

PRAYER & FASTING



2022 Devotional

FIREPLACE CHURCH

# FASTING GUIDE

THERE ARE MANY VIABLE APPROACHES TO FASTING. WE ARE ALL CAPABLE OF DIFFERENT LEVELS OF FASTING AND ALL CONVICTED TO APPROACH IT DIFFERENTLY. BELOW YOU WILL FIND SOME EXAMPLES OF FASTS THAT YOU CAN DO FOR THE NEXT 21 DAYS. WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO ASK THE LORD WHAT HE WOULD DESIRE OF YOU IN THIS SEASON.

Choosing a fast:

Fasting is an invitation from the Lord for us to engage with Him in a heightened way. There are many different kinds of fasts to choose from. Here are several ways you can participate:

- 1-day fast each week for the entire day
- 3-day liquid fast
- 10-day Daniel fast or liquid fast
- 21-day Daniel fast, liquid fast, or 1 meal per day

Common Fasts:

- Water fast: Abstaining from all forms of food and drink other than water
- Juice fast: Abstaining from all solid food and only drinking juice and water
- Daniel fast: Eating only vegetables and abstaining from meats, sweets, etc.
- Selective meal fast: Abstaining from certain meals and snacks throughout the day and only eating a reduced amount during a single designated mealtime

Regardless of the type of fast you choose to participate in, it's important to pray about what God is leading you to do, as well as consult a doctor and educate yourself if you have any questions or health concerns.

We encourage you to set aside some of the comforts that consume your time and spend extra time seeking God's face.

Here are a few comforts that you can abstain from:

- Social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok)
- Entertainment (movies, TV, YouTube)
- Buying material items (instead, donate and give to the poor)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank)

Scripture teaches us that something unique and powerful happens when believers gather together in faith to seek God and cry out to Him with one voice. Here are some ways to engage through prayer and worship:

- Attend at least 1 prayer meeting per week
- Set morning alarm 30 minutes early to pray

During these 21 days, carve out significant time to spend reading the Bible. Here are a few reading challenges:

- Start and complete a 21-Day YouVersion Reading Plan
- Start 1-Year Full Bible Reading Plan
- Read the entire New Testament in 21 days
- Read the entire Bible in 21 days

# Day 1 - FASTING

## VERSE

*Matthew 6:16-18*

*"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*

These words about fasting were a part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. It is important to consider this because throughout this message He was giving, He highlighted many things that were important to life as a believer. His teaching on fasting does not focus on reasons for fasting or how we must do a specific type of fast, follow certain procedures, and pray a certain number of times for our fast to "work." Jesus thought it more important to make sure that people weren't just fasting for the attention or applause of others. This is why he said that we shouldn't make it obvious to others when we are fasting, because fasting isn't about us. Fasting is really about being close with God. We often see a lot of breakthroughs and changes in our lives, and the lives of those around us, during this time because we've positioned ourselves to encounter God. When we seek nearness with Him, we hear Him more clearly and pray things that are aligned with His heart.

We see this dynamic also exemplified in our relationships with our community. We get to know one another by spending time together, actively living life together, and sharing about our experiences. Deepening a relationship requires active engagement. When we are regularly in close proximity to our friends, we begin to learn their desires, motivations, and character. This gives us the ability to converse freely with them and opens us up to hear any insight they possess for our lives, and the same is true with the Lord.

As we begin this fast, we have a fantastic opportunity to cultivate a rhythm of reading the Word and spending time in the presence of God. Fasting can feel so much more difficult if we are not actively choosing to supplement this time by being with God—make sure that you have a plan for your time with Him during the fast!

## PRAYERS

Lord, I choose to position my heart nearer to you. During this time of fasting, I ask that you would also draw close to me so that I may hear you clearly and grow more and more aligned with your heart.

## ACTIONS

If you haven't already, make a fasting plan. It should include what you're fasting and when, whether it is eating an altered diet, giving up a meal, or fasting something other than food. You should also include your plan for spending time with God. Write it down! You can also share with a friend what you are planning for this time so they can help keep you accountable.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

Isaiah 58



# Day 2 LISTENING

## VERSE

1 Samuel 3:9-10

*9 And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10 Then the Lord came and stood, and called as at the other times: "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."*

The Bible is full of references to the word of the Lord coming to His prophets. Rather than leaving our forefathers in the faith on a pedestal, let's acknowledge that we are part of the inheritance God promised them. We are the joy set before Christ, and we were created for an ever-increasing relationship with God. We are invited into two sided communication with God throughout our lives.

When we hear Him, He doesn't always say what we're expecting. He has compassionate things to say about people who irritate you. He has high hopes for your least favorite politician. He isn't as obsessed with our failures as we imagine. Transformation and healing happen inside His love, and He is a safe place for our hearts, even in pain. When there is correction "a bruised reed He will not break, and a faintly burning wick He will not quench" (Isaiah 42). He will say whatever He will say to you in the way that you can receive it. And just as God led the Israelites as a fire during the dark night and a cloud during the day, when they could see more clearly, there will be variances in how He reveals Himself, according to your needs. When Elijah was waiting to hear from God (1 Kings 19) he searched in the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, and he was not rebuked for it when the Lord's voice came as a whisper. He'd been operating as a prophet for some time, and he was not wrong to listen for God in those things. God just wasn't in them, that time. Elijah was being attentive.

Purpose your heart to encounter God and listen. It's easy to fall into the trap of believing that our interactions must be completely initiated by Him, because so often when our faith takes an increasingly experiential bent, it is necessarily dramatic. If it feels presumptuous to seek a meaningful encounter with God that isn't already in process. Know that all of your righteous desires come from Him in the first place. You wouldn't and couldn't even want to love Him without His invitation, so your desire to listen to Someone who has such a different outlook than you is not only welcome, but also His idea.

The closeness you seek with the Lord is something you can align with but not manufacture. Some things that can be helpful for encounter and conversation are:

- \*Revisiting a previous encounter
- \*Asking Jesus what He has to say about you
- \*Pray-reading scripture that resonates with your heart
- \*Asking hard questions about life
- \*Asking God for a Bible passage
- \*Asking for dreams and visions
- \*Drawing or collaging while praying
- \*Listening to worship music that you enjoy
- \*Refusing to beat yourself up if you feel blocked
- \*Asking the Holy Spirit what He has to say about Jesus

## PRAYERS

Holy Spirit, I desire to listen. Right now I choose to position my heart and wait expectantly to hear you. Reveal your voice in a new way.

## ACTIONS

Ask the Lord to reveal His voice in a way that is new to you. Make your request specific or open ended, being open to noticing and encountering His character. If you're used to hearing from Him in your dreams, perhaps it's time to expand your vision for hearing from Him through any one of your five physical senses. If you're not in the habit of (consciously) hearing from Him, many people find dreams to be a safe place to venture into.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

Psalm 29

# DAY 3 — WORSHIP

## VERSE

John 4:19-24

*19The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. 20"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." 21Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. 22"You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

When you think about worship, what comes to mind? Your favorite song, a specific worship leader, your church?

In this passage we read a portion of a conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well. They begin discussing worship and the differing beliefs of the Samaritans and Jews. According to Judaism the Temple Mount of Moriah in Jerusalem was the correct place to worship, whereas Samaritans believed Mount Gerizim to be the right place. Jesus corrects her, explaining that, with his coming, the worship location no longer mattered. The location and traditions were not the important part. What matters now is that we worship in spirit and truth.

But what does that look like? It can be easy to get distracted by style, aesthetics, location, ect. Or to passively participate in a worship service, to sing and listen while neglecting to engage our spirit and soul with the Lord. In John 14, Jesus tells us that He is the way, the TRUTH, and the life, and that no one comes to the Father except through Him. When we engage our hearts with scriptural truth through worship we are also engaging the person of truth, which draws us nearer to God.

The external expressions and locations for worship can be nice, but they aren't the most important part of worship-lavishing our adoration upon Christ is. However, if you've never explored different mediums for expressing your worship, consider exploring that today. Many of us are most familiar with singing as worship, but have you ever tried art, dancing, writing poetry, photography? There can be beauty in each form of expression as they facilitate vulnerability in different ways as we engage our hearts with God.

## PRAYERS

Jesus, I desire to be a true worshiper of you. I thank you that my worship of You is not limited by location or style. Teach me how to engage my spirit with your truth. Increase my sensitivity to your Spirit and truth. And through your Spirit, reveal truth to my heart.

## ACTIONS

Ask the Lord to show you a scriptural truth about His nature, character, or sovereignty. And ask Him to reveal a situation in your life where that truth applies. Sit with that truth and situation. Begin to acknowledge and thank the Lord for who His is and how He is moving according to the truth. Once your heart is engaged, express that worship through speaking, writing, singing, dancing, art, etc. Ex: Try drawing a rainbow as you praise God for His many promises in your life. Sing out a truth and remember that God rejoices over you with singing. Write prophesying the truth of God into your life.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

John 14:6

-Amanda

## VERSE

Ezra 7:10

*10For Ezra had firmly resolved to study the Law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.*

In this passage, we see that Ezra resolved to do three things: study the Law, practice (or live out) the Law and to teach the Law to others—it is important to note that the latter two would have been ineffective or even impossible without the former (study). Before we dive into the implications of this passage, let's examine Ezra's context. He lived in a time where Israel's worship of God had been interrupted for several generations due to the Babylonian Exile. They were reclaiming their homeland and reinstating the worship of God, but they didn't know God's Word well enough to even start out correctly. Ezra is sent by the Persian King Artaxerxes, because Artaxerxes was aware of Ezra's reputation as "a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses" (Ez 7:6). Despite already being considered an expert in the Law of Moses, "Ezra had firmly resolved to study the Law of the Lord." Ezra could have just coasted on his past studies, but instead he "firmly resolved to study" and doubled down on his readiness to teach and live God's word. The result of all his studying and teaching the Law to God's people, is that he and Nehemiah led God's people into a time of spiritual renewal in chapters 8-12 of Nehemiah.

Have you ever had a skill or a knowledge base that you allowed to experience some level of disuse? Chances are when you came back around to that skill it wasn't exactly how you left it. You probably experienced some level of atrophy. Several years ago I got back into the gym after a six-year absence, and let me tell you, it was humbling!

Just like you and I cannot expect to be highly proficient in areas of our life that we allow to collect dust, we will neither be proficient in teaching others God's Word nor living it out, if we do not firmly resolve to study. If Ezra, who was already considered to be an expert in his generation, still felt the need to study God's Word, how much more should you and I double down in our study and prepare ourselves for effectiveness in the Kingdom! You and I live in a time very similar to Ezra in the sense that there are people around us who are Biblically illiterate, some of who genuinely want to seek the Lord. Let's be like Ezra and help prepare the way.

## PRAYERS

Lord help us study Your Word with passion and excellence. As Ezra led a spiritual renewal, help me to prepare to lead in spiritual renewal, my spiritual renewal first and then others!

## ACTIONS

Ask God to show you a scripture passage, book of the Bible or character of the Bible to study. Read the passage and its context at least twice. Then find a reliable commentary for supplemental information. Begin to write down the things you are learning, and like Ezra, incorporate them into your life and teach others. Also, consider checking out our one year Bible reading plan.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

2 Tim:2:14-16

-Pastor Alvin

Day 4  
STUDY

# Day 5 MEDITATION

## VERSE

Psalm 119:97-104

*97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. 98 Your commands are always with me and make me wiser than my enemies. 99 I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. 100 I have more understanding than the elders, or I obey your precepts. 101 I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word. 102 I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me. 103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! 104 I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.*

The Psalmist here is expressing how he meditates on the law, or the Word of God, all day. He comments on the wisdom he has gained, the understanding that he has. His meditation keeps him on the right path and obeying God's Word. He also points out that God's Word is sweeter than honey. The Word guides us, gives us wisdom beyond our years, and allows us to walk in the path that God lays out before us. Meditation on the Word helps us to really know and understand what God is trying to say. Meditation in the Christian context looks very different from the understanding of meditation that we see in society. For Christians, meditation is the process of thinking about the Word, sometimes committing it to memory, but really thinking through what God is trying to say through the authors of Scripture. It is slowing down and allowing a space for God to encounter you inwardly in a new way. Through this, we will hear from God and center our lives around His Word.

How do we learn? When we're trying to learn a concept, we spend time with it and practice it in different ways to commit it to memory and truly understand it. Most of the time just memorizing something doesn't help with actual understanding. We have to really process the concept in order to develop a deep understanding in a way that will impact us.

Incorporating meditation can change our relationship with God. When we truly know God's Word, we will walk closer in relationship with Him, honor others over ourselves, and live our lives in a manner worthy of our Lord. Along with studying and praying, meditation helps us fold God's word into our hearts so we are marked by Him.

## PRAYERS

Thank you, God, for your Word. Your words are sweet and nourish my soul. This day, I choose to engage with and open my heart to the truths You have given me through scripture. Guide me as I seek to know You. Let your Word sink into my heart deeply and impact me for years to come.

## ACTIONS

We are all going to meditate on Psalm 37:5. Often positioning yourself during your meditation can help with centering down your mind. You can sit with your palms up in a receiving position, kneel, or lie prostrate on the ground. I personally sit with my palms up in a receiving position during meditation. Read the verse through until you can remember it, then close your eyes and continue to think about this word, all that it means, and as Mary said, store it up in your heart.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

Philippians 4:4-9



## Day 6 GUIDANCE

### VERSE

Acts 13:1-4

1 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. 4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

In Acts 13, a group of believers were given guidance by way of the Holy Spirit. What is very interesting about the Holy Spirit's guidance in this passage, is that it was given corporately. In a group dynamic of worship and fasting, the Holy Spirit began speaking collectively, in a way that the group was able to discern the same thing, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." They were so convinced by what they heard, that when Paul and Barnabas were sent out, verse 4 reads "being sent out by the Holy Spirit"—notice it doesn't say sent out by the Church of Antioch.

Oftentimes when modern believers think about being led by the Holy Spirit, we associate it with God's direction for us as individuals. For instance "I feel that He is leading me to individually do such and such," as opposed to "we feel like He is leading us to..." Maybe it's a product of the high value our culture places on independence, or maybe we have never seen healthy interdependence modeled. Whatever the cause, when we seek God's direction purely independently, we are cutting ourselves off from the manifold wisdom of God. His wisdom is expressed through the multitude of gifts, personalities, and experiences He has sown into His sons and daughters.

Scripture tells us that we are a body with many parts, and we need the whole body to function properly. This applies to hearing the Lord's direction as well. Oftentimes during these fasts, the Lord speaks guidance to our church, but it is never just to one or two people hearing from Him. Sometimes His message to a body works similarly to a family assembling a jigsaw puzzle. As different family members notice details on puzzle pieces, themes, and shapes, they collectively begin snapping them together to form a complete picture.

As a part of this spiritual family, will you do your part to seek guidance from God? Help us discern what the Lord is saying to us. Just like in Acts 13, let's gather to fast, pray, and worship Him.

### PRAYERS

Holy Spirit, use me to help receive guidance, not just for me, but for our spiritual family. Give me the boldness and articulation to share what I hear you saying to us.

### ACTIONS

Attend a Kindle Night with an openness to hearing from God for the body. Reach out and share what you are hearing.

### ADDITIONAL READINGS

Acts 16:6-10, 2 Corinthians 2:12

-Pastor Alvin



# DAY 7 – PRAYER

## VERSE

Isaiah 59:1

*1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear.*

Reading it by itself, Isaiah 59:1 is a powerful stand-alone statement about prayer. It states that God hears you and can respond with salvation. But if you read the rest of chapter 59, the context provided deepens the application. Verses 2- 16 paint a pretty bleak situation; Israel has devolved into a complete sinful failure, and God is keenly aware of it. Yet His ear isn't "so dull that it cannot hear" them. He still desires to rescue them, even though they have failed Him massively. In verses 17-21 He states that He will save them Himself because "He saw that there was no one and was amazed that there was not one to intercede." Ultimately, Israel needed a Redeemer, Jesus, to come rescue them from their sin.

You may be thinking to yourself, "Great, Jesus is our hero and rescues us in the midst of our sin and failure, but I thought the topic of this devotion was prayer." You are right, on both counts! Jesus will always be the hero of our prayer life. The whole reason you and I can live in a covenant relationship with God, is Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross!

Listen to what Isaiah 59:21 has to say about the benefits of having a covenant relationship with God, "As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the Lord: "My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth..."

You and I have a Heavenly Father who not only hears us when we pray, but He empowers our prayer through His Holy Spirit and even gives us words to pray when we don't know what to pray (Rom 8:26, Isaiah 59:21). Even if your situation is as bleak and dysfunctional as the Israeli people of Isaiah's day, you are not hopeless. A rescuer is coming. Pray! Whether it's the biggest and most important issue in your life or a much smaller and seemingly insignificant matter, today pray about it with the confidence that "the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear."

## PRAYERS

God, I thank you that You are a God who hears and saves me. No circumstance is too big or so broken that You cannot repair it. I ask You to come and save me—You are my rescuer and redeemer.

## ACTIONS

Make a list of a few things you want to continue to pray about during the 21-Days of Prayer and Fasting.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

Rom 8:26, Isaiah 59

-Pastor Alvin

# Day 8

# THANKFULNESS

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## VERSE

Jonah 2:7-10

*7 While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, And my prayer came to You, Into Your holy temple. 8 Those who are followers of worthless idols Abandon their faithfulness, 9 But I will sacrifice to You With a voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the Lord." 10 Then the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.*

Typically when we think about Jonah we think about his rebellion or his melodramatic whining. He's not exactly the poster boy for thankfulness; however, thankfulness is a part of his story. To set the stage, Jonah has been commissioned by God to deliver a prophetic message calling for repentance to his enemies, the Ninevites; he has overtly rebelled against God, putting the lives of himself, his shipmates, and all of Nineveh in danger; and he's been swallowed by a giant fish and has now been sitting in its belly for roughly 72 hours.

It is at this point that Jonah finally begins to pray. In his prayer to the Lord, Jonah recounts how his head was wrapped with seaweed, the waves crashed continually over him, as he slipped into the depths of the sea to die, and the Lord sent him a great fish--a vessel designed to not only withstand, but thrive in, the dark depths of the ocean (Jonah 2:3-6). And a beautiful thing happens here--Jonah begins to commit himself to offering his thanksgiving to God as sacrificial worship. And immediately in the story, God commands the fish to spit Jonah onto land. When Jonah diverts his focus from his miserable circumstances, albeit self-inflicted, and begins to thank the Lord, God changes Jonah's perspective and enables him to move forward with the calling God placed in his life.

Have you ever felt like you were encompassed to the point of death, bound in your circumstances so you can't see an escape, and you need the Lord to save you? Or maybe you have your own metaphorical whale and can feel the grace of God saving you, but things are dark, messy, and confusing. Try offering your thanks to God.

Thankfulness shifts your perspective. Sometimes in life we suffer, and our circumstances feel devastatingly hard. But the Lord's nature and faithfulness to us never changes. Your earthly circumstances may not be changing as quickly as you want them to, but you can still enter His gates with thanksgiving in your heart (Psalm 100:4). We don't always get to choose our circumstances, but we can choose how our heart responds to the Lord in the midst of those circumstances. We can sit in hopelessness, accusation, or bitterness. Or we can choose to offer a sacrifice to the Lord with a voice of thanksgiving. And when we choose thankfulness, our perspective shifts and the Lord reminds us of His sovereignty and steadfast love.

## PRAYERS

Lord, thank you for your sovereignty in my life. Thank you for your goodness and your faithfulness to rescue my soul from the depths of despair. Help me to choose to offer a sacrifice of thankfulness daily.

## ACTIONS

Pick one circumstance in your life right now that feels a bit like Jonah in the whale. Ask God to reveal three aspects of His character or ways He is moving in that circumstance for which you can be thankful. Thank Him.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

1 Thessalonians 5:18, Psalm 100:4, Hebrews 12:28, 1 Samuel 2:1-2

-Amanda

# DAY 9

## Forgiveness

### VERSE

Ephesians 4:32

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

What comes to your mind when you hear the word forgiveness? If you have walked through difficult relationships or trials this word may ring bittersweet. We all love the idea of forgiveness when we are in need of it, but it doesn't always seem as attractive when we are the one who has been wronged. When the sting goes deep, it can be difficult to forgive. We can be tempted to stew over it and grow resentful, and it can allow the enemy a foothold for negative thought patterns. Despite the difficulty of forgiving, the repercussions of unforgiveness can be detrimental to our relationship with God and others.

In our humanity we often question why we should forgive someone who has wronged us, especially when they don't come knock at our door and confess their sin and ask us for forgiveness. We may feel we are justified in withholding forgiveness because they haven't done anything to deserve it. However this scripture reminds us that God calls us to forgive, not because the other person is deserving, but because in Christ God forgave us. We owed a debt we could never repay, and God removed it by the costly blood of His Son. In light of this He asks us to forgive others for their wrongdoings, both small and great.

He showed the greatest act of love by laying His life down so we could experience forgiveness, and He calls us also to live a life that is marked by forgiveness toward others. He led the way in displaying forgiveness in the midst of the greatest trial on Calvary when He spoke the words, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing," (Luke 23:34). There's no doubt it can feel difficult to forgive, but Jesus doesn't ask us to do something He didn't first show us how to do. Even in His greatest hour of trial He spoke forth words of forgiveness toward those who were crucifying Him. He will also give us grace to forgive others as we have been forgiven.

Unforgiveness festers into anger and bitterness that will weigh us down in our walk with the Lord and our relationships with others. We can trust that when we choose to obey Him by forgiving, He will be faithful to bless our obedience and bring healing to our hearts and our relationships with others.

### PRAYERS

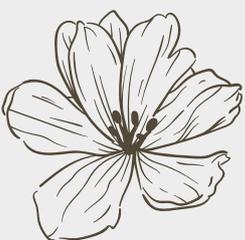
Lord Jesus, show me any areas of my life where I may be withholding forgiveness from someone. (Pause to listen.) Help me to forgive them from the heart. Today, I choose to forgive (Insert name). I forgive them for (list whatever things come up in your heart.) Lord, bless them and draw them closer to you.

### ACTIONS

Reflect on God's forgiveness. Ask Him to help you to walk in forgiveness toward others. If we notice anger, resentment, or negative feelings toward someone, these may be signs that we need to take time to ask God to help us forgive them from the heart.

### ADDITIONAL READINGS

Matthew 6:12-15, Proverbs 17:9, Matthew 18:21-22, 1 John 1:9, Matthew 11:25



## VERSE

Romans 12:2

*2Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (NLT)*

Years ago, hearing the word, "repentance" would conjure intimidating images of approaching an angry God who was just waiting for me to get my act together. I would profusely apologize and then promise I wouldn't mess up like that again. Unsurprisingly, this never brought about effective change in my life. This idea of repentance finally changed when someone helped reframe my thinking to understand that repentance is not scary, but an opportunity to have a greater connection with God.

In the Greek, the word repentance means to change the way you think. It's having a complete shift or renewing of how you perceive something. You aren't going to stop an unhealthy and sinful behavior long-term without first addressing how you think about it. This is seen in Romans 12:2, "but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think." So how will God transform us? It is through changing our thoughts (attitudes, core beliefs, and values). For example, if you struggle with gossiping, you will probably continue to gossip, unless you're able to reframe the way you think about people--realizing that every person has value in God's eyes. Merely trying to stop the behavior will be difficult, but once you allow God to transform your heart toward people you will begin to see results.

This change in thinking comes by drawing close to God and allowing Him to pinpoint areas that need revision. David prayed this in Psalms 139:23. He said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." In this verse, David asked God to address his thinking and to make him aware of areas that God was offended by.

Repentance is a partnership with God. We come to Him in humility and He partners with us to bring us toward truth and transformation. So repentance is more than apologizing to God for our behavior, it's an opportunity to have God show us our faulty ways of thinking and to replace them with His truth. God wants us closer to Him and to look more like Him. Now when I think of repentance, I imagine God being excited because I'm drawing close to Him and allowing Him to transform me into His image.

## PRAYERS

Holy Spirit, examine my thoughts, attitudes, and core beliefs. Are there any areas You want to bring transformation and healing? Holy Spirit, lead me to a scripture to bring truth to this area.

## ACTIONS

As the Holy Spirit reveals an area in need of transformation and healing, ask God if there are any actions for which you need to ask forgiveness. And soak in the truth of scripture that brings transformation.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

Psalms 139:23



Repentance  
DAY 10



# Day 11

## CONFESSING SCRIPTURE

### VERSE

John 8:31-32

*31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (NASB)*

I find it very interesting that in verse 31 John provides us with a distinct context for who Jesus is speaking to, "Jews who had believed Him." These were Hebrew people who were already in a posture of faith and acceptance of God's Word. But it doesn't end with the initial phase of belief, Jesus indicates that there is a continuous process when He said to them, "If you continue in my Word, then you are truly My Disciples." Thus, the true mark of discipleship isn't a one-time, or past-tense, experience of knowing and believing His Word, but a present reality in the life of a true disciple. When scripture says you will know the truth, the Greek word used there means to know or understand through experience. It is the same experiential knowing that is described when the Bible refers to a husband "knowing" his wife. The truth setting us free, and true discipleship, comes from an intimate, on-going knowledge of His Word.

In life, there are things that you know like the back of your hand, and there are other things (tasks, areas of knowledge or skills) that are a bit more awkward or foreign. Many times the difference is practice. If you took me to a golf course today, I would provide you with the greatest how-not-to instruction on a golf swing, because I have not picked up a golf club in a decade. However, I could show you a thing or two on my grill, because I have plenty of active experiential knowledge in the BBQ arts!

Today's topic is confessing scripture and if I am going to be faithful to continue in His Word, then one of the tools we possess to help us stay in a place of active discipleship is confessing scriptures. The study and meditation of scripture is absolutely vital, but declaring those scriptures over your life is the highest form of prophecy. When we have that intimate knowledge of His Word, we can begin to declare it with accuracy and authority and that will help us see Jesus' promise to us, that "the truth will set you free."

### PRAYERS

God, I ask that you would lead me to scriptures to declare over myself and my situation. Reveal truths in scripture that I can prophesy over my life.

### ACTIONS

Write these scriptures down and begin studying, meditating on, and confessing them. Identify an area where you desire freedom, and locate a scripture that corresponds to that area. Pray and begin confessing scripture over your life.

### ADDITIONAL READINGS

Hebrews 4:12, Eph 6:17

-Pastor Alvin



Day 12

# REMEMBER

## VERSE

Genesis 9:12-16

*12And God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 13I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 15I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.'*

The first time the word remember is used in the Bible is in the story of Noah when God remembered Noah and all the animals with him in the ark as the floods were ruling over the waters and He did something about it, He caused the waters to recede. In the next chapter, the Lord uses the same word while making a covenant with all the living creatures for all generations. This means that it extends to you right now. If you have ever seen a rainbow in the sky, you have seen the tangible evidence of a covenantal promise of God and a sign of His remembrance. What's so interesting about this visible reminder is that The Lord established it to remind Him of His promise to us! Now, I don't think God is forgetful. He didn't have to set this visible reminder for Himself, but for us. He did it to show us the power and importance of remembrance.

Over time, this became a quality of God's people; when they encountered the Lord they would choose some signal to remember the Lord and what He had done. Sometimes it was ordinary things around them like a tower of rocks or a piece of their clothing; other times it was a new name or an entire day of their week devoted to remembering God. However, this spiritual discipline is not found only in the Old Testament; Jesus, himself, instructed the disciples that when they broke bread together they were to remember Him and the covenant formed by His blood. We call this communion and participate together as the body of Christ at church. But the disciples didn't eat bread together only once a month. Every time they ate a meal together they were to bring to mind the relationship they had with Christ and fellowship not just with each other but with Jesus himself.

We can and should similarly remember the covenant we have with Jesus and all that He has done for us, during meals and otherwise. Maybe like the disciples, when you pray before your meals or as you eat you want to think back on what Jesus has done. If you don't know where to start, pick some scriptures that speak to what believers have in Christ. However, this practice is not reserved for meals. When Jacob received a dream from God, he used the ordinary rocks around him to build a pillar to remember the promise of God and Jacob's covenant with Him. You too can use the most mundane objects to signify profound moments with God and the more 'altars' we build into our lives to remember the Lord, the more we renew our mind, the more we are transformed to look and live more like Him.

## PRAYERS

Lord, I recognize that you have done amazing things in my life! Help me to honor all that you do by setting up signs and habits to remind me throughout my day of you and your greatness. I desire to use more of the details of my everyday life to think about who you are, what you have done and the promises that you have made to me. Let this become a continued practice of my life so it all brings glory to You in every way.

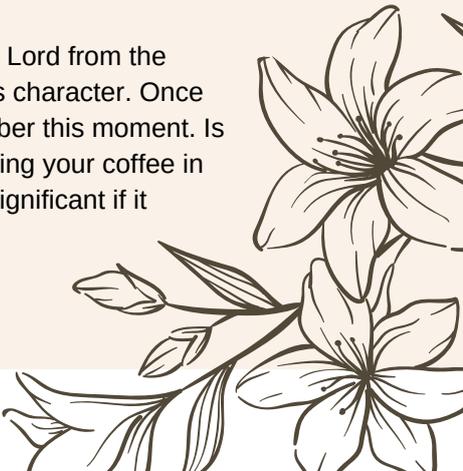
## ACTIONS

Pray and ask God what He wants you to remember—maybe it's an encounter with the Lord from the past, a scriptural truth you want to believe in, an answered prayer, or an aspect of His character. Once you have something, return to prayer to ask God what you can set in place to remember this moment. Is it a physical object in your house that can trigger your memory? Or a routine like making your coffee in the morning? Remember this is between you and the Lord, nothing is too small or insignificant if it causes you to reflect on Our Great God.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

Luke 22:7-23; Romans 12:2; Genesis 28:10-22

-Eileen



# DAY 13

## Renewing the Mind

### VERSE

Romans 12:2

*2And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (NASB)*

Throughout scripture we repeatedly see themes of renewed hearts and minds--an exchange of old for new. In Ezekiel God speaks of exchanging a heart of stone for one of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). The psalmist asks God to "create a clean heart" and "renew a right spirit" (Psalm 51:10). And here, in Romans 12, Paul urges the church in Rome to engage in this transformation through a renewal of the mind. But what does this renewal look like? And how can we actively participate with God as he transforms our hearts?

One of my favorite scriptures on transformation describes this process. "But we all, with unveiled faces, looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18, NASB). When we look at the image of Christ and bathe our souls in scripture, there is a change that begins to happen. When the image of our heart is placed against His, God's Spirit reveals the differences through a hope filled conviction. And as we repent and exchange our heart of stone for a clean heart, we become more like Christ. Our mind is renewed. And the more we engage with God in the process of renewal, the more our hearts are healed and we become like Him.

God is a God of transformation and redemption and reconciliation. He desires to make us new, to heal our hurt, and give us the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). He desires for us to live a life walking with Him, free from false conclusions about ourselves, God, and others. Renewing our mind through the truth of His word is a pathway to inner healing and transformation. What part of your mind needs to be renewed by God today?

### PRAYERS

God, create in me a new heart. I ask that my former belief systems would pass away and that you would transform my heart and mind to be more like Yours. Reveal any areas in my heart that need renewal. I surrender, and choose to conform to Your word rather than the world. I give you the areas of my heart that are stone and ask you to make them alive with your transformational truth.

### ACTIONS

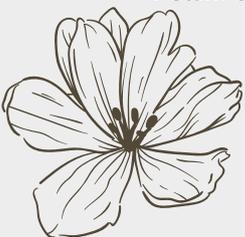
Ask God to reveal an area in your heart in need of renewal, an area where you have a false conclusion about yourself, God, or others. Ask God to give you a scripture to combat that false conclusion. Now ask God's forgiveness for believing that lie and any sinful actions that have occurred as a result. And pray a prayer confessing the scripture over your life. If you feel stuck, or need support, seek out a trusted mentor or friend.

Example: False conclusion: Not believing God will provide for your needs, whether monetary, emotional, physical. Scripture: Philippians 4:19 "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

Prayer: God forgive me for not trusting you as my provider. Forgive me for running to worldly sources (job, relationships, etc.). Forgive me for operating out of a fear of lack. God I confess Philippians 4:19 over my life; you are my provider and you care about my needs.

### ADDITIONAL READINGS

Psalm 51:10, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ezekiel 36:26. 2 Corinthians 3:18, 1 Corinthians 2:16



# Day 14 HUMILITY

## VERSE

Philippians 2:1-8

*1Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility consider one another as more important than yourselves; 4do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6who, as He already existed in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7but emptied Himself by taking the form of a bond-servant and being born in the likeness of men. 8And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death: death on a cross.*

The context of this passage adds so much depth to what Paul is saying to the Philippians. From a prison cell of persecution Paul writes to a group of people in the midst of their own persecution and asks, “are you receiving encouragement, love, fellowship, affection and compassion from Christ?” And if you are, extend that to others. From there he moves on to confront selfishness and empty conceit and counters it with humility and looking out for the interest of others. If we have trouble figuring out how to do that, he points to how Jesus exemplified considering others more important than himself.

For an example of what humility really looks like, we need to look no further than Jesus on the cross dying for the benefit of others. Jesus left Heaven (for the benefit of others), took on Human flesh (for the benefit of others), and died a gruesome death on the cross (for the benefit of others). Not only were all of these acts for the benefit of others, but they are all incredible acts of humility. He was literally above all of these things, but He chose to lower Himself in obedience so that you and I could be saved.

If I ever need a measuring reed for my spiritual maturity, it would be, “am I living out the humility of Jesus?” Am I considering others more important than myself? Or am I considering myself more important and living a life of selfishness and empty conceit? These are both indicators of our spiritual growth, and we should evaluate our humility regularly.

If we continue reading verses 9-11, we see how God the Father feels about humility.

*9For this reason also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)*

This verse is obviously important to the subject of salvation and to the subject of Jesus' Lordship, but the way Paul wedges this into the overall conversation he is having with the Philippians shows us something about the character of God as well. God honors humility! Three times in scripture we are told “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Let's make sure we are receiving grace from God!

## PRAYERS

Ask God to teach you about the humility of Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of your life that need more humility.

## ACTIONS

As the Lord reveals areas of growth, make a conscious effort to walk that humility out.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5

-Pastor Alvin



# DAY 15 – REST

## VERSE

Matthew 11:28-30

*28 “Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is comfortable, and My burden is light.”*

Christ's invitation to rest resonates so deeply with me as a sleep deprived parent of young children. The effects of neglecting sleep are intense--fatigue, irritability, confusion, loss of coordination. And if you go too long without sleep you start hallucinating. And much like sleep, neglecting rest, a sabbath, impairs your wellbeing. It is the same for our souls. If you go too long without resting in the Lord, you begin to experience weariness, resentment, you lose your balance, and even lose your perspective.

Throughout scripture we are reminded to rest. God rested on the seventh day of creation (Genesis 2:2); we need rest as a means of recovery after a large exertion. After a day of ministry Jesus left crowds of people to get away and rest in a boat (Mark 4:35-39); we need to prioritize rest even if there are people gathered looking to us for help. And on multiple occasions God commands us to observe a sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11), a set apart day of rest built into our life rhythms. Our bodies and souls need regular reprieve from life's demands, not just for recovery but also for sustainability. Here in Matthew, Christ invites us to approach Him for rest. He desires to teach us how to rest, to be still and know Him. He removes heavy burdens that are not from Him and restores our souls in such a way that makes His yoke light and His burden comfortable.

Does your soul need rest today? Are you carrying burdens that you're not intended to carry? Have you allowed yourself time to recover from life's demands? Have you chronically prioritized other people over rest? Or maybe you don't even know what it looks like to truly rest in the Lord. Take time to be still before the Lord and submit your schedule, to-do-list, and burdens to Him. Allow Him to teach you to live a life of rest.

## PRAYERS

Jesus, I come to you, weary and burdened. Thank you for being gentle and humble. Give me rest. Teach me a better way. Bring rest to my soul.

## ACTIONS

Ask the Holy Spirit to identify an area of your life that needs rest--whether a burden to lay down, a need for recovery, or a lack of a sabbath. Submit that area to the Lord. Rest.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

Matthew 11:28-30, Hebrews 4:9-11, Luke 13:10-17, Exodus 20:8-11, Mark 4:35-39

-Pastor Alvin

# DAY 16

## Service

### VERSE

John 13:12-15

*12 When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.*

During the Feast of the Passover, Jesus got up from the table to go wash the disciples' feet. Jesus taught the disciples that as their Master, even He washed their feet and honored them. He told them as I have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. He may in this instance have literally meant to wash each other's feet as that is a sign of respect, but it also has other implications about serving one another. Jesus set us the example of service and expects us to follow His lead.

In the book of Acts, we see a life lived out of serving and doing life with others. The members of the early church gave what they had to help a friend in need, sometimes even selling their own belongings to give money to other people. They had the desire to emulate Christ in the way that they lived their day to day lives.

For us, service looks like many things. It looks like helping a neighbor in need, babysitting a young family's children, or giving our time to care for someone who is hurting. It is putting others first, looking out for the good of the group, and giving ourselves as an offering before God. There is always an opportunity around you to serve like Jesus, you just have to look for it..

### PRAYERS

Jesus, open my heart to serving others. Give me the desire to give of myself for Your Glory. Help me see the opportunity to serve others in unconventional ways. I give You my yes.

### ACTIONS

Resolve to find a place to serve, whether that is signing up to serve people in need locally or getting involved with serving in a ministry. There are always opportunities to serve at Fireplace in the children's ministry, worship/sound team, and hospitality team. If you aren't serving here already and would like to, please send an email to [jfillis@vt.edu](mailto:jfillis@vt.edu)

### ADDITIONAL READINGS

Philippians 2:1-11

-Jessica



**VERSE**  
Isaiah 58:6-10

6 Is this not the fast that I choose: To release the bonds of wickedness, To undo the ropes of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free, And break every yoke? 7 Is it not to break your bread with the hungry And bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh? 8 Then your light will break out like the dawn, And your recovery will spring up quickly; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. 9 Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; You will cry for help, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you remove the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, 10 And if you offer yourself to the hungry And satisfy the need of the afflicted, Then your light will rise in darkness, And your gloom will become like midday.

In Isaiah 58, we see God confronting Israel in the midst of their shallow religion and fasting. They dressed in sackcloth and ashes, as was the custom, but they neglected the things God truly cares about—people. In verses 6 and 7, God explains what would move His heart. He desires that His people would stop oppressing each other and give provisions to the poor among them, and if they do those things, He promises to not just hear them, but also to bless them mightily.

We are met with this theme of giving again and again throughout scripture, and we see that giving to and caring for those in need is pleasing to God! Hebrews 13:16 says, "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." In 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 we are told to give cheerfully and assured that we will receive God's grace in return.

As a dramatic contrast to the Israelites in Isaiah 58, look to the early church in Acts. We see descriptions of their culture of giving in Acts 2:45—the early Christians shared all they had with one another. In Acts 4:34, scripture tells us that believers went so far as to sell their land and houses to give provisions to each other. Can you imagine living in a community, such as the one in Acts, where scripture tells us everyone's needs were provided for?

Giving is a radical act of worship. Sometimes giving can be scary; at times we mistakenly place our security in money. And while it is good to make wise financial decisions—budgeting, saving for retirement, avoiding excessive debt, etc—we are also called to give. When we give, we "consider the needs of others as more important" (Philippians 2:3) and we obey the commandment to love one another. In Matthew 25:45, Jesus teaches us that caring for the needy is the same as caring for Him. When we love Him, we show it by loving others.

**PRAYERS**

God, Thank you for the financial provision You have placed in my life. Thank you for the times when others have provided for my financial needs. Forgive me for believing that my security is found in money. God, you are my provider and I trust you to meet my needs. Grow my desire to give and bless others. Open my eyes to see the needs around me.

**ACTIONS**

Consider setting aside money for the purpose of giving. It can be as big as a bank account, or as simple as a mason jar of coins. Make a plan to add to it regularly, and look for opportunities to give generously. If you plan ahead to give, when a need arises you will be ready!

**ADDITIONAL READINGS**

Acts 2:45, 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, Isaiah 58, Matt 6:1-4, Proverbs 11:24-25, 1 Timothy 6:17-19, Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:16, 1 John 3:17, James 1:27

Day 18

# COMMUNITY

## VERSE

Philippians 1:7-8, 21-26

*7 For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. 8 For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus... 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.*

It is almost as if Paul is saying to them, "Hey, I actually like you guys!" After all, not only was he their Apostle, but they stood with him through some of the hardest times of his life. Now Paul is at a phase in his life where he is so ready to pass from this life to the next that he is expressing his desire to "depart and be with Christ," yet at the same time he is willing to set aside his desires temporarily for the sake of community. He acknowledges him staying alive/around brings something to the community in Philippi.

Sometimes we may ask ourselves, what do I truly bring to this community of believers? If I disconnected myself would I be truly missed? I can confidently say you would be missed by the community! Even if you have not felt as though you are a major contributor to the overall life of a certain community (maybe because you are new, maybe because you have felt distant or disconnected). I know that God has placed special things in each of us that help complete the picture of what the community of God looks like. When you are missing from the community, we miss seeing your face and walking in friendship with you. But we also experience your absence as a spiritual gap. Scripture describes the community of God as a body with many parts. If you are a foot and are absent from the body, we cannot walk properly without you.

When we truly embrace the culture of community the way we see Paul embrace it in our passage, that's when community is about ourselves. Like Paul we say, "I will stay and I will be a blessing." I challenge you today to not just be physically present, but also to bring all of you, all of what God put in you, into true community!

## PRAYERS

Pray that He would help you to know your value to your community. Pray that your activity in community would be a place of the expression of the multifaceted wisdom of God.

## ACTIONS

Make it a point this week to involve yourself more deeply in the communities God has embedded you into.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

1 Thessalonians 2

-Pastor Alvin



Day 19

# SOLITUDE

## VERSE

Mark 1:35

*35Very 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.*

There are many moments when reading the Bible where I had to stop and ask “How? How did they endure that? How did they hear so clearly from God? How did they do that life transforming act?”--especially when reading about the life of Jesus. When we take a closer look, we see that Jesus set aside time to be alone with God after preaching, performing miracles, and even hearing about the death of John the baptist (Luke 5:15-16, Matthew 14:13, 23). He also chose to spend time in solitude before crucial moments of his life and ministry, like the night before picking the disciples and in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He was betrayed and ultimately led to the cross. (Luke 6:12-13, Matthew 26:36).

However, this wasn't just something Jesus did for himself, he instructed his disciples to also follow this practice. In Mark 6, when the 12 disciples returned from their first time preaching, casting out demons and healing, Jesus says to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” This discipline isn't reserved for Jesus' closest friends but carries over to us as we faithfully live as His disciples! We need to get away to be with Him.

An important concept shared in Richard Fosters' Celebration of Discipline asserts that “Solitude is more of a state of mind and heart than it is a place.” It isn't simply about being in an empty room or silent environment but quieting all external AND internal distractions so one can solely focus on being with Jesus. This means we have to put down our phones, still our thoughts, maybe even close our eyes until we are still enough to hear His still small whisper (1 Kings 19:11-12). When we continue this practice and learn how to “come boldly to the throne of grace” (Hebrew 4:16), acknowledging that His presence is always accessible, we can use this discipline of getting alone with God anytime and anywhere--even at our busiest and most stressful moments. It doesn't always require outward silence, but it does require inner stillness so we can listen in to what the Spirit is saying.

## PRAYERS

Lord, help me know and understand your omni-presence. Transform my mind so whenever I'm alone I recognize it as an opportunity to be with you. Remind me even in the busy and crowded moments of my life, that you will never leave or forsake me (Deut 31:6), that your presence is only a thought, a breath away. Help me become increasingly still and quiet within myself so that I am ever more sensitive to your ways. Grant me self-control and peace in my inner-life.

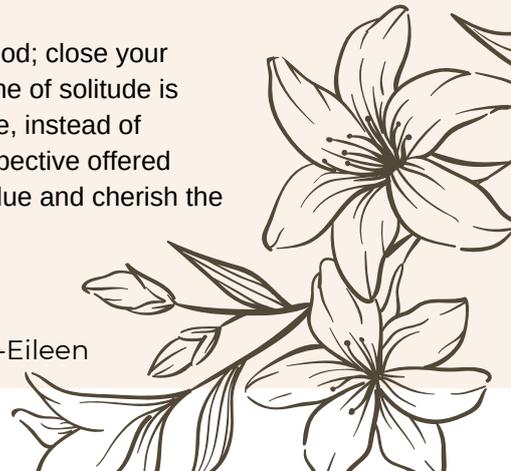
## ACTIONS

Take small moments sprinkled throughout your day to mentally be alone with God; close your eyes and take a breath, bring your mind back to focus on the Lord. The discipline of solitude is closely tied to the discipline of silence. Try to institute moments of silence where, instead of speaking, you choose to listen. Focus on what is being said and value the perspective offered instead of simply looking for the next thing to say. This will help you not only value and cherish the people God has put around you but also His voice when He speaks.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

Psalms 62:5, Mark 6:30-32, Matthew 14:12-13, 23, Luke 5:15-16

-Eileen



# DAY 20

## Submission

### VERSE

Ephesians 5:21

*21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

When we as modern hearers consider the idea of submission in a biblical sense we most likely think of the often quoted verses directed toward specific members of family units, or those under certain authorities, in government or the marketplace. Today we are addressing the submission that Jesus modeled and calls his people to walk in. It is a discipline, as many of the others that have been discussed in our devotional times, that we must seek to cultivate if we are to live as Jesus' disciples.

Jesus is our ultimate example of what it looks like to live a life of submission. Though he was God he willingly chose to take "the form of a servant," (Philippians 2:6). Jesus lived his life in full submission to the Father. He only did what he saw the Father doing, (John 5:19). His life was marked with obedience even to the point of death on a cross.

When we choose a life of voluntary submission we are choosing to follow more closely to Christ. The world would have us believe that if we submit we are losing something. That we must fight for what we want if we want to achieve in this life. Jesus calls us aside to find true life in him. This does not come from our outward circumstances or getting our own way, but from a vibrant inner life marked by peace in the presence of God. This is only found when we know the freedom of walking as Jesus walked.

Jesus walked in submission to God and voluntary submission to those he came to serve. He modeled this submission most clearly in John 13 when he washed his disciples feet. Culturally, footwashing was as necessary as providing a meal. It was also considered to be the job of the person with the "lowest rank" in the house. Yet Jesus chose to perform this task for his disciples. He then speaks to the heart behind this extraordinary gesture "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you," (John 13:14-15). Jesus chose to humble himself and put others' needs ahead of cultural norms or of his own appearance. Though he was God, he chose voluntary submission and humility to show us the way we also must walk.

Later Paul exhorts us in Phillipians 2:3-5, "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus." We, as the body of Christ, are called to have the mind of Christ Jesus, which he demonstrated both in the way He lived and died. When the world tells us that we must fight for our own way, Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him (Mark 9:35). That he who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake, will find it (Matt. 10:39). The life Christ calls us to is in contradiction to the ideas of self-actualization and self-fulfillment that are popular in these times. They are also contrary to our own self-will. If we are to live this life of submission God is calling us to, it may require some changes to the ways we approach our interactions with others and a dependence on the Holy Spirit to lead us.

### PRAYERS

Lord, everything you call me to do, you also give me the grace to do. God, empower me to walk as you walked, to choose a life of submission to you first and to those you place in my path. Help me to see others as you see them. Help me to be willing to yield and consider others needs and interests. Help me to consider with significance even those who seem to be lower by cultural norms or appearances. Lord help me to find ways to wash the feet of others as you modeled this for me and have called me to have this same mind. Thank you, that you empower me to live this way by the power of your Spirit! Amen.

### ACTIONS

Let's take some time to reflect and ask God today how we can look out more for the interests of others. We can first reflect on how we can do this more in our family unit and then also when we go through our day and interact with others. How can I do this today?

### ADDITIONAL READINGS

Philippians 2:3-11, Eph. 5:21, Gal. 5:13, Phil. 2:3, 1 Peter 5:5, 1 Cor 7:3, 1 Cor 16:16

Day 21

# CELEBRATE



## VERSE

Psalms 150

*1Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty expanse. 2Praise Him for His mighty deeds; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness. 3Praise Him with trumpet sound; Praise Him with harp and lyre. 4Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe. 5Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals. 6Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!*

Today is a day of celebration honoring all that God has done in these 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting. I have already heard from many of you about the great things God has done in Week One and Two; I imagine by the time you are reading this, that list has only gotten longer!

## PRAYERS

Thank you for Your presence and grace over the last 21 days. You are a God who hears and answers Your children. Thank you for the many ways You have met me and changed me during this fast. I praise You for the healing, restoration, and redemption that You have brought into my life. I celebrate all that You have done and continue to do!

## ACTIONS

Journal the things God has done in you during this fast. Spend time with a friend or family member and share these things with them.

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

Psalms 106

-Pastor Alvin

