTHORITY OVER SICKNESS

Jesus had authority over sickness and death. He performed miracles throughout his public ministry and is still doing so today. He is our Jehovah Rapha—"the God who heals."

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit. Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice. Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. (Luke 4:40)

Jesus was teaching a group of people. Pharisees were among them.

The power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow

who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.
Luke 5:17-25

Authority to forgive sins, authority to heal diseases, authority to raise people from the dead—Jesus was no ordinary man. He was God incarnate sent to earth with the sole purpose of bringing freedom from sin and death to all who would believe on His name. The Pharisees did not believe Jesus was the Messiah. They were threatened by this man who could perform miracles with a spoken word. Their jealousy eventually led to Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. This Godman hung out with the very people they condemned.

Jesus had the power to heal, and when He spoke, He offered hope. He was loved by the common man and drew large crowds. They followed Jesus wherever He went, looking for answers because *he taught as one who had authority* (Matthew 7:29, Mark 1:22).

When you pray in the authority of Jesus' name, you have access to His authority over life and death. Jesus can and still does bring miraculous healing. He does it to glorify Himself. And He does it so they may know *the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14).

M&M

Meditate & Memorize

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."
-Matthew 28:18*

P

Pray

Father, I pray in the name of Jesus and in the power of your Holy Spirit, Amen.

C

Consider

The authority given to you as a child of God.

A

Act

Pray with unwavering faith in His authority.

THE NAMES OF GOD

The names of God reveal His authority over fear, sickness and even death. His names declare who He is and how He meets us intimately in every area of our lives. He brings healing because He is the ultimate Healer. He brings peace because He Himself is the God of peace. He provides for you because He is the source of all resources. He speaks and the lame immediately walk. He speaks and the blind see. He speaks and demons flee. He spoke hope, peace and love to everyone the world ignored and despised. He stood up for the weak and made them strong. He stood up for those who had no voice and brought deliverance and hope to the oppressed.

As you begin your time with Jesus, think of the ways you want Him to come. As healer? As provider? As Prince of Peace?

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit. Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice. Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

As you learn the names of God, consider beginning your prayer time offering short prayers of worship. This is also a fun way to pray together in a large group. It is sometimes referred to as popcorn prayer. Begin by praying, "Father, receive my simple prayers today as an offering of worship."

Elohim, My Creator
El Elyon, Most High God
El Olam, The Everlasting God
El Roi, The God Who Sees
El Shaddai, My Supplier
Jehovah, My Lord God
Jehovah Jireh, My Provider
Jehovah Rapha, My Healer
Jehovah Nissi, My Banner
Jehovah M'Kaddesh, My Sanctifier
Jehovah Tsidqenu, The Lord Our Righteousness
Yaweh, The God Who Is Always There

Bread of Life (John 6:35, 48)
Immanuel (Matthew 1:23)
Chief Cornerstone (1 Peter 2:7)
First and Last (Revelation 22:13)
Good Shepherd (John 10:11)
Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14)
King of Kings (Revelation 19:16)
Lamb of God (John 1:29)
Light of the World (John 8:12)
Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16)
Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6)
Son of God (Hebrews 4:14)

M&M

Meditate & Memorize

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."
-Matthew 28:18*

P

Pray

Father, I pray in the name of Jesus and in the power of your Holy Spirit, Amen.

C

Consider

All of God's names and attributes.

A

Act

Mark the ones which have special meaning for you and why.

CONCLUSION

Did you know that studies have shown it takes 66 days for a new behavior to become a habit? You have done well. My prayer for you is that prayer becomes much more than a habit or an added daily responsibility; rather, a life-giving source of blessing as you spend time in the presence of your *Abba, El Shaddai, El Rohi, Elohim and El Roi*. May He alone be your source of hope and peace.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your grace that has made me one of your dearly loved children. Help me love you with my whole heart. Empower me to love others the way you love me. I repent of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Help me praise you with all that is within me. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord. Change me any way you want. Fill me with the power of your Holy Spirit. Make me an instrument of your grace, truth, forgiveness, righteousness and justice. Use me for your glory and to invite others to follow you.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

The Prayer Covenant is not meant to be singularly prayed, or even prayed word for word. It is simply one tool to inspire your time with Jesus each day and guide you in learning to pray Christ-centered prayers. Memory verses have been added to each line of the prayer because it is powerful to pray through God's word. As you meditate on and memorize Scripture, the Holy Spirit will bring verses to mind at specific times, in unexpected ways, to reassure and remind you that He is with you.

Apostolic prayers are prayers in the New Testament prayed by Jesus and the apostles. They are centered on who God is and inspired by the Holy Spirit. I want to close with one of Paul's prayers found in Colossians 1:9-12. It is my prayer for you:

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

Know you have been created and designed by God for *such a time as this* (Esther 4:14). Make every moment count for eternity. Focus on living your life worthy of Jesus—seek to please Him in everything you say and do. Be strong in the Lord, grow in the knowledge of who He is and what He has done for you. Seek His best. Follow His leading in every area of your life. Grow in wisdom. Seek out mature, godly leaders and learn from them. Be teachable. Be humble. Pattern your life around Jesus. Put others first. Serve God and man. Do everything in love. Develop godly character, which will produce endurance and patience.

Jesus never said following Him would be easy. In fact, He taught *small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it* (Matthew 7:14).

You will find everything you will ever need in the person of Jesus Christ. In His authority, may He meet you as *Yaweh Jireh*, your provider.



Meditate & Memorize

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."
-Matthew 28:18*



Pray

Father, I pray in the name of Jesus and in the power of your Holy Spirit, Amen.



Consider

Habits are formed in 66 days.



Act

Find another prayer partner(s) and covenant with them for an agreed upon number of days. Whatever you do, always keep on praying for all the Lord's people (Ephesians 6:18).

NOTES ON AUTHORITY

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

