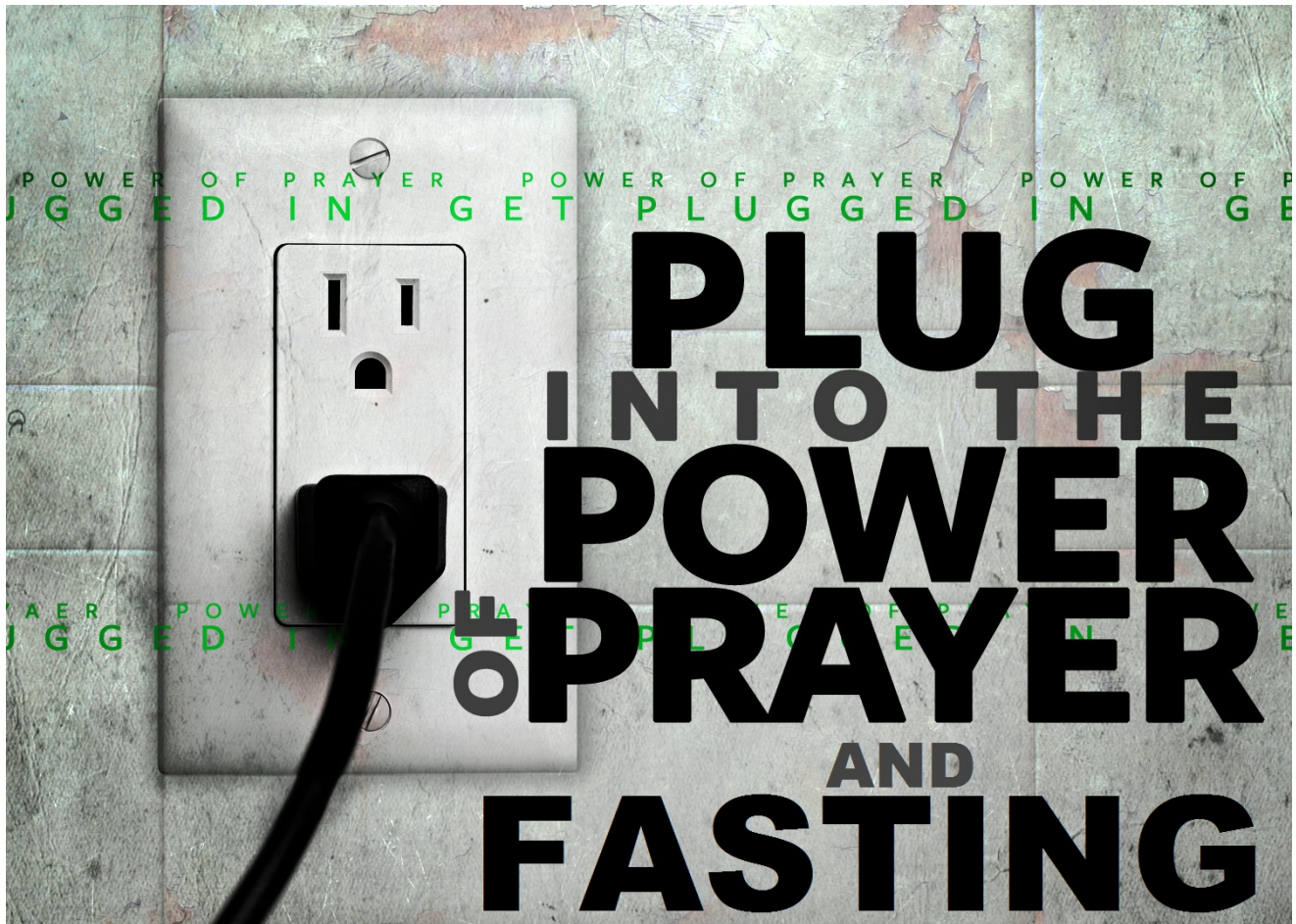


PRAYER & FASTING RESOURCES



21 Days of Prayer & Fasting Resources

We are happy to provide you with additional resources that will help you over the next 21 Days of church-wide Prayer & Fasting. These resources include a devotion for each day of our fast, inspirational quotes, prayer focuses for each day, and helpful fasting tips and information.

Table of Contents:

Pages 1-18 Devotions

Page 19 Fasting Resource

Together, let's focus on His Kingdom first, target our prayers, and believe!

Day 1 Devotion-

Starting Over!

by Benny Cunningham

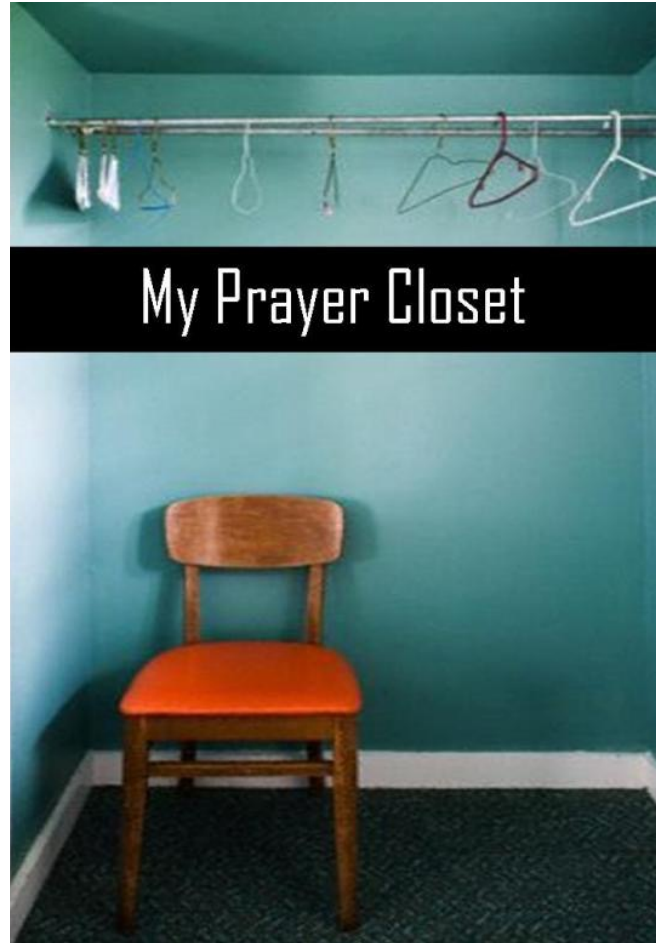
Starting over is a good thing. Starting over can be fun and exciting! Starting over is an opportunity to do things differently, to experiment! Explore! **Let's Go!**

A new year is an opportunity to start over. Adults, teens or kids can launch out and into the New Year in a new way. It can be a bit scary, but that is where faith comes in. Let's start this new adventure of 2018 and beyond with a new faith focus.

Think about the good things that happened last year and build upon those. Build on the good and continue on that path. However, on the other hand, have you not had the best year or last couple of months? Stop and reflect: what went wrong? Determine how you got off track. Did others affect you in a negative way? If that was the case then start off this new season looking to make better friends. What relationship changes may be needed?

Often we get in a rut of bad habits. We get busy and allow some of the important things to fall by the wayside. We allow ourselves to get lax in prayer, Bible reading or study habits. This is a new opportunity to start differently! Set New Goals! Also **DO NOT** be afraid to ask for help! There are friends, church leaders, teachers, counselors and pastors who will help you. **You are not alone.**

The Bible has so much to say about New Things! God makes all things new, as we see in Isaiah 43. We are new creations like 2 Corinthians 5 tells us. God will help us with our failures and give us victory! He will help us with new attitudes, a new heart, a new mind and more. The shortcomings of last year are gone and in the past, done away with if we want them to be. Let's move forward into a wonderful new season!



Day 2 Devotion-

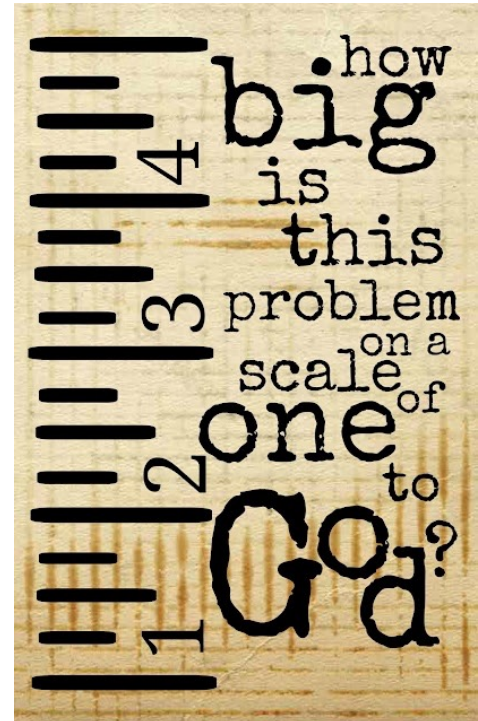
Stop Yelling at the Devil...

by Melissa Nelson

Yep, that's what God said to me as I was having a shouting match one morning with my enemy. Satan was wreaking havoc again and I tend to yell scripture at him to remind him

who I am in God—that he won’t have my family, that he has no power over me—you know how we do. Several minutes into this match, I felt God sit back, chuckle, and say, “What are you doing? Huh?” This was my ignorant reply: “Well... I’m reminding the enemy who I am in You and that he won’t have my family, and that he has no power over me.” I felt the sweet Holy Spirit surround me and gently *REMIND ME* of something: “Stop paying so much attention to him and concentrate your efforts on me. He knows who you are. He knows that he won’t have your family. He knows that he has no power over you. This is his tactic to *DISTRACT* you from my presence and Kingdom work. Invite me into this room. Begin to really worship me with everything in you despite his efforts and he won’t stick around.” And you know what? God was right, again.

We are beginning a very busy season of reaping the harvest and there is too much work and ministry upon us for any distractions. Let’s just shout, “Watch me work—Watch me pray, pray!” (No worries if you don’t get the pun!) John 4:35 (NLT) states: “You know the saying, ‘Four months between planting and harvest.’ But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest.” Let’s get busy!



Day 3 Devotion- *Prophetic Provisions*

by Tyler Oswald

Read 1 Kings 17:1-6

True success is not measured by accomplishments of this world, but by obedience to the God who created it. Elijah is one of my favorite prophets to read about in Scripture because I believe he is an exemplary man who earnestly trusted God. Elijah was one of two people in the Bible who never physically died, so he must have done something right while he was still here on earth.

As we read our scripture, we discover the introduction to Elijah’s story. Elijah approaches king Ahab in the name of the Lord and declares that there will be a drought in Israel until he says it will stop. The boldness displayed by Elijah in this moment was stupendous because of what was at stake. Elijah was risking his life to obey what God had told him to do because of Ahab and his wife, Jezebel’s, errant political and religious belief system. However God did not leave His prophet for dead; instead He commanded Elijah to go to the Kerith Ravine to stay. Not only does God provide Elijah with a safe place to live, but there is also a brook to drink from and some ravens to deliver room service! Elijah risked his life to

“True success is not measured by accomplishments of this world, but by obedience to the God who created it.”

- Tyler Oswald

obey God and in return God provided him with everything he needed to endure. I believe that many of us believers need to receive the lessons of obedience and provision from this portion of Elijah's story. Elijah *OBEYED* God *FIRST*, and then, God *PROVIDED* for Elijah. The same works for any born-again believer in Christ, so today, trust in God and watch Him provide for the circumstances of your life!



Day 4 Devotion-

The Sin of Murmuring

by David Strahan

“Murmuring does not trust God; it invites death and the judgement of God into your life.”

- David Strahan

A monk joined a monastery and took a vow of silence. After the first 10 years, his superior called him in and asked, "Do you have anything to say?" The monk replied, "Food bad." After another 10 years the monk again had opportunity to voice his thoughts. He said, "Bed hard." Another 10 years went by and again he was called in before his superior. When asked if he had anything to say, he responded, "I quit." The Abbot responded, "It doesn't surprise me one bit. You've done nothing but complain ever since you got here."

When we think about sins that the Israelites were guilty of, we remember the golden calf, their idol worship, sexual immorality, and so forth. But one of the gravest sins that they committed is murmuring. They complained. Murmuring is a verbal rebellion against what God has allowed in your life. Murmuring does not trust God; it invites death and the judgment of God into your life.

Jude 16 describes ungodly men in the last days, "These people are grumblers and complainers, living only to satisfy their desires." Complainers are selfish, destroyers of unity, and cause division.

Philippians 2:3 instructs us. "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too." 1 Peter 4:9 reminds us, "Be hospitable to one another without grumbling."

Do not be selfish, greedy, or negative. Instead, be humble, content, peacemakers, and submissive to one another in love. Pray for God to help you not to murmur and to rid the church of complaining!

Day 5 Devotion-

Promises and Expectations

by Pam Guyette

Promise: a legally binding declaration that gives the person to whom it is made a right to expect or claim a specified act.

The Word is full of God's promises, but one of the most encouraging is when God tells Joshua in Joshua 1:9, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you *WHEREVER* you go." For the promise to be fulfilled, Joshua's only job was to trust God. The obstacles would be great, the giants large, the river deep, and the walls massive. But God promised—wherever he walked, whatever circumstances, whatever situation—The Lord, The Great I Am, would be with him. Joshua walked in expectation of God's promise and witnessed its fulfillment.

"Joshua walked in expectation of God's promise and witnessed its fulfillment."

- Pam Guyette

Even today, that assurance is ours. If we trust Him, we can stand on His promises and walk expecting to receive them. His timing is not always ours, but when life becomes too difficult, when health falters, when finances crumble, when relationships fail, we can still be strong and courageous—we can still walk in expectation. Our Father, redeemer, healer, provider, protector, restorer of dreams, supplier, comforter, peace, lover of our soul, and deliverer will be with us wherever we go.

We can walk in the truth of His promises—we can walk in faith with expectation. Our only job is to trust Him! Psalm 5:3 reads:

"In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice.

In the morning, I lay my request before you, And wait in expectation."

Day 6 Devotion-

The Sovereignty of God

by Brenda Summersgill

Sovereignty, that's a big word, one of those "Christianese" lingo terms. I figured I knew the gist of the meaning, but I decided to look it up. Here you go, the official Miriam Webster definition: supreme excellence, supreme power, freedom from external control, and controlling influence.

So I guess you're wondering why I was pondering this word. I'll be completely transparent with you. I struggle praying for people at times, not because I don't have faith that God can change them or their circumstances; I'm afraid that the person I'm praying for might be resistant and not *LET* God do the work He needs to do. This is one of those subjects that could never be exhausted and could very well go in circles in group discussion.

I was actually confessing and repenting to the Father that I try to manipulate people and problems to make them turn out the way I want them to. Usually that doesn't work because some people won't be manipulated and some circumstances are beyond our

control. That's what led me to consider the sovereignty of God. *NOTHING* is beyond his control. He knows exactly what it will take to change us—the person we're praying for or the situation we may find ourselves in. As the definition above states, He is free from external

“God sees the end from the beginning.”

- Brenda Summersgill

control, has supreme power, and is a controlling influence in our lives. He will not *FORCE* us to do anything, but He knows us better than anyone and knows what it will take to get our attention. He can read our minds and counter any excuses we may try to use.

Let me take this notion of the sovereignty of God a step further. Do you have a promise directly from God that you have not seen fulfilled? I do. And sometimes it seems a million miles away. The Holy Spirit reminded me that God sees the end from the beginning; not in linear terms as we do, but in circular. He can see it all at the same time. So when He made the promise, He already knew the future. He could guarantee it because He had already seen it. That is so exciting. To know that He already knows it will happen and that once He has spoken it to us, it is done. So I don't have to worry about the one for whom the promise was given, God has already seen it happen.

As you pray during this season of fasting, ask God for a promise concerning those things you're praying for. Ask the Holy Spirit to remind you not to look at the circumstances surrounding you, but to the Almighty, Sovereign God who has all power to grant our petitions. And believe for His perfect will to be done.

“I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.” - Psalm 73:28

“But my eyes are fixed on you, Sovereign Lord; in you I take refuge” - Psalm 141:8

“He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, for a thousand generations” - Psalm 105:8

“Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!” - Luke 1:45

“...being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.” - Romans 4:21

Day 7 Devotion-

Legacy of Prayer

by Ronnie Nelson

The greatest legacy we can leave for our children and grandchildren is a legacy of prayer! Lamentations 2:19 says “Rise during the night and cry out. Pour out your hearts like water to the Lord. Lift up your hands to him in prayer, pleading for your children.” Now, more than ever, our children and grandchildren need our prayers. We need to make sure our heavenly Father hears about them daily! Prayer turns ordinary parents into prophets who shape the destinies of their children, grandchildren, and every generation that follows! You don't become a praying parent by default. You do it by design, by desire, by discipline. Spiritual disciplines take sheer determination, but if you determine to pray for your children and grandchildren daily, you can and will shape their destinies. Your prayers will live on in their lives long after you die. One of the most important prayers we can pray for them is the favor of God. In Luke 2:52, it says “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and



all the people.” By praying for our children and grandchildren daily, we can write their future. It can be the difference between

“letting things happen” and “making things happen.” No one is a perfect parent and we all make mistakes, but the one thing we cannot afford to get wrong is prayer. Prayer is our highest privilege as a parent or grandparent. Nothing we do for our kids will have a higher return on our investment than prayer. The dividends are eternal!

“Nothing we do for our kids will have a higher return on our investment than prayer.”

- Ronnie Nelson

Day 8 Devotion-

Roadblocks

by Justin Ingram

What we believe about God not only determines WHO we worship but How we worship. What kind of God do we believe in? What is God like? This may be difficult to answer, not because of insufficient faith, but a problem of an adequate definition of God.

Read:

Isaiah 44:6 (GNT)

Isaiah 46:5

Isaiah 46:9

So what is worship?

⁶ “What shall I bring to the Lord, the God of heaven, when I come to worship him? Shall I bring the best calves to burn as offerings to him? ⁷ Will the Lord be pleased if I bring him thousands of sheep or endless streams of olive oil? Shall I offer him my first-born child to pay for my sins? ⁸ No, the Lord has told us what is good. **What he**

requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.” - Micah 6:6-8 (GNT)

“So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer.” - Romans 12:1 (GNT)

Commitment is a fundamental part of worship. We must commit ourselves completely to God. It requires daily personal sacrifice! **We can define worship as an outward expression of an inward experience.** Worship that honors God must come from our mind and heart. The entire self must express that one belongs to God. We must desire to know

“What we believe about God not only determines WHO we worship, but HOW we worship.”

- Justin Ingram

God and respond to him, then we will be grasped by His presence. He has been there the whole time, waiting for you to worship him!

Focus for 2018

God seeks us and He will choose whether or not to respond to our worship. It is not a matter of God being present; He is there. Here is the key, there may be things in our lives that present roadblocks and these must be removed to experience a deep true worship that honors God.

Day 9 Devotion-

Fear Not

by Bill Guyette

Last October, six of us from our company traveled to Botswana, Africa to build three tabernacles in the Kalahari Desert region. We also arranged for a two-day wildlife viewing safari in the Okavango Delta, where all manner of wildlife migrate annually in search of water. No firearms allowed. We would be sleeping with the animals.

On Day 1 we got close to elephants, giraffes, zebras, and other big game animals, including a pride of lions, in their natural habitat. By nightfall, we were sharing a meal next to our campfire, when our conversation was interrupted by the roaring of lions. As we shined our flashlights into the bushes surrounding the camp, we could see at least ten sets of eyes, about seventy-five meters away. Our guide assured us that the lions were only being curious, not in attack mode. But, he cautioned that they could sense fear and might change their minds!

1 Peter 5:8-9 advises us to "Be alert and of a sound mind. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, Standing firm in faith". After about thirty minutes, the lions moved on. Some of our party would openly admit that they were very afraid that night. Fear is contagious, and if unchecked can become panic. 2 Timothy 1:7 reminds us, "For God hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind". Faith is the opposite of fear, the two cannot coexist. Inside our tents, we slept with one eye open that starry African night, listening to the sounds of the wild.

Did you know that there are over 2,000 fears or phobias that have been identified in human experience? Yet, according to psychologists, we are born with just two basic fears: the fear of loud noises and the fear of falling. All other fears have to be learned. Fear of failure ranks among the top ten worst human fears, alongside other "learned" fears like public speaking, rejection, disapproval, making mistakes, loneliness, financial problems, and death.

Fear is one of Satan's favorite tools. Fear paralyzes and robs you of a victorious life. Fear will keep you from trying because you might fail. You might look foolish, or you might be rejected. But God doesn't want you to be paralyzed by fear! Did you know that the Bible says "Fear not", 365 times? That is one "Fear not" for every day of the year! Do you worry too

much? When you get up every morning, there is a "Fear not" from God waiting for you no matter what your day brings

Day 10 Devotion- *Let Us Thank Him*

by Greg Banach

"Fear paralyzes and robs you of a victorious life."

- Bill Guyette

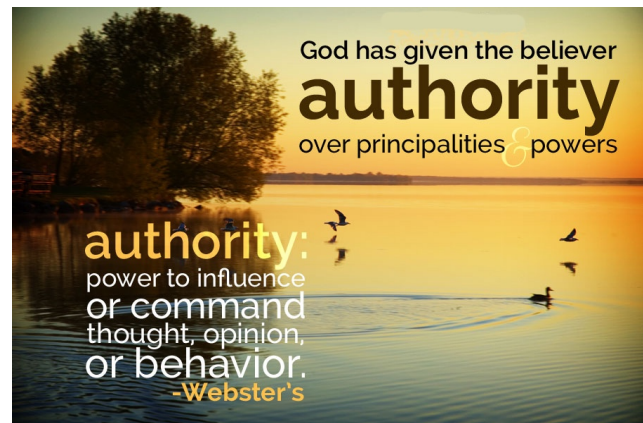
In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:18

The most defining statement I can make about my life is this: I have nothing that I have not been given.

To elaborate, I have nothing good that has not been given to me by God as a free gift of His kindness and love towards me. One of my favorite things to do is to go before the Lord and rehash all of His amazing mercies towards me. I'll tell Him about it like I think He's forgotten, "God, I still remember that time, ten years ago, and how I thought it could never be okay again, but then you ... and that time three years ago when it all seemed hopeless and then you God, I remember how lonely I was once, I remember how I longed to see all of my children in church, I remember unemployment, I remember this and this and that, but then you ... !

My heart breaks before God and most of the time I can only offer tears in place of words when I recall how good He has been to me. It's overwhelming. I know many of you feel the same. You know, a grateful heart is one of the most formidable weapons we can carry through life. It changes the very fabric of our trials. We can be thankful in all things because we know that there is nothing we could ever face that God can't work for good. So, if we aren't grateful in the valley, then when we get back to the mountain top our gratitude might seem shallow. It's gratitude in the valley that shows a heart truly grafted to Christ. I can't only be grateful on the mountain top.

Yes, God is great, God is good, so let us thank Him!



Day 11 Devotion-

Entering Into God's Rest

by Willa Carpenter

The book of Hebrews does not name its author, only God knows for certain who wrote it. However, God does everything with purpose. This epistle is known as God's supreme revelation. He spoke to us in these last days through his son Jesus Christ, not as He did in the past through prophets and various ways. This book was speaking to the Jewish believers who were wavering in their faith under the



**Only if we have
faith in God's
word can we
enter into the
rest."**

-WILLA CARPENTER

weight of persecution and delay of Christ's coming. The writer points out the supreme glory of the person and the work of Christ, which transcends what they had experienced under the law.

In chapter 3, the writer uses the tragic failure of the Israelites in the wilderness as an example to the early Christians, also to us living in these last days. We learn of how they rebelled and died in the wilderness and did not enter into rest, (The Promised Land), because of unbelief. Hebrews 4:1 says, "Therefore since a promise remains of entering his rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it." He reminds and warns us that the promise of entering His rest remains if we surrender to the Lordship of Christ and the control of the Holy

Spirit. They heard the word just as we are hearing it, but it was no profit to them because they lacked faith. Only if we have faith in God's word can we enter into the rest. Hebrews 4:10 says, "For he who has entered his rest has himself also ceased from works as God did from His." We know that God in His work of creation, rested from his work, so we who trust in God no longer strive for salvation by our own efforts but live in total dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit.

Psalms 31: 23 says, "O love the Lord all you his saints! For the Lord preserves the faithful and repays the proud person." One translation describes the proud person as someone "arrogant enough to go it alone." God uses strong words to describe unbelief. Let's not be one who will "go" or "do" our own way but let's be of those who believe and trust God and His ways!

2 Peter 1: 3 says, "That through the knowledge of Jesus who called us by glory and virtue, we have been given all things that pertain to life and Godliness."

Let's be those who will live in His rest. Do not allow unbelief to rob us of God's rest. When faced with situations or problems, have faith, hear and believe the promises of scripture.

Remember, Jesus said His yoke is easy and His burden is light, it is in Him we find true rest for our souls. (Matthew 11:28-30).

Day 12 Devotion-

NOT NOW

by Don Powell

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

– Romans 8:1

That's a pretty bold promise. And one that is hard for many of us to truly believe and live in. After all, we've all experienced pain, disappointment, and failure.

That voice that keeps telling us "You can't do it" or "You failed this time because you've always been a failure and you'll always be a failure." We're all familiar with that voice of condemnation. And yet here we read that we're free from condemnation. It just doesn't seem possible.

I want to encourage you today that it is possible. Another way to think of that promise is to rearrange it slightly and see that "there is no condemnation now." It may be overwhelming to grasp the promise that we are free from condemnation for the rest of our lives. But could you believe that you are free just for "now"? Just for this very moment? That doesn't seem like it would be too much to ask. But what about in ten minutes? The great news is that in ten minutes, it will be "now" again.

"God is not bound by time."

- Don Powell

So when are we condemned? If there's no condemnation "now" then logic would lead us to allow for the possibility of condemnation sometime other than "now." But remember, God is not bound by time. With Him, the clock always reads "now." As long as we are in His "now," we are free from condemnation.

So be encouraged. The next time you hear that condemning voice reminding you of disappointments, replaying your failures, or reliving the pain of your past, treat it like you would any other unwelcome interruption that you don't have time for—tell it "not now!"

Day 13 Devotion-

The Sovereign Lord Has Spoken

by Susan Strahan

"The Sovereign Lord has given me his words of wisdom, so that I know how to comfort the weary. Morning by morning he awakens me and opens my understanding to his will. The Sovereign Lord has spoken to me, and I have listened. I have not rebelled or turned away ... Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore, I have set my face like a stone, determined to do his will. And I know that I will not be put to shame."

- Isaiah 50:4-7

Isaiah is prophesying about the Servant (Jesus). How exciting to know that if we are obedient servants, God is on our side. When we are attentive to His words, He awakens us to know His will. When we submit, even in the face of suffering, God comes to our defense. What confidence!

**"We should also be
immovable and
unshakable in our faith."**

- Susan Strahan

These verses make me think of Mount Rushmore where the faces of four former Presidents are etched into the granite rock. These faces can't be turned to the left or the right. They are constant no matter what is going on around them. They are immovable. We should also be immovable and unshakable in our faith.

Because of the Servant's unwavering obedience and resilient faith, God opened his understanding. No matter what came His way, He had seen the will of God and He remained strong.

God desires to show us His will. He desires to open our understanding. Like the Servant, we should trust the Lord no matter what. When we do, we can go to bed with full assurance God will awaken us to do His will. Even more, God will vindicate us!

Day 14 Devotion- ***A Root Of Bitterness***

by Daniel Mims

Read Hebrews 12:15

Bitterness. Buried deep. Planted by injustice, betrayal, hurt, deceit. Left in tact, it will sprout all kinds of trouble that will grow to defile us. From bitterness comes discontent, jealousy, hate and unforgiveness. It chokes out the fruit of the Spirit and steals our joy, our peace and our love.

Bitterness has no place in a Christian's heart and we must constantly seek to dig it out ... daily. Life happens and circumstances weigh on us, but we can't let a bitter root take hold of our lives. Maybe someone that you love has betrayed you. Maybe you have been dealt an injustice that has caused you loss and suffering. There may be circumstances of life that you just don't understand and that seem unfair. Whatever the case, God wants us to find our strength and dependence in Him. He wants to perfect us into His holiness so that we can live above our circumstances. The enemy of our souls wants us focused on our situation, believing his lie that we have been treated "unfairly." This mindset not only steals our ability to enjoy our abundant life in Christ, but it makes us ineffective in our work for the Kingdom and could ultimately cost us our soul.

**"Bitterness has no place
in a Christian's heart and
we must constantly seek
to dig it out ... daily."**

- Daniel Mims

Digging out that root of bitterness starts with forgiveness. Forgiving others and allowing God to forgive us through the redemption of Christ's sacrifice. As we start this new year, may we all search our heart daily to make sure that no root of bitterness exists to grow up causing us trouble and defiling us.

Day 15 Devotion-

Those Revealing Blood Tests

by Ruth Lambert

Having my annual physical a few weeks ago, I thought about the importance of lab work for my primary care doctor to know my physical status, my needs, my deficiencies and my excessive “whatevers.” Everyone knows that you have to fast prior to an appointment. I never have to leave notes reminding myself to eat, but I have a history of leaving notes on my coffee pot, the cabinet with dishes, and the pantry that read, “Do Not Eat, 12 hour fast for Check-up!”

Of course I want to comply since nutrients and ingredients in the food and beverages I consume are absorbed into my bloodstream and could impact factors measured by certain tests. Fasting improves the accuracy of those tests. The fast isn’t the painful part, I hate needles and still can’t watch when they draw blood. I grit my teeth and close my eyes during the process. Thank goodness water is allowed since water hydrates your veins. Hydrated veins are easier to find. And that means easier to draw from. Yes for “easier!”

We have a great physician Who knows our physical, mental, spiritual and emotional being. Those times that are set apart for prayer and fasting can be quite revealing and sometimes painful as time spent with Him reveals truth. In both the Old and New Testaments, **fasting** is seen as useful for humbling oneself as a sign of commitment or repentance and for increasing faith, especially when accompanied by **prayer**. **Fasting** allows one to be devoted to spiritual matters without distraction from earthly things. During these days of prayer and fasting, may I remember to drink freely from the water of everlasting life, the water that will never run dry and with confidence, humility and submission, come before the Great Physician, my Lord, my Savior and no matter what, the report will be “It Is Well, It Is Well,” all because of the blood, His blood.

“Perfect submission, all is at rest
I in my Savior am happy and blessed
Watching and waiting, looking above
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.”

*“And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood
of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony ... ”*
- Revelation 12:11

With a “Blessed Assurance” in His love, grace, and mercy, I join my church family in our time of prayer and fasting.

All for His Glory!

Ruth Lambert

Day 16 Devotion- *Choosing To Praise*

by Laura Williams

This time of year is always bittersweet for me. I always feel a little sad when I see people taking down their Christmas decorations and the Christmas carols slowly fading away. The holiday season is such a fun and uplifting time that, when it is all over, there is a feeling of disappointment that can try to creep in. Although it can be a time of sadness, this time of year can also be a time of expectancy for the new year to come. Many people make a list of their new year resolutions that typically only last a few weeks or a few days if we're being honest. Whether we stick to our new goals or not, this time of year can create a sense of hope. We become excited that this new year can be a new beginning.

During this time of year, we can either allow a spirit of heaviness or a spirit of hope to settle into our lives. The Lord began to speak to me a few weeks ago about what it means to put on a garment of praise instead of a spirit of heaviness. In Isaiah 61 it says "The Lord will give us beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and ***a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair or heaviness.***" The revelation God has given me about these verses is that we, as His children, can freely receive these gifts of beauty, joy, and praise; but we have the responsibility of allowing them to change us and use them to help and encourage others.

"You can either choose to receive the spirit of heaviness or you can put on the garment of praise."

- Laura Williams

One day recently I was feeling emotionally distraught and almost numb, if you will. The Lord clearly spoke to my spirit and said, "You can either choose to receive the spirit of heaviness or you can put on the garment of praise." Church, I want to encourage all of us to intentionally put on the garment of praise every day. Sometimes we just have to look at fear, discouragement, doubt, disappointment, and all of the other "weights" that try to entangle us and say, "Not today! I am choosing to praise!" Chapter 61 in Isaiah, that I referenced earlier, is titled "The Year of The Lord's Favor," and I believe this next year will be a year of favor in so many areas for our church family.

Will you believe with me?

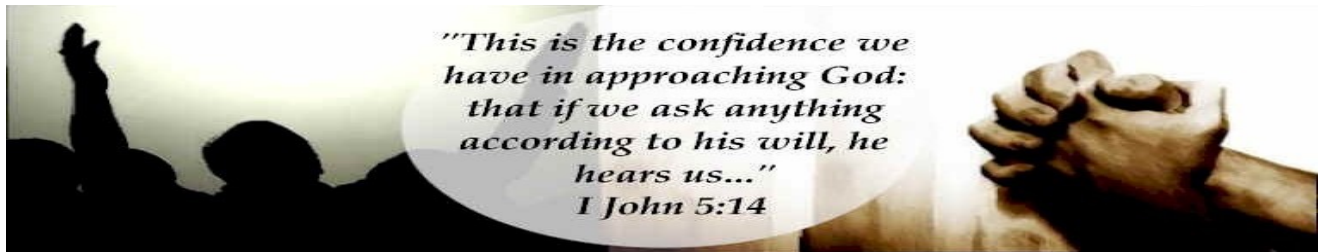


Day 17 Devotion- *Words Have Power*

by Brittni Ingram

"Words are powerful; take them seriously. Words can be your salvation. Words can also be your damnation."

- Matthew 12:37 (MSG)



During John The Baptist's miraculous birth announcement, his father was struck with silence until the prophesy of John's birth was fulfilled. The Lord could not allow Zachariah to speak his unbelief. Jesus was coming, there was no time to waste!

Do you believe the same for today? Jesus is coming! There is no time to waste with words of unbelief. We can know if it's God's Word- it's His Will! Hebrews 11:6 (HSBC/NKJV) says "Now without faith it is impossible to please God, for the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who [diligently] seek Him."

Let's diligently seek Him and remove any roadblocks. Are we tithing and giving an offering? Being careful to keep his commands and keeping ourselves from voicing unbelief? Once we cleanse the heavens above us, we can choose to align our words with what God says and see miracles happen! Let's decree together (I encourage you to speak these words aloud!):

"Jesus is the King of Hope. He is all powerful. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Miracles are for today. The church is getting stronger and more relevant. It is prosperous. Its influence is growing. Success is inevitable because no weapon formed against us can prosper and if God be for us, who can successfully be against us?"

"Yahweh! Be praised forever! Your people by Your power declare- Your Kingdom Come! Your Will Be Done! In our lives, our families and our church family and world as it is in Heaven!"

Day 18 Devotion- *What's Hiding In Your Closet?*

by Crystal Mason

What's hiding in your closet?

There are times when we clean up on a whim because unexpected guests are coming, or maybe we've procrastinated ... and shoved some things in a closet. Inevitably we sometimes forget what we put in there. It's possible we just keep pushing things further to the back so we don't even remember what's in there and keep adding so much that it would take a few days to find something. Our hearts are often treated the same way. We just keep adding things and shoving things into the closet of our hearts without working through them or processing them. Those closets become ineffective, we can't fit things in there, we clearly could never open the door or allow anyone to look inside.

Maybe it's time to take inventory of our hearts/closets. Toss the things that are of no use; like hurts, fears, insecurities, that are taking up unnecessary space. Lets find and put to

use the things that we may have misplaced or lost and covered by the clutter of life. Hiding underneath the hurts and pains, we can find our joy, hope and strength, open the door to the closet of your heart and find those good things.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence, and don’t take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.”
- Psalms 51:10-12 (NLT)

Day 19 Devotion-

Bright Future, Together

by Ruth Lee

“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.”
- Acts 9:31 (KJV)

Sometimes looking back helps us to be more confident about the future. The church throughout the years has suffered many trials, power struggles and financial problems, yet God’s love and grace has always brought us through victoriously! In the early church there were differences about interpretations and priorities, even about key theological opinions; but they moved forward and were blessed. The early church came to agreement on what mattered. This reminds me of when God put it on the hearts of our church leaders to build this church on Bell Road, all were united as one. They were not sidetracked by divisions, power struggles, or personality conflicts. The focus was on serving God, on one accord. The church was few in number, but serving God on a solid foundation.

As Paul speaks in Acts 9:31, There was solid teaching and Christ-centered leadership. There was also a sense of reverence for God which comes from being a people of prayer who sought and trusted God. The people depended on God rather than their own ability; this brought peace and harmony.

We have learned from the Bible that being unified brings a blessing. As we look forward to a new year in our new sanctuary, let’s use the past challenges to lead us to be a more successful church in the future. How wonderful to think about how our present leadership is nurturing these Bible characteristics among us today! They are encouraging all believers to focus on God and His Kingdom, seeking to fulfill the prayer of Jesus in John 17. Let’s be a people of prayer led by His Spirit.

My prayer will always be for peace in the church, prayerful saints, the unadulterated word of God, and joyful worship.

May the God of all grace ever be our guide.

“The people depended on God rather than their own ability; this brought peace and harmony.”

- Ruth Lee

Day 20 Devotion-

Let's Be the Change Agents that Our World Needs!

by Diane Cunningham

It seems today, that we have a "Modern Family" and we have a "Family of God." What is the difference? To some, a quick, easy answer would be that one group is living a contemporary, current life style and one is living by old outdated rules. Others would say one group is "of the world" or "Like the world" and one is not. What is this all about?

Unless you have been living under a rock for the past ten to twenty years, you know things are different. Lifestyles, morals, ethics, and principles have changed. On almost a daily basis we see and hear things that would have been considered bad or wrong only a few years ago.

The standards of our world have changed. Standards are known as the normal or typical values that are accepted. While we had a feeling change was coming we enjoyed living in the Bible belt of the south. Not anymore! Yes of course we can still live here and in a lot of ways our area and state is different and I am thankful for that, however the battle is on! There is a war raging and it is for the families, individuals, children and groups that want to live by Godly standards. Like it or not, we are all in this battle. Married or single adults, teens, children etc. none of us are exempt. The "Dark side" wants us to adapt to the standards of the world. The standards of the world are not always Biblical, Christian principles. The ideas of the world can be a selfish "If it feels good do it" or "Who said I can't say that?" mindset. The world can say or live what it wants but as believers we must speak and live differently. For the sake of those who are lost and trapped in the world system we have to live righteous to give them hope.

Our 2018 world needs us! Let's be a fresh face of freedom (Psalm 118 and 119) for everyone to see. Let our voices speak words of faith, grace, and love (1 Corinthians 13.) Let's be the light in the midst of darkness. Let's be the true change agents for the Lord! Together we can do it. Jesus has called us and is with us as we move forward!

Day 21 Devotion-

Fake News

by Steve Mason

Read Ephesians 6:10-20

If you have watched any of the political script this past year, the media world has been in a debate on fake news. "Fake news" was one of the most used (or over used) phrases in 2017. Have you ever had fake news brought against you? A narrative about you or your family that was simply made up, over-exaggerated, or something that intentionally painted you in a bad light.

Remember where it all originated ... the devil! He is the father of lies. Nothing true comes from him. When Satan accuses you or reminds you of a past sin that has been put under the blood, remind him of his past and future! He has already been defeated. Remain

"When we live in forgiveness, believing the best in others and not lowering ourselves to react, we will be victorious."

focused on God's thoughts about you.

Don't forget, even Jesus was falsely accused. Yet, he didn't react with a vengeful response. But he said "Father, forgive them." When we live in forgiveness, believing the best in others and not lowering ourselves to react, we will be victorious. God is fighting for us so we don't have to "wrestle against flesh and blood." Put on the full armor, be an overcomer and don't believe the fake news.



Below you will find additional information on the type of fast we are calling our church to over the 21 Days of Prayer & Fasting. You will also find information on the different types of fasting with additional websites that might be helpful to you.

Over the next 21 Days (January 7-28, 2018) we are calling the church to a **CORPORATE** fast. This is a called fast by our Lead Pastor encouraging our church family to participate. This type of fast allows the people to be in one accord during the prayer & fasting period. See scripture references of this type of fast in the following scriptures: See 1 Kings 21:9, Ezra 8:21, Esther 4:16.

Specific Types of Fasting

There are different types of fasting methods you can use over the 21 days. NOTE: ***The length of the fast should be dependent on three factors: Your Health, God's leading, and the Type of Fast.***

1. **Daniel Fast-** This fast is one where you *DO NOT* eat meat, sweet foods, or strong drinks like soda, coffee, tea, etc. (Daniel 10:2-3) This fast can be done over the entire days if desired.
2. **Partial Fast-** This would be NOT eating one main meal you would usually eat on a daily routine, such as breakfast, lunch, or dinner. This meal would be skipped until the fast is over.
3. **Half-Day Fast-** Fast until 3pm. This is the fast John Wesley participated in. (See Acts 10:30-31)
4. **Complete Fast-** This would require you to abstain from all solid food and drink liquids only. (See Luke 4:1-2)
5. **Total Fast-** This is a full and complete fast, no food or drink. Acts 9:9 describes when Paul went on a full fast for three days. Esther also called for this type of fast in Esther 4:15-16. This type of fast should be done with caution and not for extended periods of time.
6. **Juice Fast-** This is a fast where only fresh fruits and vegetables are juiced in a juicer. You can also buy juices without sugar or additives.

Here are some additional websites for fasting information:

- A. The Daniel Fast Website: daniel-fast.com
- B. The Daniel Fast Blog: danielfast.wordpress.com
- C. Jentezen Franklin Ministries Fasting Page: jentezenfranklin.org/fasting