

KEEPING IT REAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

*21 DAYS OF FASTING  
AND RETURNING TO  
SPIRITUAL PRIORITIES*

FEBRUARY 2022

CONSECRATE A FAST; CALL A

**SOLEMN**  
**Assembly**



# DAY 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF FASTING

## SCRIPTURE READING

So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. (Daniel 9:3)

## DEVOTIONAL

When I opened my Bible and began to study the subject of fasting, I found it mentioned over and over throughout Scripture. In God's Word, fasting isn't considered a mere sideline to the Christian life but is the very essence of what you should do when a crisis erupts in your life. Fasting is key when you need God to perform a breakthrough in your life on some spiritual level, whether you are dealing with personal problems, financial turmoil, health issues, or any other obstacle. We are often taught to deal with our struggles through prayer, which is fitting because prayer is a powerful thing. But we don't hear much these days about fasting and the important role it plays in the believer's life. However, fasting might be the very thing that could change your spiritual life and your present situation.

After His death and resurrection, Jesus left earth and ascended to heaven. Before He left, He made it clear to the disciples that in His absence, while He was not physically present, fasting was to be a priority. He said, **"The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast"** (Matthew 9:15). Fasting is a spiritual link to the person of Christ while He is not here on earth with us.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- \*What experiences have you had with fasting?
- \*Why is fasting so important to Christians today?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Father, I don't ever want to ignore something that You told me is important, so I will commit to making fasting a part of my prayer life. May You use it to remind me that You are the only source of everything I really need. In Jesus' name, amen.

# DAY2: THE PRINCIPLE OF FASTING

## SCRIPTURE READING

Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, **"When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted? When you eat and drink, do you not eat for yourselves and do you not drink for yourselves?"** (Zechariah 7:5-6)

## DEVOTIONAL

What exactly is fasting? Fasting is a deliberate abstinence from physical gratification-usually going without food for a period of time-to achieve a greater spiritual goal. Fasting is intentionally denying the flesh in order to gain a response from the spirit. It means renouncing the natural in order to invoke the supernatural. When fasting, you say "no" to yourself and "yes" to God. When we eat, we eat for ourselves. We eat because we need to, and sometimes we eat just because we can. The only reason to eat is for our own benefit. When we fast, we fast for Him. When we fast, we are saying that the cry of our souls is greater than the cry of our stomachs. It is more important that God feed us and meet our spiritual needs than to take that time to meet our physical need for food.

We are made of dust, and to dust we shall return. Our eternal value comes from the breath of life that God breathed into humanity, making us living souls. Your value is not in your body. Your value is in your soul. We feed the body by eating, but we can feed the soul by not eating. Fasting makes the soul a higher priority than the body.

The question of fasting is simply this: Are you willing to give up steak and potatoes to gain spiritual riches? Are you willing to give up that which gratifies the flesh in order to make an investment that builds up the spirit? Fasting is a test of how serious you are in your walk with God by what you are willing to deny yourself. The principle of fasting means giving up a craving of the body because you have a deeper need of the spirit.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*How does fasting help you reorient your priorities in life?

\*What deeper needs can fasting help meet in your life?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, there are so many things that I think I need. Thank You for providing fasting as a way to be reminded that the only thing I really need is You. I can do without money, and food, and things, but I cannot do without You. In Jesus' name, amen.

# DAY 3: THE PURPOSE OF FASTING

## SCRIPTURE READING

**Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke? (Isaiah 58:6)**

## DEVOTIONAL

Isaiah 58 gives us great insight into the meaning of fasting. In the verses previous to those quoted above, God says to the Israelites, **"Behold on the day of your fast you find your desire, and drive hard all your workers. Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high"** (vv. 3-4). So, fasting, when done in the proper way, is a means of making your voice heard on high. Verse 5 says, **"Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one's head like a reed and for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the Lord?"** Fasting is meant to be a humbling experience.

Self-denial brings humility because your thoughts aren't focused on yourself. Jesus tells us that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). He's speaking of heavenly nourishment, not earthly food. You must die to self if you want to truly live. Jesus explains the sacrifice of a true believer: **"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me"** (Luke 9:23). And James 4:10 says, **"Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."** It is both humbling and freeing to bow down before God and confess that He is Lord and that He has all the power and the glory. Fasting is one way to bow down to God and acknowledge your need for Him in all areas of your life.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*What are the areas in your life where you need God to hear you?

\*Why is humility the only proper attitude for seeking God?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Father, let me always be reminded that You have a better plan for me than any plan I can devise. Let me learn humility and trust, knowing that from You alone comes everything I truly need. In Jesus' name, amen.

# DAY 4: THE PRACTICE OF FASTING

## SCRIPTURE READING

**"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning: and rend your heart and not your garments.' Now return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil. Who knows whether He will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him, even a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God? Blow a trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly." (Joel 2:12-15)**

## DEVOTIONAL

In this passage, the prophet Joel describes God's command to the rebellious Israelites. They should fast and seek Him, for God wants to deliver His people from their sins, and He commands them to fast in order to turn their wicked hearts back to Him.

Here's how the psalmist describes his own experience with fasting: **"When I wept in my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. Those who sit in the gate talk about me, and I am the song of the drunkards. But as for me, my prayer is to You, O Lord, at an acceptable time; O God, in the greatness of Your lovingkindness, answer me with Your saving truth. Deliver me from the mire, and do not let me sink; may I be delivered from my foes, and from the deep waters. May the flood of water not overflow me nor the deep swallow me up, nor the pit shut its mouth on me"** (Psalm 69:10-15).

As we see, when the psalmist came before God, he was dealing with the crisis of trouble from his enemies, and so he cried out with fasting. Others made fun of him, but he trusted in God.

Fasting is a powerful thing to do when it feels like your world is closing in. Fasting is prayer, it is praise, it is proclamation-it is hearing God's Word. If you feel trapped in your crisis or struggle, throw yourself on the mercy of God in humility while giving up the craving of your flesh so that you can focus on the greater need of your spirit.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*What is the basis for God accepting our sacrifice of fasting?

\*What current need in your life would be good to approach with prayer and fasting?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Father, sometimes it feels like my world is closing in around me. I feel lost and afraid and uncertain about the future. Help me learn that in such times I need to take You at Your word and trust You for the deliverance I need. In Jesus' name, amen.



# DAY 5: THE POWER OF PRAYER

## SCRIPTURE READING

**The Lord has heard my supplication, The Lord receives my prayer.** (Psalm 6:9)

## DEVOTIONAL

Prayer has been practiced, studied, written about, talked about and preached about by countless people in countless ways. Yet even so it remains an elusive element to most of us. In over four decades of ministry, I have encountered only a few who truly seem to grasp and understand prayer. For far too many people, even believers, prayer is like the national anthem before a sporting event. It gets the game going, but it has little-to-no relevance on what is happening on the field. It is merely an exercise of routine.

For example, when most of us pray before we eat, we don't really utilize our minds to do that because we say the same general things each time. Or when many of us pray before we go to bed at night, we simply recite a call for blessing and protection with a little bit of gratitude thrown in there for good measure. Prayer has become just a habit for far too many of us.

But prayer is powerful. Kingdom prayer is the divinely authorized methodology to access heavenly authority for earthly intervention. It is earth giving heaven permission to intervene in the reality down here with the manifestation of the spiritual reality up there. Heaven is waiting to be involved in our activities, and yet because we were given freedom-God does not force Himself on our situations. He waits for us to ask-to connect with Him in prayer.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*How can you make sure your prayers are more than just routine?

\*Why does God gift us the gift of prayer?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, may my prayers never be merely a routine or ritual. Remind me of the power of prayer and help me open my heart to You in honesty, integrity and authenticity. Let my prayers rise to You from the deepest parts of my heart into Your presence. In Jesus' name, amen.

# DAY 6: THE PRESENCE OF PRAYER

## SCRIPTURE READING

**Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.** (Psalm 46:10)

## DEVOTIONAL

God calls us to spend time with Him. Alone and one-on-one.

When Elijah took the initiative to stand for God in front of King Ahab, God took the initiative to tell Elijah to go to the brook. Elijah's work had just begun. Whenever God puts you in a situation where you need to find a place of solitude, you can know that He has something planned for you just beyond the horizon. He has something big in store for you. That's why He needs you to go away with Him and refresh, recharge and reconnect with Him. God will never send you to the brook to a time of solitude to waste your time. God's request for your special presence with Him is always strategically planned in order to accomplish a kingdom purpose.

After Elijah spent some time with the Lord, Scripture tells us that Elijah's brook dried up. What was that all about? God told him to go away to a brook and then dried up the brook. Have you ever felt like something similar happened to you? Whenever you are spending time alone with God and things start to become dry just know that it is time to move on and apply what you have gleaned in your time with God. God is getting ready to do a new thing.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*What are the things keeping you from spending time alone with God?

\*What can you expect to happen as a result of time spent with Him?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, how I long for time alone with You. I know that it is only when I put aside all the chaos of my life and bend my ear to hear You that I will find the help I need and the guidance to move forward in all You have for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

# DAY 7: DEVOTION TO GOD'S WORD

## SCRIPTURE READING

It is written, **"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."** (Matthew 4:4)

## DEVOTIONAL

When we sit down to a meal in a restaurant, we have to make choices. There are options available such as "comfort food," which are generally very tasty but high in calories and fat. Or there are options that are much better for us; food that our bodies can use to grow stronger and more healthy. We must choose. Are we going to eat a meal that gives us little more than a few moments of pleasure? Or a meal that truly nourishes our body?

This is the same choice Christians must make in regard to their spiritual sustenance. Are we going to settle for the earthly "food" our culture offers, or are we going to feast upon what God has provided for us in His Word?

Jesus Christ explicitly made a connection between spiritual health and the Word of God when He said, **"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God"** (Matthew 4:4). Given the essential part the Word plays in our spiritual growth, it is unfortunate today that the Bible has been reduced to a menu to be studied rather than a nourishing meal to be enjoyed.

When learning the Scriptures becomes merely an academic exercise, we can actually increase in biblical knowledge while regressing in spiritual understanding. Jesus told the people of His day that while they were diligent to search the Scriptures, their study didn't do them any good because it did not lead them to believe in Him (see John 5:39-40). The Bible is a book to be eaten and digested, not just read and understood (see Ezekiel 3:1-3). It is a feast offered to us by the one who knows exactly what we really need.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*What is your approach to the Bible? Do you go to it for information or for nourishment?

\*What can you do to make reading the Bible more of a priority in your life?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Father, I am so grateful that You have not left me to wonder about how I should live my life. In Your gracious goodness you have given me Your Word to teach me how to follow You in the way I should. Let me always nourish my soul on the gift of Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.



# DAY 8: SEEKING GOD FIRST

## SCRIPTURE READING

**But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.** (Matthew 6:33)

## DEVOTIONAL

What far too many Christians do is mix a little of God with a lot of the world. Is this something that you have done? Have you wound up experiencing less of God because His kingdom is not of this world? When you bring the world into the Word, you are asking the King to bless something that His Kingdom is not a part of, and He won't do it.

If you lose sight of the kingdom, God's perspective gets lost and you start focusing on the tangible and temporal things in life. When that happens, your judgment begins to be skewed and your decisions become short-sighted. Rather than living out your destiny and purpose, you may end up with wasted time, effort, energy and emotions.

Yet when God's kingdom is prioritized, you get to see heaven both rule and overrule in your life. You will witness God trump circumstances and people that you thought had the last word. Only God has the last word. You get to experience Him at a whole other level when you experience Him as King. You must seek the kingdom first, always making it the number one priority of your life.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*What does it mean to put God's kingdom first?

\*What areas of your life need to be realigned to God's kingdom agenda?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Father, I want to truly experience You as King in my life. Reveal to me where I am looking to the world's way rather than your way in my thoughts, decisions and actions. Help me to align all my life with Your Word so that I can benefit from the covering of Your covenant and kingdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

# DAY 9: BECOMING A KINGDOM-MINDED PERSON

## SCRIPTURE READING

**The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all.**  
(Psalm 103:19)

## DEVOTIONAL

As you seek to align your life underneath God's kingdom agenda, you are coming underneath His sovereign rule. Sovereignty refers to God's supremacy over all of His creation-visible and invisible. His rules are universal, absolute and comprehensive. God is accountable to no one.

Many people don't like or understand this word-sovereignty. But it is intrinsic within God's character and makeup. In Psalm 103:19, David wrote, **"The Lord has established His throne in the heavens; and His sovereignty rules over all."** In other words, God is not operating by anyone's permission. He sovereignly rules over each and every one of us. He sovereignly rules over you.

Psalm 115:3 tells us, **"Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases."** Embracing that truth is a vital part to living a successful and abundant life. Recognizing that God reigns above all can give you the confidence you need to trust Him in your day-to-day decisions. After all, He is in charge.

His claim of absolute sovereignty is the claim of perfect Deity. God alone has the right to make such a claim. Yet through His gift of His son, Jesus Christ, He has opened the door freely to you to commune with the One who sits high and lifted up over all.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*Is your life fully surrendered to the sovereignty of God?

\*What blessings come from surrendering to Him?

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Sovereign Lord, You have established Your throne and Your rule. You tell the sun to rise, the rain to fall, the grass to grow and the earth to rotate on its axis. Everything is dependent upon You. I want to honor You in my heart and in my choices in such a way that shows You I recognize Your kingdom rule over all. Enable me to do this today and each day. In Jesus' name, amen.*

# DAY 10: RESTORING LIFE

## SCRIPTURE READING

**The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry. He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" (Ezekiel 37:1-3)**

## DEVOTIONAL

Spiritual struggles place us in the valley of dry bones—a situation in which we experience helplessness. We feel as though our future is without hope. However, God has provided a way out.

We must be willing to listen to the Word of God. When in a dry place, a place of no hope and no apparent answer to life's dilemmas, we need to turn to God's Word, which is the beginning of the process for deliverance from disorder.

We must be willing to respond in obedience to the Word of God. Our willingness to act on what God has spoken continues this deliverance from our dryness.

We must be sensitive to the movement of God's Spirit. God's Word gives us order, but the Spirit gives life. The Holy Spirit provides the power to bring the truth of God's Word to fruition.

Friend, if you feel as if you're in a dry place or a valley, always remember that a valley is a mountain waiting to happen. The only way to get out of a valley is to go through it. Keep your eyes focused on Jesus, who can bring life and light into a dark and dry situation. He cares for you.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*What steps do you need to take when you are in a time of spiritual dryness?

\*What is God's remedy for hopelessness and helplessness?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Father, when I feel lost and alone in the valley of despair, bring to me the light of Your Word. Let me learn to listen, follow You in obedience, and always remain sensitive to the movement of Your Spirit. I pray You will bring me through. In Jesus' name, amen.

# DAY 11: THE GIFT OF GRACE

## SCRIPTURE READING

**For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

## DEVOTIONAL

What would you think if you went to buy a car and the salesperson said you either had to push the car everywhere you went or pay extra for an engine? You'd know something was wrong because cars come equipped with their own supply of power to get you where you're going. The engine is part of the purchase price of the car.

You do have a responsibility to turn on the ignition and steer, but your effort does not supply the power needed for the trip. When I see so many believers failing in their Christian life, living defeated lives day after day, month after month, and year after year, it soon becomes apparent they are trying to push their Christian lives. They don't realize that the power for the Christian life is already under the hood.

That power is the grace of God, His inexhaustible supply of goodness by which He does for us what we could never do for ourselves. Some of us live under the misconception that we have the power within us to pull off the Christian life. If that were true, we would be no different from a non-Christian who vigorously seeks to keep the Ten Commandments. It's not about our human effort.

God has supplied every true believer with a magnificent gift: His inexhaustible supply of goodness called grace. We can't earn it, we don't deserve it, and we can never repay it, but He has made it abundantly available for free. If Christians need to grasp any truth, it is grace.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- \*What is the source of our power to live a truly Christian life?
- \*How does grace change our perspective on living righteously?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Father, I know that if I have to depend on my own strength, I am in trouble. As hard as I might try, I can never live up to what You have called me to be. But with the power of Your grace, I can reach out and accept the goodness that Christ is working out within me. In Jesus' name, amen.

# DAY 12: CONSIDERING OTHERS NEEDS

## SCRIPTURE READING

**He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God?** (Micah 6:8)

## DEVOTIONAL

There is a strong biblical connection between our knowledge and relationship with God and our concern for the poor and the oppressed (Jeremiah 22:16; Matthew 25:40). Micah 6:8 reveals this, **"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"** We "do justice" in a humble relation to a just God as a natural reflection of His presence in our lives. Religion becomes authentic when it manifests itself in ministry to others in need.

The second most talked about subject in Scripture, after money, is the poor. More than three hundred verses directly relate to the treatment of the poor, strategies to aid the poor, God's intentions for the poor, and what our perspective should be toward the poor. God particularly cares about the poor because they are the most vulnerable to suffering from injustice.

Ultimately, doing justice fulfills the two greatest commandments given to us by Jesus—that of loving God and loving others (Matthew 22:37-40). Christ says, **"On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."** Both the content and meaning of the Law and Prophets were centered not only on one's relationship to God, but also on whether one was rightly related to his neighbor.

Thus, Jesus linked our attitude toward God (spiritual) with our attitude toward others (social). When asked who is my neighbor that I am to love, Jesus responded by telling the story of the good Samaritan, pointing out that your neighbor is the person whose need you see and whose need you are able to meet (Luke 10:26-37). Jesus concludes the story by exhorting us to love in like manner.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*Who in your life has needs that you can help meet?

\*What is Jesus' definition of being a good neighbor?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Father, teach me to be a person who works for justice, shows love and kindness to everyone around me, and walks humbly with You. Let me learn to pay attention to the needs of others and to become a person of compassion. In Jesus' name, amen.

# DAY13: WALKING BY THE SPIRIT

## SCRIPTURE READING

**But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.** (Galatians 5:16)

## DEVOTIONAL

The concept of walking by the Holy Spirit is similar to being filled with the Spirit, but the imagery of walking may make it easier to picture the ongoing nature of the Spirit's work. Walking is something we do every day, and we do it continually. Walking has three components we don't usually think about, but it is helpful to consider them when we're talking about our spiritual walk.

First of all, walking involves a destination. When you walk, you're going somewhere, even if it's just across the room. Walking by the Spirit involves a destination too because He is ever and always moving us toward a destination, which is God's glory. Jesus described the Holy Spirit's destination when He said of the Spirit, **"He will glorify Me"** (John 16:14). When you walk by the Spirit, you're going somewhere. The flesh is always seeking to move us in the other direction, toward that which pleases self in opposition to that which glorifies God, so it's important that we watch where we're walking.

Second, walking also requires dedication. Most people don't just take a few steps and then quit for the day. Anyone who does that won't get very far, because walking must continue if we are to make progress. It's like the Holy Spirit's filling, which must be renewed regularly. It must be ongoing.

A third component of walking is dependence. You have to put your weight down on one leg and then another to walk. Or if your legs aren't working properly, you have to depend on something or someone else to get you where you're going. Either way demands dependence.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*What is the destination of your life?

\*How dedicated are you to walking by God's Spirit instead of your own power?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, teach me to walk by Your Spirit. Instead of walking in the power of my own intelligence and strength, let me learn to depend on You every step of every day. In Jesus' name, amen.



# DAY 14: KINDNESS IN THE CULTURE

## SCRIPTURE READING

**Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?** (Romans 2:4)

## DEVOTIONAL

Because God is kind, He expects His people to be ambassadors of kindness. He doesn't just want you to be nice. He wants you to be kind.

Kindness is niceness on public display. As kingdom people we should be creating a different atmosphere in our culture. Our culture is spending a lot of time, energy, programs and money to try to make us kinder, but it's not working. It reminds me of the time we were dealing with a putrid smell coming out of the bathrooms at the church, and we couldn't figure out how to deal with it. It turned out that the solution was simple. The fans had been installed incorrectly and they were pushing the bad air out into the atmosphere, making it unpleasant for everyone.

It seems like the problem in our culture is that we've got too many people turning the wrong way, and they are creating chaos and vitriol. All the money and all the effort and all the programs won't change things unless we decide to turn in the right direction. In Philippians 2:3-8 we're told, **"Do nothing from selfish or empty conceit but with humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourselves. Do not merely look out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."**

If we could have that attitude in our interactions with others, we could become the ambassadors of kindness that the world so badly needs.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*Why is kindness so contagious?

\*What can you do to make the world a kinder place?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Father, You have shown Your kindness to me over and over again. Please help me learn how to show kindness toward others. By putting their needs above my own, let me truly become an ambassador of kindness in the world. In Jesus' name, amen.

# DAY15: WHY WE NEED CHURCH

## SCRIPTURE READING

**Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.** (Hebrews 10:25)

## DEVOTIONAL

Because of all the nature and animal programs on television, we can now observe the animal world up close and personal in a way that was not possible before. What's interesting is that a lot of these shows confirm what we already knew about the way many animals live.

For instance, God has designed most animals to live in a community, either for procreation, protection, raising their young, or some combination of all three. These animals seldom reach their maximum potential if they are separated from the group. They also become easier prey for predators like lions, who try to panic and scatter the herd and then pick off the straggler or the baby animal that is out there alone and vulnerable to attack.

The concept of community is an important principle both in the physical and the spiritual worlds. God designed Christians to be born, protected, and raised in the context of a community known as the church. The Bible says that our enemy, the devil, "prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). One of the easiest people to devour is the Christian who is no longer functioning within the nurturing context of the church.

The church is the most exciting entity that God has placed on this earth, precisely because it is the life-support system for individual Christians. Just as no one expects a baby to grow on its own, God never meant for us to grow and develop spiritually in isolation from other believers. Spiritual growth is a group project, which should be good news to you because it means you don't have to do it all yourself. Christians grow best in a healthy family context where they are surrounded by spiritual fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters to help them.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*Why is it so important for Christians to meet together and function as a community?

\*What attitudes do you have toward church that may require some adjustment?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Father, always remind me I am part of the family of God, with brothers and sisters who need my help and encouragement, and from whom I can gain the strength I need to live faithfully for You. Help me make my church a priority. In Jesus' name, amen.

# DAY16: JESUS' PRAYER

## SCRIPTURE READING

**I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.** (John 17:20-21)

## DEVOTIONAL

Jesus prayed this prayer for unity just hours before He was arrested and crucified. It was foremost on His mind as the end drew near. But today we are far from living up to what He prayed would happen.

Division roars louder now than it has in many years past. Everywhere we turn, it seems a new group rises up against another. We are a world divided by a multiplicity of ideas, values, beliefs, preferences, dreams and expectations. And yet God calls us to live in unity. As the apostle Paul states, **"If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men"** (Romans 12:18).

As kingdom followers of Jesus Christ, we have been chosen to model unity, love and peace as an alternative to the ways of a world that stands divided. Yet it seems that division often slithers its way into our churches and Christian organizations. Satan's overall strategies rarely change-whatever he can divide, he can conquer (Mark 3:24). He accomplishes this division through lies, deception and destruction (John 10:10).

Unity is to be our defining marker as kingdom disciples. Jesus said our unity will show the world that God sent Him and that He has loved us as God loves Him. Oneness is not an emotion. Unity is not a song. It is a strategy, responsibility and approach to advancing God's kingdom agenda and seeing His rule manifested on earth. To live divided (whether at home, work or church or in our communities, nation or world) is to bow to Satan rather than the one true God. It is to relinquish our spiritual authority on the altar of discord.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*Why do you think Jesus put such an emphasis on unity?

\*What can you do to help bring greater unity in your own personal world?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, you prayed that we might all be one, showing unity of vision and purpose. But our divisions seem so deep and so impenetrable. Please show us the way to greater unity, a unity based upon love and truth and faithfulness to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

# DAY 17: ACCEPTING ONE ANOTHER

## SCRIPTURE READING

**For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace.** (Ephesians 2:14-15)

## DEVOTIONAL

Despite our different backgrounds, histories and preferences, God has asked us to live, love, worship and work together while operating in unity as part of the family of God. In order to do that, we must embrace Paul's admonition to "accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God" (Romans 15:7). And we must do more than simply recite this verse. The many rifts among us reveal that precious few of us have put flesh on these words.

We are called as brothers and sisters in Christ to accept one another just as Christ accepted us. Accepting one another is critical to our ability to celebrate and enjoy the freedom that we have in the Lord. It is one of the first steps we must take in order to overcome our divisions. Paul didn't say we have to agree with one another. He said we have to accept one another. Yes, even those whom we do not like or prefer.

Keep in mind, God has not asked us to accept all behaviors. Sin is sin, and we are to oppose it and not associate with sinful situations. However, we have been called to love and accept all people as fellow human beings made in the divine image of God.

Much of our division and infighting occurs due to differences in personal values, opinions and preferences. But each of us has been gifted a free will by God to live life's journey. To divide over this gift is a shame. Likewise, to deny someone else his or her freedom to live in this gift is hypocritical. Unity begins with acceptance. It starts with allowing each person to be personally responsible for themselves and accountable to God-not to you.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*Am I showing an attitude of love and acceptance even toward those who are different from me?

\*What does it mean to accept someone else as Christ as accepted you?

## CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord, let me learn to accept others just as You have accepted me. Not on the basis of living up to all the standards, but through showing grace, mercy and understanding. Teach me to pray for others rather than criticize them. In Jesus' name, amen.

# DAY 18: A KINGDOM FOCUS

## SCRIPTURE READING

**Set your mind on things above, not on the things that are on earth.** (Colossians 3:2)

## DEVOTIONAL

Finding victory in your spiritual battles comes down to one foundational thing: your perspective. What are you looking at? Are you staring at what you can see in front of you? Or are you looking from the perspective of "heavenly places." Unless you learn to operate from up there, you will succumb to your challenges down here.

Because of who your enemy is and how his opposing kingdom operates, it is essential that you learn to think and live from a spiritual mindset. Why? Because if you don't, it will be as if you are trying to fight a land battle in Ohio from Alaska. You can strategize all you want in Alaska, and even equip yourself to wage war-but neither your strategies nor your weapons will be effective because you can't accurately size up the enemy from that distance.

Similarly, unless you keep your mind set on spiritual things, you won't recognize Satan's agenda when you see it, and therefore, you won't be able to wage victorious spiritual warfare. You need to learn to put the spiritual ahead of the physical because your real battle is against a kingdom that seeks to dominate you spiritually. Satan knows that if he can get control of your mind, he can dictate your actions. So, to wage victorious warfare in the heavenly places, you must set your mind on Christ and His truth.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*What is the source of your power to fight your spiritual battles?

\*Where should you keep your focus if you want to experience victory?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, help me to keep my eyes always focused on You, and teach me to see things from Your perspective rather than my own. Let me be bold to engage the enemy of my soul through the power that comes from having the mind of Christ and the Word of God. In Jesus' name, amen.

# DAY 19: THE WEAPON OF THANKFULNESS

## SCRIPTURE READING

**In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.** (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

## DEVOTIONAL

Just like any effective military commander, Satan has a battle plan. One way he can defeat you is by distracting you. He tries to take your focus off of the truth and put it on what you see and experience instead. In this way, he will often encourage you to complain, gripe or even give up. As he did with Eve in the garden, Satan wants you to dismiss the value of the trees you have permission to eat and enjoy and get you fixated on the one you can't. He wants you to forget all of God's blessings and focus on what you believe to be your lack. He tries to divert your gaze from God's goodness because he knows the only way to defeat you is through deception.

But God is not bound by smoke and mirrors, or even by what you plainly see in front of you. He has already won this battle. For you to realize the fruit of His victory you need to employ a strategy of giving thanks. Had Eve chosen to be grateful for the numerous trees in the garden rather than just lusting for the one she did not have permission to eat, Satan's scheme would not have worked as it did. This is because a complaining spirit produces death in a variety of ways, mainly through bringing about envy and wrong desires. This contributes to diminishing your ability to experience God's promise of the abundant life. Death can show up as the death of a dream, relationship, career, virtue or in any number of areas.

Like throwing water on the wicked witch in Oz, gratitude and thanksgiving will destroy Satan. Use this weapon wisely and frequently to grasp hold of the victory that is yours.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*How can you change your attitude from complaining to giving thanks?

\*Why does thankfulness work as a weapon against Satan?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I am so grateful for everything You have done for me and in me. My heart is full of thanksgiving. Let me learn to always remember to give you thanks every day. May it be the tool that defeats the power of Satan in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.



# DAY 20: LIVING ON PURPOSE

## SCRIPTURE READING

**God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:27-28)**

## DEVOTIONAL

From the very beginning of creation, God has made each of us with a purpose to be fulfilled. You can take an important step on the path toward purpose in your own life when you realize that you exist for God and that He does not exist for you. God loves doing things for you, but the reason you get up in the morning is to fulfill His purpose for your life. He has a plan for you, a destiny with your name on it.

God saved you not only so you can go to heaven (which is wonderful enough!) but also so He can fulfill His purpose through you on earth. Friend, if you truly want to discover and live out the full power and meaning of God's purpose in your life, you must stop thinking of God as a vending machine and let Him be the central focus in your life.

If you want to find your purpose, find God. If you want to get close to your purpose, get close to God. When you get close to God, you get close to the One who knows the plans He has for you-good plans for a future and a hope.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*How can you discover your purpose in life?

\*Are you ready to commit yourself to living out God's purpose for you?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God, let me see anew the purposes You have for me. Let me be dedicated to fulfilling them with Your help and Your power guiding me. Draw me close enough to hear You whisper that purpose in my heart. In Jesus' name, amen.

# DAY 21: PRAYING GOD'S NAMES

## SCRIPTURE READING

**God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus shall you say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14)**

## DEVOTIONAL

Learning about God's names that are found in Scripture allows us to learn more about who He is. His names teach us some important things about Him. We learn about His love, might, strength, mercy, forgiveness, grace, rule and a multitude of other expressions of who He is. These attributes show up in the many names by which He is known. And they remind us that He is there for us. Whatever Your need, God has a name to meet it. In God's names are found all that is needed for you to live your life to the fullest (John 10:10). He is your rescuer, redeemer, counselor, friend and more.

Praying these names is a powerful way to pray as you continue your lifestyle of fasting and prayer throughout the year. To call on God's name in prayer is to call on the character and attributes which that particular name represents. There is power in His name. As you learn to align your life under His name, you will tap into His power.

There is similar power in the names of Jesus. He is the comprehensive statement, reflection and manifestation of God. He is sufficient for all of life. Now, I don't want you to misunderstand and assume that fixing your eyes on Jesus means you won't have any challenges. No, it doesn't mean you won't have any problems. But it does mean that the crucifixion of Friday will become the resurrection of Sunday in your own life.

So I invite you to explore the names of God and the names of Jesus: the Creator (Genesis 1), the Healer (Psalm 41:3), the Almighty (Psalm 80:19), the Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:6), the Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6), the Good Shepherd (John 10:11), the Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8), and so many more. You might want to read my books, *The Power of Gods Names* and *The Power of Jesus' Names* to learn more.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

\*Which of the names of God are especially precious to you?

\*Why is so much power experienced through the names of God and the names of Jesus?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, show me who You are through the names by which You have revealed Yourself. I am blessed to be able to understand anew Your strength, power and love as I see the names by which You have chosen to be identified. Let me learn to identify with those names and know You better. In Jesus' name, amen.

## SOURCES OF THE DEVOTIONS

1. The Importance of Fasting
2. The Importance of Fasting
3. The Importance of Fasting
4. The Importance of Fasting
5. Kingdom Prayer, ch. 1
6. Kingdom Prayer, ch. 8
7. Life Essentials, ch. 8
8. Kingdom Agenda Devotional, ch. 11
9. Kingdom Agenda Devotional, ch. 12
10. A Moment with God
11. God Himself, ch. 9
12. Kingdom Agenda Devotional, ch. 306
13. Life Essentials, ch. 7
14. December 12, 2021 sermon
15. Life Essentials, ch. 10
16. Stronger Together, introduction
17. Stronger Together, ch. 2
18. Prayers for Victory in Spiritual Warfare, ch. 2
19. Prayers for Victory in Spiritual Warfare, ch. 3
20. A Moment with God
21. Adapted from the introduction to Praying Jesus' Names