

An Undivided Heart

as we Walk in the Word



WHOLEHEARTED

“Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.”

PSALM 86:11



THRIVE

2025



THRIVE

2025

21-Day Daniel Fast Devotional

January 12 - February 1, 2025

REHOBOTH OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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Rev. Leroy Spencer - Senior Pastor Rev. Dalton Spencer - Admin Pastor



An Undivided Heart

A CALL TO FAST

Pastoral Charge & Challenge

Fasting Basics

Fasting Schedule

WEEK 01	SEEK CHRIST	January 12 - January 18
WEEK 02	SHARE CHRIST	January 19 - January 25
WEEK 03	SHOW CHRIST	January 26 - February 1

Notes



SERVE CHRIST WITH AN UNDIVIDED HEART

Dear Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we enter this season of prayer and fasting, our hearts are set on serving Christ with undivided devotion. Let us pray as David did:

“Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness. Give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name” (Psalm 86:11).

What a powerful prayer! It calls us to seek God's ways, His truth, and a heart wholly devoted to Him. God desires our hearts to be loyal, and He responds when we seek to live according to His will. Our devotion should reflect Jesus's unwavering commitment to the Father, doing only what He commanded (John 14:31).

David's life is a profound example of serving God with an undivided heart. Despite his flaws, David pursued God with a pure heart, often praying for wholehearted devotion. He passed on this wisdom to his son Solomon: *“Serve him with a whole heart and a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought” (1 Chronicles 28:9a).*

Our best life is lived in complete devotion to God, trusting Jesus as our Savior and the Holy Spirit as our strength. In the words of Dwight L. Moody, *“The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to him. By God's help, I aim to be that man.”* Let us commit to becoming such people this year. Let us walk in God's Word and seek fresh encounters with Him. I long to experience Him in fullness this year, and I invite you to join me in this pursuit.

A divided heart has only one remedy: the decision to commit fully to Christ. I encourage you to ask yourself:

- Where do I feel divided in my heart, and what is causing it?
- What is the condition of my heart? Is it hard, divided, or wandering?
- What is competing for my heart's attention?
- Do areas of my life need to be re-committed to God?

Take time to reflect on where your heart may be divided and offer those areas to God in prayer. He promises to give us a united heart.

“I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.” (Jeremiah 32:39-40 ESV)

With single-minded devotion, we align our lives with His purposes. As we strive to serve Christ wholeheartedly – to **SEEK CHRIST, SHARE CHRIST, and SHOW CHRIST** – remember:

- *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength” (Deuteronomy 6:5).*
Full commitment: Putting God first in all aspects of life without reservation.
- *“Obey the Lord your God with all your heart and soul” (Deuteronomy 30:2).*
Sincere devotion: Genuine love and worship towards God, not just outward practices
- *“Serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul” (Deuteronomy 10:12).*
Unwavering loyalty: Staying faithful to God even during difficult times.

Let us make Christ the center of all we do—at home, at work, in our communities, and in our ministry. This is the essence of living our best lives.

Today, Lord, please give me an undivided heart to love, obey, and serve You in the way You desire. Amen

In Christ's love,
Pastor Spencer

FASTING BASICS

SIMPLY STATED, BIBLICAL FASTING IS REFRAINING FROM FOOD FOR A SPIRITUAL PURPOSE.

According to the Bible, there are three duties of every Christian: give, pray and fast. Biblical fasting takes a lot of discipline and strength—strength which you can only receive from God. Your private discipline will bring you rewards in Heaven, says Matthew 6. When you give God your first through fasting, prayer and giving at the beginning of the year, you set the course for the entire year.

WHY SHOULD I FAST?

- Are you in need of healing or a miracle?
- Do you need the tender touch of God in your life?
- Is there a dream inside you that only He can make possible?
- Are you in need of a fresh encounter?
- Do you desire a deeper, more intimate and powerful relationship with the Lord?
- Are you ready to have heightened sensitivity to the desires of God?
- Do you need to break away from bondages that have been holding you hostage?
- Is there a friend or loved one that needs Salvation?
- Do you desire to know God's will for your life?



BIBLICAL FASTING FOCUS

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-2

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

ISAIAH 58:6

"[Is] not this the fast that I have chosen to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"

ROMANS 12:1

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service."

MATTHEW 6:33

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

We want to encourage you to target your prayers during the fast. Two specific areas we will be focusing on together are leadership and finances. The Bible instructs us to continually pray for our leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-2). When we lift up our leaders, here in the United States and around the world, we can expect God's peace in our lives and in our nation.

Another great promise, from the book of Isaiah, proclaims that the chosen fast will "undo the heavy burdens and let the oppressed go free." We are living in tough economic times and we know that so many people are under a financial burden. As we come together to fast and pray, we believe that your burdens will be lifted and that financial blessings will be released into your life!

We encourage you to seek the Lord in prayer and let your decisions about your biblical fasting come from Him. Ask the Lord to show you areas to target during your time of fasting and prayer. We believe that, as we pray and seek God and give Him our best at the first of the year, He will bless our ENTIRE year (Matthew 6:33)!



HOW TO FAST

HOW TO BEGIN

Start with a clear goal. Be specific. Why are you fasting? Do you need direction, healing, restoration of marriage or family issues? Are you facing financial difficulties? Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. Pray daily and read the Bible.

PREPARING SPIRITUALLY

Confess your sins to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of weakness. Forgive all who have offended you and ask forgiveness from those you may have offended (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3-4). Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ and reject the worldly desires that try to hinder you (Romans 12:1-2).

DECIDING WHAT TO FAST

The type of fasting you choose is up to you. You could go on a full fast in which you only drink liquids, or you may desire to fast like Daniel, who abstained from sweets and meats, and the only liquid he drank was water. Remember to replace that time with prayer and Bible study.

DECIDING HOW LONG

You may fast as long as you like. Most can easily fast from one to three days, but you may feel the grace to go longer, even as much as 21 to 40 days. Use wisdom and pray for guidance. Beginners are advised to start slow.

WHAT TO EXPECT

When you fast your body detoxifies, eliminating toxins from your system. This can cause mild discomfort such as headaches and irritability during withdrawal from caffeine and sugars. And naturally, you will have hunger pains. Limit your activity and exercise moderately. Take time to rest. Fasting brings about miraculous results. You are following Jesus' example when you fast. Spend time listening to praise and worship. Pray as often as you can throughout the day. Get away from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mindset on seeking God's face.

HOW TO END

Don't overeat when the time comes to end your fast. Begin eating solid food gradually; eat small portions or snacks.



ADDITIONAL FASTING INFORMATION

Fasting is not only a religious obligation, but it has many health benefits. Fasting is a good practice, if properly implemented. It promotes elimination of toxins from the body, reduces blood sugar and fat stores. It promotes healthy eating habits and boost immunity.

Research suggests there are major health benefits of fasting to caloric restriction. Benefits include: reduced risks of cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, insulin resistance, immune disorders, and more generally, the slowing of the ageing process, and the potential to increase maximum life span. Here are top 10 health benefits you can derive from fasting.

10 Incredible Health Benefits of Fasting:

1. Fasting Promotes Detoxification

The act of fasting promotes detoxification, since fat is burned and toxins are released. As the body breaks down its fat reserves, it mobilizes and eliminates stored toxins.

2. Fasting Improves Insulin Sensitivity

Fasting improves insulin sensitivity (which is a very big deal). When your cells are tickled by the effects of insulin, they do a much better job modulating your blood sugar levels after meals and this makes life a lot easier for your poor old pancreas.

3. Fasting Rests Digestive System

During fasting, the digestive organs rest. Fasting gives the digestive system a much-needed rest. After fasting, both digestion and elimination are invigorated.

4. Fasting Boosts Immunity

Fasting boosts immunity if one is careful not to break their fast with an abnormally excessive amount of food. Fruits contain vitamins A and E which boost immunity so one should take care of their balanced diet in between fasts if this is to take place. Fruits should be eaten a lot while breaking the fast.

5. Fasting Corrects High Blood Pressure

Fasting corrects high blood pressure without drugs. Fasting will normalize blood pressure in the vast majority of cases, the blood pressure will remain low after the fast, if the person follows a health-supporting diet and lifestyle.

6. Fasting May Help to Overcome Addictions

Fasting makes it easy to overcome bad habits and addictions. Many people have overcome tobacco and alcohol addictions by fasting, and even drug addictions. Fasting rapidly dissipates the craving for nicotine, alcohol, caffeine and other drugs.

7. Fasting Promotes Weight Loss

Fasting initiates rapid weight loss with little or no hunger. It reduces the store of fats in the body. However, fasting is not a good weight loss strategy. Reducing fat and sugar intake, and increasing fruits and rest are better measures to achieve weight reduction.

8. Fasting Resolves Inflammatory Response

Some studies show that fasting triggers resolution of inflammatory diseases and allergies, examples of such being arthritis and skin diseases such as psoriasis. Some experts even suggest that fasting could magically heal the inflammatory bowel diseases such as ulcerative colitis.

9. Fasting Promotes Healthy Diet

Fasting is the perfect gateway to a healthful diet and lifestyle. Going on a fast gives you the motivation and enthusiasm to make a fresh start. It has been observed that fasting reduces craving for processed foods. It promotes desire for natural foods, especially water and fruits.

10. Fasting Clears the Skin and Whitens the Eyes

Fasting clears the skin and whitens the eyes. It is common to see skin eruptions clear while fasting, and the whites of the eyes never look so clear and bright as they do after fasting.

DANIEL FAST

FOODS YOU CAN EAT ON THE DANIEL FAST

The only acceptable foods explicitly listed in the scripture are water and vegetables. However, the term "pulse" is used in the King James Version, which means "bean or seed grown for food." This gives permission to those on the Daniel Fast to eat whole grains, fruits, and other plant-based foods — everything else is off-limits.

Foods You Can Eat on the Daniel Fast

- **Whole grains:** Barley, brown rice, buckwheat, farro, grits, millet, oats, popcorn, quinoa, rice cakes, rye, sorghum, spelt, whole wheat, whole-wheat pasta, and wild rice.
- **Beans and legumes:** Black beans, black-eyed peas, cannellini beans, garbanzo beans (chickpeas), great northern beans, kidney beans, lentils, peanuts, pinto beans, and split peas.
- **Nuts and seeds:** Almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, natural nut butters (no additives), peanuts, pecans, pumpkin seeds, pine nuts, pistachios, poppy seeds, sesame seeds, soy nuts, sunflower seeds, and walnuts.
- **Vegetables:** All vegetables whether fresh, frozen, dried, juiced, or canned.
- **Fruits:** All fruit whether fresh, frozen, dried, juiced, or canned (so long as it doesn't contain added sugar).
- **Oils:** Oils can be used minimally, but not for deep-frying.
- **Herbs, spices, and seasonings:** Includes salt and pepper.
- **Soy products:** All soy products including tofu.
- **Unleavened bread:** Whole grain breads made without yeast, sugars, or preservatives.
- **Water:** Distilled, filtered, sparkling, spring, and mineral waters allowed.
- **100-percent fruit juice:** Natural, 100-percent fruit juice is allowed but should be had sparingly.



DANIEL FAST

FOODS TO AVOID ON THE DANIEL FAST

Foods You Can't Eat on the Daniel Fast

- **Animal products:** All meat, dairy, seafood, and eggs.
- **Sweeteners:** Agave nectar, artificial sweeteners, brown rice syrup, brown sugar, cane juice, corn syrup, honey, malt syrup, molasses, raw sugar, sugar, and other syrups.
- **Leavened bread:** Bread made with yeast.
- **Refined and processed foods:** Foods that contain artificial flavorings, artificial preservatives, food additives, white flour, and white rice.
- **Deep-fried foods:** All fried foods.
- **Solid fats:** Butter, lard, margarine, and shortening.
- **Chocolate:** Milk chocolate, semi-sweet chocolate, dark chocolate, chocolate syrup, and cacao.
- **Some beverages:** Alcohol, coffee, and other caffeinated beverages.



CORPORATE PRAYER & FASTING MEETING TIMES

SEEK CHRIST | Schedule for Week 1 (January 12 - January 18, 2025)

Day(s)	Time	Meeting Method
Sunday	12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	In-Person & YouTube
Monday & Tuesday	7:00 PM - 8:15 PM	Zoom Video Prayer
Wednesday	5:00 AM - 6:00 AM (Men Only)	Teleconference Prayer Session
	12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Teleconference Prayer Session
	7:00 PM - 8:15 PM	In-Person & Zoom Video Prayer
Thursday - Saturday	7:00 - 8:15 PM	Zoom Video Prayer

SHARE CHRIST | Schedule for Week 2 (January 19 - January 25, 2025)

Day(s)	Time	Meeting Method
Sunday	12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	In-Person & YouTube
Monday & Tuesday	7:00 PM - 8:15 PM	Zoom Video Prayer
Wednesday	5:00 AM - 6:00 AM (Men Only)	Teleconference Prayer Session
	12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Teleconference Prayer Session
	7:00 PM - 8:15 PM	In-Person & Zoom Video Prayer
Thursday - Saturday	7:00 - 8:15 PM	Zoom Video Prayer

SHOW CHRIST | Schedule for Week 3 (January 26 - February 01, 2025)

Day(s)	Time	Meeting Method
Sunday	12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	In-Person & YouTube
Monday & Tuesday	7:00 PM - 8:15 PM	Zoom Video Prayer
Wednesday	5:00 AM - 6:00 AM (Men Only)	Teleconference Prayer Session
	12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Teleconference Prayer Session
	7:00 PM - 8:15 PM	In-Person & Zoom Video Prayer
Thursday	7:00 PM - 8:15 PM	In-Person & Zoom Video Prayer
Friday	7:00 PM - 12:00 AM	In-Person & Zoom Video Prayer
Saturday	7:00 PM - 8:15 PM	Zoom Video Prayer

Corporate Daily Fasting Time

Suggested Fasting Times: 5:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Synchronize Prayer Times: 8 AM, 11 AM, & 6 PM (Psalm 86:11)

Corporate Zoom Prayer Conference Line

Dial: 1 (646) 518-9805 Meeting ID: 364 543 6697 Access Code: 5102

Zoom Video Conference

Meeting ID: 364 543 6697 Access Code: 5102

[ROBC Zoom Link](#) (click to be redirected)

Corporate Teleconference Line

Dial: (646) 558-6338 Access Code: 2249667

CORPORATE PRAYER & FASTING SCHEDULE

SEEK CHRIST | Schedule for Week 1 (January 12 - January 18, 2025)

Date	Day	Time	Theme	Leader
01/12/25	SUNDAY	10:00 AM	Above All Else, Seek God!	NORBERT ALLEN
		12:00 PM		PASTOR LEROY SPENCER
01/13/25	MONDAY	7:00 PM	For In Christ, We Live.	REV. NORMAN CLAYTON
01/14/25	TUESDAY	7:00 PM	United with Christ	REV. ANTHONY FRANCIS
01/15/25	WEDNESDAY	5:00 AM	Live in Love, Live in God.	NORBERT ALLEN
		12:00 PM		REV. DALTON SPENCER
		7:00 PM		REV. EVA DIAH
01/16/25	THURSDAY	7:00 PM	Commit to the Lord	REV. CARLA SAMUELS
01/17/25	FRIDAY	7:00 PM	Rooted for Good Fruit	NICOLE ALLEN
01/18/25	SATURDAY	7:00 PM	Remain in Jesus	MYTSIE WILKS

SHARE CHRIST | Schedule for Week 2 (January 19 - January 25, 2025)

Date	Day	Time	Theme	Leader
01/19/25	SUNDAY	10:00 AM	Follow the Instructions	JUDITH SPENCER
		12:00 PM		IAN LUTCHMAN
01/20/25	MONDAY	7:00 PM	Do the Work	IONA WATSON
01/21/25	TUESDAY	7:00 PM	Prepare the Answers	DALTON PATTERSON
01/22/25	WEDNESDAY	5:00 AM	Carry the Message	NEVILLE CAMPBELL
		12:00 PM		LOUISE SCOTT
		7:00 PM		PAULINE PATTERSON
01/23/25	THURSDAY	7:00 PM	Lead the Way	GUEST
01/24/25	FRIDAY	7:00 PM	Love the Gospel	VANGEE DYER
01/25/25	SATURDAY	7:00 PM	Make the Appeal	RESMENA O'MEALLY FERGUSON

SHOW CHRIST | Schedule for Week 3 (January 26 - February 01, 2025)

Date	Day	Time	Theme	Leader
01/26/25	SUNDAY	10:00 AM	Let Your Light Shine	YOUTH
		12:00 PM		JOANN SPENCER & JOEL PATTERSON
01/27/25	MONDAY	7:00 PM	Becoming All Things to All People	CHEVANNE MORRIS & JOSEPH SPENCER
01/28/25	TUESDAY	7:00 PM	Wise Engagement	FARAH BAPTISTE & WENDY HILLARY
01/29/25	WEDNESDAY	5:00 AM	My Heart, Your Home	GREGORY LAMB & PETER AIKEN
		12:00 PM		WINSOME WALLACE & GENEVA SAMUELS
		7:00 PM		MAXINE CAMPBELL & LAUREL PROVIDENCE
01/30/25	THURSDAY	7:00 PM	Live Out Your Faith	ALLAN SELMAN & DIETRIC WING-PAUL
01/31/25	FRIDAY	7:00 PM	God Won't Forget	KERRY CRAWFORD & JUDITH SPENCER
02/01/25	SATURDAY	7:00 PM	Love Without Borders	DAVID PORTER & HERBERT DONALDS

Prayer Calendar

21 DAYS TO BECOMING A DISCIPLE MAKER BY JIM BRITTS

Step 1. Write out 30 names of people you know (Ex. cell phones, FB etc.) and then put their names in the top of each box.

Step 2. Reach out to the person 1-2 days in advance and tell them they are on your prayer calendar that day. Ask how you can specifically be praying for them.

Step 3. Either by phone call or text, pray for them on that day. Have their requests on your mind throughout the day.

Step 4. Do this every day. If you find after 2 months someone doesn't respond, then replace them. Keep track of answers prayers

Step 5. After living this out consistently for at least a few weeks invite and train 2-5 other people to make their own prayer calendar. Ask them how it's going and challenge them to invite/train 2-5 others.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
15.	16.	17.	18.	19.	20.	21.
22.	23.	24.	25.	26.	27.	28.
29.	30.	31.				

Use the acronym F.R.A.N.C. E. to identify the persons you will be praying for:

- (F) Friends
- (R) Relatives
- (A) Acquaintances
- (N) Neighbors
- (C) Co-workers/Classmates
- (E) Earlier in Life

DAILY CHALLENGE

Most of us are educated far beyond our levels of obedience. It's time to change that.

Begin by doing it for a Day!

(Mark Batterson)

DAY 1: PRACTICE

Cultivate the habit of carving out dedicated time to grow by committing to a specific time and place where you read a chapter in the Word.

I will read every day until I _____

When: _____ Where: _____

When you fall in love with the process rather than the product, you don't have to wait to give yourself permission to be happy.

(James Clear – Atomic Habits: Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results)

DAY 2: REFLECTION

Spend a few minutes answering these questions and then praying over the answers:

- Who helped make you a disciple? Pre-conversion?
Post-conversion?
- Who have you discipled?
- Have any of the people you discipled gone on to disciple others? Who?

DAY 3: PRAY FOR YOU

Pray: *Jesus, use me to disciple someone into a relationship with You, to baptize them, and then get out of the way and watch them baptize others.*

- Open my eyes to truly see the people around me.
- Open my eyes to see the needs of others.
- Open my eyes to see where you're already working.
- Open my eyes to see the harvest – those whose hearts are open to God.
- Cross my path with someone who needs you and is ready to listen to you.
- Give me the boldness to initiate spiritual conversations.
- Guide in the words to say.
- Pray that you live out the great commission.

Your passion often follows your prayers. You begin to feel more passionate about the things you pray fervently about, and you begin to see more and more of God's answers.

Pray the following prayer daily for yourself today and then continue to pray it for the rest of your life.

DAY 4: PRAY FOR OTHERS

"Before you approach people about God, we need to approach God about these people."

Take five minutes and ask God to guide your mind as you fill in the blanks below with names (Christian or non-Christian).

Pick one or more people to pray for today.

Friends _____

Relatives _____

Acquaintances _____

Neighbors _____

Co-workers/Classmates _____

Earlier in Life _____

Examples of prayers:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| a. Ephesians 1: 17-18 | b. Ephesians 3: 16-19 |
| c. Philippians 1: 9-12 | d. Colossians 3:15 |
| e. 1 Thessalonians 3: 12-13 | f. 1Peter 3:8 |
| g. 1 Thessalonians 1: 1-12 | h. Hebrews 6: 11-12 |
| i. 2 Thessalonians 3:5 | j. Hebrews 12: 1-2 |
| k. Psalm 119:18 | l. Psalm 86:11 |

DAY 5: PRAY WITH OTHERS

Step 1: Fill out the Prayer Calendar

Simply transfer the names from the FRANCE sheet on Day 4 onto your calendar

Step 2: Contact the person who is on today's date.

Use the method most comfortable for you: Walk next door, Call them, Talk to them in person, Text them or Message them through social media

Send a simple note:

Hi _____, you are on my prayer calendar today.

How specifically can I pray for you today?

Or you could tell them:

"I'm trying to start a new habit of intentionally reaching out to and praying for people in my life. How are you doing, and what can I pray for you?"

Step 3: Actually, pray with them

After they respond with a request, pray with them. Send back a text or voice note or call them or pray with in person. No response, PRAY still. **DON'T SKIP THIS STEP!!!**

Make these simple habits a part of your daily rhythm.

DAILY CHALLENGE

"Before you approach people about God, we need to approach God about these people."

DAY 6: FACING YOUR DOUBTS

As we take a step of faith, God reveals a new step and then another one and another. **Baby steps can lead to life change.**

List of doubts we consciously or unconsciously carry around. Circle the ones you most identify with.

- I don't know enough
- My Church hasn't taught me
- I don't know any non-Christians
- I'm too shy
- I'm too new in my faith
- I'm too young
- I can't take rejection
- I'm too old
- If you knew my past
- I'm too busy
- I'm just not comfortable with this
- No one disciplined me
- Fill in the blank with your own: _____

Now, spend time praying this prayer over every doubt:

Dear Jesus, although I carry the doubt of

I realize that you STILL call me to be a disciple-maker. I claim your authority and lean on your presence. Be strong in me to overcome this doubt and replace it with great faith.

DAY 7: LOOK BACK

Spend a few minutes writing down:

- Insights you've learned,
- Steps of faith you've taken, and
- Stories of how God is transforming you and transforming others through you.

Celebrate everything!

What can you celebrate this week?

Can't wait to see what's next!

NOTES:

SOURCE: 21 DAYS TO BECOMING A DISCIPLE MAKER - JIM BRITTS

WEEK 1



Dear Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Prayer is our most powerful weapon on earth. As we begin this 21-day season of prayer and fasting, I encourage each of you to seek Christ with all your hearts. In a world filled with distractions, losing focus is easy, but the call to draw near to Christ remains.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”
(Matthew 6:33)

Seeking Christ is not a one-time event but a lifelong journey. Here are practical ways to pursue Him:

- **Set aside a specific time each day for prayer.** Consistency strengthens our relationship with Christ.
- **Regularly read Scripture**, meditating on who Christ is and how He wants you to live. Let the Holy Spirit guide you in applying His Word.
- **Be patient with yourself**, remembering that growth takes time.
- **Be intentional**, especially when distractions arise. Keep pressing forward, knowing that Christ is faithful.
- **Be sensitive to the Spirit’s nudges** throughout the day. The more you surrender, the closer you will draw to Christ.
- **Strive to follow His example**, no matter your circumstances. Whether in times of joy or trial, turn your heart toward Him. In Christ, we are made whole.

As Oswald Chambers wisely said, **“Beware of saying, ‘I haven’t time to read the Bible or pray’; rather, say, ‘I haven’t disciplined myself to do these things.’”**

The beauty of this pursuit is that it’s never too late to start. **Christ is always ready to meet, heal, and lead you into His presence.** Let us seek God earnestly, knowing He will guide us on the path to eternal life, truth, and hope.

Let His light shine through you to the world, and may we grow together in faith, love, and grace.

In Christ’s love,
Pastor Spencer

Here is a curated
worship playlist for this
week’s fasting focus. Be
blessed as you worship,
reflect, and meditate.





ABOVE ALL ELSE, SEEK GOD!

**SEEK THE KINGDOM OF GOD ABOVE ALL ELSE, AND LIVE RIGHTEOUSLY,
AND HE WILL GIVE YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED. - MATTHEW 6:33 NLT**

DO FIRST THINGS FIRST (MATTHEW 6:33) In this climactic statement from a portion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus simplifies life for all those who follow Him. There is a great temptation to become both overwhelmed and enslaved to certain needs such as food, drink, and clothing. But Jesus liberates us from anxieties and calls us back to an external daily perspective. *Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness* does not mean our basic needs are not important, but it does instruct us to purge ourselves of any desire that may take its place before our affect for God.

proton - first - first in rank, influence, honor

Few truly grasp this great reality and even fewer allow it to be the testimony of their lives. The ability to surrender one's affections and focus on this command of Jesus will serve as a catalyst to have influence beyond what one could possibly imagine. The leader never underestimates the power of doing something well every day. A brief survey of the landscape of Scripture and Christian history will reveal that God has continually used individuals who both understand this principle and live it out in an uncompromising fashion. The life we live will not be judged by how much money or stuff we acquire, but rather by daily doing first things first. [THE IMPACT BIBLE]

The call to "seek first" God's kingdom and righteousness connects to the other teachings Jesus has given in this Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:1-2, 5-6, 16-17). Motives matter, and only by sincerely putting God first can we pursue righteousness. Followers of Christ should prioritize living according to the principles He has been teaching (Matthew 6:24; John 14:15). Jesus' earliest message was the same as that of John the Baptist, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17).

To seek God's kingdom and His righteousness means to live in that ongoing repentance from sin, and to lead the kind of sincere, from-the-heart, devoted-to-God lifestyles Jesus has been describing. In response, God will make provision for whatever it is we truly "need" in order to accomplish His will. [<https://www.bibleref.com/Matthew/6/Matthew-6-33.html>]

Proverbs 8:17
I love those who love Me,
and those who seek Me find Me.

How to Live a Good Life

Reflection

Seeking isn't just how you get into the Kingdom of God.
It's your new lifestyle once you're in the Kingdom.

And it's the one thing that will change everything, including **YOU**.

Have I been acting as a son or as an orphan?



What is God saying to me today?



FOR IN CHRIST, WE LIVE!

“HIS PURPOSE WAS FOR THE NATIONS TO SEEK AFTER GOD AND PERHAPS FEEL THEIR WAY TOWARD HIM AND FIND HIM—THOUGH HE IS NOT FAR FROM ANY ONE OF US. FOR IN HIM WE LIVE AND MOVE AND EXIST. AS SOME OF YOUR OWN POETS HAVE SAID, ‘WE ARE HIS OFFSPRING.’” - ACTS 17:27-28 NLT

A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers are hearing from Paul in Athens. He is connecting their altar to "the unknown god" and the words of their poets to the true Creator God who will judge mankind. He has already compared the unknown god to the Creator of the world who is too magnificent to be confined in human-built temples and too powerful to need anything from humans. In fact, this God determines where and when individual people as well as empires will exist ([Acts 17:22-26](#)).

Paul now brings this mighty God closer to His creation. God's plan in establishing nations is to encourage people to seek Him. As he will say in his letter to the Romans:

"For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse" ([Romans 1:19-20](#)).

Paul will go on to show that God can't be far away because even the Greek poets have said that God gives people life. Further, the poets say that we are His offspring. But if we are, it is foolish to think God could be represented by an immobile statue designed by human imagination and made by human hands ([Acts 17:28-29](#)). To worship such an idol is ignorant foolishness; once people realize this, they must repent ([Acts 17:30](#); [Romans 1:22-23](#)). Such affront against God will not go unjudged ([Acts 17:31](#)).

If God is the source of our movement and being, and if we are His offspring, it's illogical to make images of Him by human hands ([Acts 17:29](#)). Paul shows that idols don't make sense even within the Athenian belief system.

Epicureans did not believe in the soul, judgment after death, or the resurrection of the dead. They lived for sufficient food, comfort, and friends to live a peaceful, balanced life. In fact, these philosophers were probably closet atheists who didn't take the gods seriously, anyway. Some mock Paul as he walks away, some want to hear more, and a handful accept Jesus' offer of forgiveness ([Acts 17:32-34](#)).

[<https://www.bibleref.com/Acts/17/Acts-17-27.html>]



What is God saying to me today?

Proverbs 3:5
Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own.

How to Live a Good Life

Reflection

The Lord is close to those who seek Him. Wise men [and women] still look for Jesus.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Reach out and receive redemption.

Have I been treating God like He's near or like He's far?



UNITED WITH CHRIST

FURTHERMORE, BECAUSE WE ARE UNITED WITH CHRIST, WE HAVE RECEIVED AN INHERITANCE FROM GOD, FOR HE CHOSE US IN ADVANCE, AND HE MAKES EVERYTHING WORK OUT ACCORDING TO HIS PLAN. - EPHESIANS 1:11 NLT

Our union with Christ is captured in that simple prepositional phrase, “in Christ,” used by Paul in one form or another 164 times. Only as we are “in Christ” are we chosen, called, regenerated, justified, sanctified, redeemed, assured of the resurrection, and given every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:4,7; Rom. 6:5; 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:3). This union with Christ spans space and time— so that Paul can say that the Christian has died with Christ (Rm. 6:1-11; Gal. 2:20); the Christian has been resurrected with Christ (Eph. 2:5f; Col. 3:1f.), the Christian has ascended with Christ to share now in His reign in the heavenly places (Rm. 5:17; Eph. 2:6) and the Christian is destined to share Christ’s coming glory with Him (Phil 3:20f; 1 Jn. 3:2).

No wonder some call our union with Christ one of the central messages of the New Testament. Theologian John Murray called it “the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation.” A.W. Pink said, “The subject of spiritual union is the most important, the most profound, and yet the most blessed of any that is set forth in sacred Scripture.” Cambridge scholar B.F. Westcott wrote: “If once we realize what these words ‘we are in Christ’ mean, we shall know that beneath the surface of life lie depths which we cannot fathom, full alike of mystery and hope.”

Union with Christ is that spiritual reality whereby we as believers are joined to our Lord such that what is true of Him becomes true of us. This spiritual union is the means by which space and time are transcended and we share in all the benefits of Jesus’ work in history on our behalf. It is central to our understanding of who we are as Christians.

The Spirit Himself unites us with Christ and so applies all His saving work to our lives. “We know that we live in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit” (1 John 4:13).

Union with Christ—you could say it is the sum of our salvation. The saving work of Christ is captured in this one simple phrase—by faith we are now in Christ. That’s our only hope, for to be separate from Christ is to be “without hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). But to be in Christ is to share in all His riches. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” [https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/union-with-christ/]

Proverbs 28:5
 Evildoers do not understand what is right, but those who seek the Lord understand it fully.

How to Live a Good Life



Reflection

Here is an assurance of seeking being united with Christ: **He makes everything work out according to His plan.**

Everything God does is good. If it doesn’t look good right now, then God isn’t finished yet!

He chose **YOU** and there is an inheritance from God

Do I look at myself as apart from Christ, or do I see myself as united with Christ?



What is God saying to me today?



LIVE IN LOVE, LIVE IN GOD.

WE KNOW HOW MUCH GOD LOVES US, AND WE HAVE PUT OUR TRUST IN HIS LOVE.
GOD IS LOVE, AND ALL WHO LIVE IN LOVE LIVE IN GOD, AND GOD LIVES IN THEM.

- 1 JOHN 4:16 NLT

Loving like Jesus is the best way to live. When we love like Him, we can step outside ourselves and clearly see our loved ones and their needs. We can shed layers of selfishness, resentment, anxiety, pettiness, and entitlement. Most of all, we can rise above our human imperfections and step into transcendent love.

Jesus' model of love challenges us to stop settling for anything less than "the most excellent way." If you want to love like Jesus, read on.

Can anyone really love like Jesus?

When it comes to love, Jesus raised the bar astronomically. He teaches us to love our enemies, turn the other cheek, and walk the extra mile. To our human minds, that sounds completely outrageous—but that's the point.

If we want to love like Jesus, we have to open our hearts and our minds. We need to be able to fully utilize our emotion, reason, thoughts, and feelings. We can't bring perfect love into our imperfect lives without this kind of complete vulnerability.

Why? Because opening your heart allows love to change your mind. When Jesus touches your heart, your mind can follow suit and be completely transformed. Allowing your heart into the conversation will revolutionize your thinking. We believe that's what Paul meant when he said, "You'll be changed from the inside out" (Romans 12:1 MSG).

If you're in search of reasonable love, you'll miss out on a love that's extraordinary—on the opportunity to find a love you didn't realize you had.

Jesus's ideal model of love can rub off on our imperfect lives. Why? Because loving like Him is more attainable than we realize.

5 actionable ways to love like Jesus

Jesus' example and teachings show us at least five ways we can love more like Him. While it's not an exhaustive list by any means, these practices can provide us with an actionable starting point to apply to our imperfect, human lives.

To love like Jesus, we must:

Be mindful. We need to connect more deeply with our lives and the people in them, rather than living a detached, disconnected existence.

Be approachable. It's important for people to feel safe approaching us; in other words, we must become less exclusive in our interactions with others and more welcoming to those who seek us out.

Be full of grace. We must be willing to relate to others in a less judgmental way.

Be bold. We have to shed our fears, "for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control" (2 Timothy 1:7, ESV).

Be self-giving. We need to become less self-absorbed and more invested in those around us.

Over and over, Jesus demonstrated these qualities to show us that they're not unattainable ideals. Instead, they're a doable way to get an earthly handle on a heavenly ideal.

Proverbs 10:12

Hatred stirs up
strife, but love
covers all offenses.

How to Live a Good Life



Reflection

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that."
— Martin Luther King Jr.

"We accept the love we think we deserve."
— Stephen Chbosky

What does it look like to live in love this week?



What is God saying to me today?



COMMIT TO THE LORD

COMMIT YOUR WAY TO THE LORD; TRUST IN HIM AND HE WILL DO THIS: HE WILL MAKE YOUR RIGHTEOUS REWARD SHINE LIKE THE DAWN, YOUR VINDICATION LIKE

THE NOONDAY SUN. - PSALM 37:5-6 NIV

Proverbs 16:3 states, “Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established” (ESV). This wonderful verse speaks of our responsibility to serve God and the result of discharging our duty faithfully.

The first verb, commit, is a word that, in Hebrew, literally means “to roll.” Other passages such as Genesis 29:3 and Psalm 22:8–9 likewise use the idea of “rolling” something to the Lord. The idea is that we completely give something over to God in dependence upon Him. When we “commit” our work to the Lord, we offer everything we do completely to Him.

The Hebrew syntax also reveals the idea that we commit our work to the Lord in order that our plans will be established. We must do the first part if we expect God to fulfill the second part.

If we completely depend upon God in our work, He will “establish” our plans. That is, He will “bring about” or “cause to happen” our plans. We can expect God to bring our work to fruition in God’s way and in God’s time when we depend on Him in our efforts. Part of committing our work to God, of course, is seeking and following God’s will; when our work aligns with God’s will, then success will follow.

Proverbs, as a literary form, communicate general life principles and not exact promises. In other words, we can generally expect God to bless our work when we operate according to His ways in dependence upon Him. However, this does not mean we will never lose a job or have trouble in our work. Instead, we can expect God to fulfill His promise of Romans 8:28, “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

This proverb is similar in context to Psalm 1:1–3: “Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.”

When we commit our ways and our work to the Lord, He will bless our efforts according to His perfect will in ways beyond our understanding. We should serve the Lord faithfully and then leave the results to Him. Though we will still face times of difficulty, we can trust that God is working for His ultimate good—and ours—through our efforts to please Him in our daily vocation.

[<https://www.gotquestions.org/commit-work-plans-established.html>]



What is God saying to me today?

Proverbs 16:3
Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.

How to Live a Good Life

Reflection

“Proverbs are not guaranteed promises. They are practical wisdom for a godly and peaceful life. It may not be wise to read them as a principle and promise. It is more like a cause-and-effect. There is a choice and a consequence. You make specific life decisions. And there are typical results you can expect.”

What am I committing to the Lord and trusting Him about this week?



ROOTED FOR GOOD FRUIT

A TREE IS IDENTIFIED BY ITS FRUIT. IF A TREE IS GOOD, ITS FRUIT WILL BE GOOD. IF A TREE IS BAD, ITS FRUIT WILL BE BAD. - MATTHEW 12:33 NLT

Let's look at this more carefully in three parts: a proverb about trees (v.33), a connection to the heart (v. 34-35), and a warning about words (v. 36-37). Look first at Jesus' proverb about trees. Verse 33, "Either make the tree good and its fruit good or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit."

Our neighbors have a pear tree. Several of its branches hang over our fence; and towards fall, that tree begins to drop numerous pears into our yard. Sadly, they're all bad. Since we've lived here, never once has that tree produced good fruit. Why? Because the tree itself is bad. Had someone grafted it with a good pear tree early on, perhaps there would've been more success. But the nature of that pear tree means it bears bad fruit.

In an agrarian society of Jesus' day, everyone would agree with Jesus' proverb. They experienced this in farming. Good trees make good fruit. Bad trees make bad fruit. And the way you identify a good or bad tree is by looking at the fruit.

Jesus taught the same back in 7:17. Only there it was in the context of discerning false teachers. He said, "Every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them (i.e., these false teachers) by their fruits."

Jesus makes a similar point here, but He's applying it directly to His encounter with the Pharisees. He's giving them a picture to consider in light of His own ministry and their observations about it. If you determine the nature of a tree by its fruit, then look at the good fruit of Jesus and recognize that His tree is good. But don't look at the good fruit of Jesus' life and call Him a bad tree. That's not being honest with the evidence. A more honest assessment would connect the good fruit of Jesus' ministry to His good nature. It would also connect the bad fruit of the Pharisees to their bad nature.

A Tree Is Known by Its Fruit - Bret Rogers | Partial Sermon Transcript
[<https://www.redeemerfortworth.org/sermons/sermon/2023-06-25/a-tree-is-known-by-its-fruit>]

What do others in my circle say about Jesus? What do they say about me?
What do I say about Jesus? What do I say about myself?



What is God saying to me today?

Proverbs 12:12
Whoever is wicked covets the spoil of evildoers, but the root of the righteous bears fruit.

How to Live a Good Life

Reflection

As Believers, getting caught up in the fruit we're trying to produce is a reversal of what Jesus taught. Instead, it's all about the kind of person you're becoming. The only thing on earth that can produce apples is an apple tree.

So, what kind of tree bears the fruit of the Spirit?



REMAIN IN JESUS

REMAIN IN ME, AS I ALSO REMAIN IN YOU. NO BRANCH CAN BEAR FRUIT BY ITSELF; IT MUST REMAIN IN THE VINE. NEITHER CAN YOU BEAR FRUIT UNLESS YOU REMAIN IN ME. I AM THE VINE; YOU ARE THE BRANCHES. IF YOU REMAIN IN ME AND I IN YOU, YOU WILL BEAR MUCH FRUIT; APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING. - JOHN 15:4-5 NIV

Today's Bible reading is John 15. Take a moment to reflect on Jesus' words in verses 4 and 5.

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

Trim a limb off a tree and what happens? That limb will never grow another inch. Accidentally cut your finger off with a table saw and what happens? That finger has been cut off from the source of life. Remove a branch from a vine and what happens? It's dead. It can never and will never bear more fruit.

"**Apart from me you can do nothing.**" Shouldn't that make us desperate for Jesus? Shouldn't that fuel our thanksgiving and keep us humble? Shouldn't that shape every aspect of our relationship with Him?

Apart from Him, we are alienated. Apart from Him, there is no hope. Apart from Him, we are walking through life without God. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. Nothing to save ourselves. Nothing to redeem ourselves. Nothing to right our own wrongs.

But here is the opportunity—graciously extended by the Son of God—to abide in Him and He in us. Amazing!

"**Apart from me you can do nothing.**" Let's be aware of that when we pray in His name. Let's remember that when we have the opportunity to forgive. Let's focus on that when we're called on to serve. Let's allow that truth to shape the way we worship.

"**Apart from me you can do nothing.**" Thank God we don't have to face life apart from Him.

John 15: "Apart From Me You Can Do Nothing" - Jason Hardin
[<https://www.charlestownroad.org/john-15-apart-from-me-you-can-do-nothing/>]



What is God saying to me today?

Proverbs 11:30

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives.

How to Live a Good Life

Reflection

Apart from God, fruit is impossible. With God, fruit is inevitable.

It's like the tree planted by the stream pictured in Psalm 1:3, bearing fruit in every season and never withering. "In all that he does, he prospers."

Have I checked the status of my fruit?

DAILY CHALLENGE

“A message discovered is more powerful than a message delivered.”
(Unknown)

DAY 8: PRAYER WALK

If someone wants to “find God,” they need to be the ones who leave their comfort zones and go to a place they've never been, interact with people who are different from them, and do a bunch of things that all seem foreign to them.

But Jesus clearly tells his disciples that we are the ones who are called to GO. We are the ones who are supposed to leave our comfort zones, step into other people's lives, and meet them where they are.

Go prayer walking around your neighborhood or workplace for at least 20 minutes today.

Ask God to give you a mission mindset and do some imagination prayer.

- What could you imagine God doing there?
- Write down what God speaks to your mind

DAY 9: LIVE WITH A MISSION MINDSET

“We shouldn't bother sharing our faith if we aren't willing to first show it.”

There are two kinds of people in the world:

- 1) Those who walk around saying “Here I Am”
- AND
- 2) Those who walk saying “There you Are

Be others-focused, a “There you are” type of person.

Shift how we view where we live, work, and play.

Grow in the art of engaging with lost people. “E” in DINE.

Let's rearrange our lives to regularly engage with those who don't know Jesus yet.

What are you going to do today to show God's love?

With _____
Whom? _____

How will you do it? _____

DAY 10: INTENTIONAL CONVERSATION

Pick someone in your life that you have only had casual conversations with and try to move the conversation to Meaningful. Strike up a conversation.

Casual Conversations	Meaningful Conversations	Casual – Surface Talk, Facts (Ex. The weather, where you're from, age of kids) Meaningful – Sharing Vulnerably, Feelings (Ex. Stresses, passions) Spiritual – God Talk, Sharing your story (Ex. Asking about spiritual Background) Discovery – Informal Bible Study (Ex. Sharing a Bible Study and discussing)
Discovery Conversations	Spiritual Conversations	

ASK QUESTIONS

E.g.

- You seem to be really into _____; why is that?
- You are really good at _____, how did you get that way
- If you could have one miracle happen in your life, what would it be?

Strike up a meaningful conversation today

- ◆ Be quiet and listen, really listen
- ◆ Listen for pain points
- ◆ Listen for things you can offer to pray for
- ◆ Listen for ways you could serve them

Strike up a meaningful conversation today.

DAY 11: LET JESUS DRIP IN

Develop the habit of sending a note thanking those God has placed and poured into the lives of your family.

Send a thank you/appreciation note to express:

- a. Express something you are grateful for and give God credit for it
- b. Share about something/lesson that God recently taught you
- c. Talk about a miracle you've experienced as a result

PRAY FOR THE PEOPLE GOD PLACED IN YOUR LIFE WHO HAVE BEEN A BLESSING TO YOUR FAMILY

DAILY CHALLENGE

"A message discovered is more powerful than a message delivered."
Unknown

DAY 12: CELEBRATE OBEDIENCE

What's an area in your life that you'd honestly not want someone to emulate?

- Language
- Weak Prayer Life
- Purity
- Fill in _____

What's a small, specific step you could take to grow in this area?

Call a Christian friend and ask if they will keep you accountable

DAY 13: BE STILL

Be quiet before the Lord for a few minutes and ask Him what you should specifically do today based on what you just read.

Write down what he says:

NOW OBEY

7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE DISCIPLES MAKERS

1. **PRAY** – a lot
2. **CONNECT** – meaningful conversations
3. **SERVE** – help people
4. **ASK** – ask people to take action
5. **PLAN** – promote consistency
6. **TEAM UP** – don't work alone
7. **THINK**

MULTIPLICATION – be fruitful & multiply

"The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. ³⁸ Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."
(Matt. 9:37-38)

NOTES:

WEEK 2



SHARE CHRIST

Dear Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we continue in this season of prayer and fasting, I encourage you to boldly share Christ's hope. We are called to be His witnesses, proclaiming the gospel with joy and urgency.

**“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses.”
(Acts 1:8)**

The Holy Spirit empowers us to share Christ’s love in our neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, and families. Sharing Christ is about pointing others to the gospel's truth through words or actions. You don’t need to be a preacher—simply live in a way that reflects His grace.

Start by showing kindness, listening, and praying for those who have yet to know Christ. Share your testimony, and let your actions reflect His love. The Holy Spirit will guide every conversation and moment.

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few (Matthew 9:37).

Let us be those laborers, ready to share the hope we’ve found in Christ. You don’t need the perfect moment to share your faith. Let’s grow as a congregation, actively reaching out to others with the life-changing message of Christ. As we share His love, we will see lives transformed, hearts healed, and God’s Kingdom expanded.

Borrowing from others with some adaptation, use the **B.L.E.S.S. rhythms** to lead disciples to make disciples together where we live, work, learn, and play. **B.L.E.S.S. is an acronym for Bless, Listen, Eat, Slow Down, and Share.**

- **B – Begin with Prayer** (I will pray for the people in my life and the places that I’m in.)
- **L – Listen** (I will listen to and discover the needs of others and the places where God is at work.)
- **E – Eat** (I will share meals and spend time with people in my life.)
- **S – Serve** (I will respond to the needs of others and help them in tangible and impacting ways.)
- **S – Share your story** (I will share the story of Jesus and what He is doing in my life with others.)

May God bless each of you as you go and share the hope of Christ, starting with those closest to you (**F.R.A.N.C.E.** – Family, Friends, Relatives, Acquaintances, Neighbors, Colleagues, and Everyone).

You are His hands and feet in this world, and He will equip you for every opportunity.

In Christ’s love,
Pastor Spencer

Here is a curated
worship playlist for this
week’s fasting focus. Be
blessed as you worship,
reflect, and meditate.





GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THAT I HAVE COMMANDED YOU. AND BEHOLD, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, TO THE END OF THE AGE.

MATTHEW 28:19-20 ESV

FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS

Each of the four Gospels describes Jesus commissioning His disciples before His ascension. The disciples were to proclaim the gospel to the world (Mark 16:15), proclaim repentance for the forgiveness of sins to all nations (Luke 24:47), and were being sent by Jesus with the power of the Holy Spirit (John 20:21-22).

The most famous commissioning is recorded in Matthew 28:18-20. It is known as the Great Commission, the final charge from Jesus to His followers. These three verses contain a declaration, a command, and a promise from the Savior of the world.

The Great Commission is a commission, a task, a mission that was originally assigned to Jesus' apostles. The central task is to make disciples. To do this, one must go to the lost and then baptize and teach believers to obey Jesus' commands.

The commission is accompanied by a declaration that Jesus has all authority in Heaven and on Earth (Matthew 28:18) and a promise that He will be with us to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).

The Great Commission was not meant just for the original disciples. In Acts, it says persecution caused the church in Jerusalem to scatter, and "[t]hose who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went (Acts 8:4)."

That early Church modeled that as new believers were discipled, they in turn preached the gospel and discipled others. This is because all believers are called to be ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20) and to be ready "to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have (1 Peter 3:15)."

This means every obedient follower of Jesus is called to participate in His Great Commission.

However, not every disciple of Christ is called to be a missionary. To say the only way to be a part of the Great Commission is by traveling overseas is a narrow view of the task. Even Paul, a great missionary for the Lord, did not ask the Roman Church to join him in his travels. Rather, he asked his fellow believers to assist him on his journey (Romans 15:24) and to join him in prayer (Romans 15:30).

With that said, believers should not discount the possible call on their lives to work on the front lines. It could be a calling as short as a weeklong mission trip or as long as a 30-year deployment. The point is to discern how God is leading you to participate in His mission and to faithfully respond to that leading.

[<https://www.eastwest.org/blog/commissioned-part-1-understanding-the-great-commission/>]

Reflection

God says, "GO," and therefore, He equips, empowers, and evolves you for His induction and instruction. He stays with you. Decide today, "Where He leads, I will follow."

How often do I remind myself that God is with ME and is sending ME?

He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, But he who refuses correction goes astray.

Proverbs 10:17



How to Live a Good Life



What is God saying to me today?



AS FOR YOU, ALWAYS BE SOBER-MINDED, ENDURE SUFFERING, DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST, FULFILL YOUR MINISTRY. - 2 TIMOTHY 4:5 ESV

DO THE WORK

His rescuing love is the trustworthy seed that our friends need. When shared sincerely, it will change them as it has changed us!

The calling to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5) has been put to each and every person who follows Jesus Christ. Like all of His commands, this one brings us to the end of ourselves.

We have no power to change someone’s mind or open someone’s heart. Each man, each woman is a silent fortress of private hopes and fears which we cannot enter on our own. We must be invited in. But only those who are trustworthy get invited in and on our own, we fall short of such a title. **But this is not inescapable, God has the power to re-shape and re-make us so that we truly are worthy of our friends’ trust.**

He does this by the power and the presence of His Holy Spirit. Men and women find Christ to be worthy of trust and so they welcome Him into their lives. But this trustworthy Christ now lives inside us because of our faith. This is the mystery – “Christ in you the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). It is not we ourselves who must gain access to our neighbor’s hearts. But it is the Lord.

God Uses Us

When Paul and Barnabas spoke to Lydia on the riverbank in Philippi, “the Lord opened her heart to the message.” (Acts 16:14)

After Lydia’s heart was opened, she accepted what Paul was saying. First comes the opening of the heart by the Lord and then comes the acceptance of the message by the searching soul. Notice evangelism here is conversational and very personal. It happens in the context of a small group without stage lights or a professional speaker.

To do the work of an evangelist then throws us utterly onto the mercy of God. It is not a job we can do. If their heart is opened, He has done it. If they accept the message, He has done it.

This is a central truth about evangelism. We must never forget it. But let’s not stop there. If we focus solely on God’s central role, it can eclipse our role. Thinking there is nothing for us to do, we throw up our hands and stop before we even start.

God has always used people to achieve His ends. (Moses, Jonah, Peter, etc.) In the heart-opening work of evangelism, God continues this pattern. **God uses people. God uses us.**

[<https://saturatetheworld.com/2017/10/31/the-work-of-an-evangelist/>]

Reflection

Be, then do. “Ministry flows from being.” Be in Christ and then do the work of Christ.

When was the last time I rested in Christ? When was the last time I felt like I lived from a place of desire and delight instead of duty and demand?

A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.

Proverbs 11:25



How to Live a Good Life



What is God saying to me today?



BUT IN YOUR HEARTS REVERE CHRIST AS LORD. ALWAYS BE PREPARED TO GIVE AN ANSWER TO EVERYONE WHO ASKS YOU TO GIVE THE REASON FOR THE HOPE THAT YOU HAVE. BUT DO THIS WITH GENTLENESS AND RESPECT, KEEPING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE, SO THAT THOSE WHO SPEAK MALICIOUSLY AGAINST YOUR GOOD BEHAVIOR IN CHRIST MAY BE ASHAMED OF THEIR SLANDER. FOR IT IS BETTER, IF IT IS GOD'S WILL, TO SUFFER FOR DOING GOOD THAN FOR DOING EVIL. - 1 PETER 3:15-17 NIV

Reflection

“FEAR” is the number one answer that Christians give for not sharing Christ. When looked into further, feelings of inadequacy or fear of an unpleasant reception show up in great droves. In just 3 verses (1 Pet. 3:15-17), we have a model for a full Christian life. Revere Christ. Live Hopeful. Be Prepared. Give Answers. Display Gentleness. Show Respect. Maintain Conscience.

Which of these seven aspects do I need to work on? How will I do it?"

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 15:1



How to Live a Good Life

PREPARE THE ANSWERS

Clear Conscience - 1 Peter 3:13-22

“Persecution occurred, however, in spite of believers’ desires to live peacefully and their eagerness to do good. Peter encouraged his readers with the fact that the right response to undeserved suffering results in blessing. He presented the principle in verses 13–17 and provided examples in verses 18–22.”

1. Who is going to hurt you? (13-14) Blessed here means “highly favored”, not feel delighted.
 - Fear God over men. Isaiah 8:12 (ESV): “Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread.” (14)
2. Overcoming fear requires us exalting Christ as Lord (15)
 - Reason = apologia or defense for why you believe what you believe about Christ Jesus.
 - 1 Peter 3:15 (BKC): As a result Christians should always be prepared (heteroimoi, “ready”; cf. 1:5) to give ... the reason (apologian, the “defense” which a defendant makes before a judge; cf. Acts 22:1; 25:16) for their hope in Christ. Such an oral defense should be consistent with one’s “set-apart” conduct.
 - There’s the posture of *prepared*.
 - There’s the work of *prepared*.
 - There’s the willingness of *prepared*.
3. Give your reason in a way that honors Christ. How you do this matters. (16)
 - Perhaps Peter is recalling how he did not do this when confronted 3 times after Jesus’ arrest. (Mark 14:66-72)
 - Yet it may be God’s will for you to suffer for doing good. (17)
4. Illustrations on the above principles (18-22)
 - Jesus is our supreme example. He suffered greatly for doing nothing but good. (Healing, miracles, preaching, serving, and the cross) Great summary: “1 Peter 3:18 (BKC): In verses 18–22 Peter illustrated the principles given in verses 13–17. Once again Christ provided the perfect example. He suffered for doing what was right (2:14). His sinless life provoked the unjust hostilities of evil men. However, He did not fear men but trusted Himself to God. Christ clearly stated His purpose and committed Himself to a course of action. He died in mankind’s place, keeping His conscience clear (cf. 2:23). As a result He received tremendous blessing and reward in His own resurrection and exultation.” (18) Maybe the greatest summary of the gospel in one verse in the Bible.
 1. Christ (anointed one) suffered once for sins (fully sufficient sacrifice for all sin)
 2. the righteous for the unrighteous (our substitute)
 3. to bring you to God (to reconcile us to God)
 4. Put to death in the body (cross)
 5. Made alive in the Spirit

[<https://www.gracetoday.net/podcast/2020/12/1/be-prepared-to-answer-1-peter-315-16>]



What is God saying to me today?



HOW, THEN, CAN THEY CALL ON THE ONE THEY HAVE NOT BELIEVED IN? AND HOW CAN THEY BELIEVE IN THE ONE OF WHOM THEY HAVE NOT HEARD? AND HOW CAN THEY HEAR WITHOUT SOMEONE PREACHING TO THEM? AND HOW CAN ANYONE PREACH UNLESS THEY ARE SENT? AS IT IS WRITTEN: "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS!"

CONSEQUENTLY, FAITH COMES FROM HEARING THE MESSAGE, AND THE MESSAGE IS HEARD THROUGH THE WORD ABOUT CHRIST.

ROMANS 10:14-15, 17 NIV

CARRY THE MESSAGE

From Paul to Timothy

I am past 60 and don't know exactly how long I will be here, so I am trying to mentor the next generation of men and women to carry on with proclaiming the Gospel for the day in which I am no longer here. I have no clue when that will be; only God does (John 14:5; Psalm 39:4). Therefore, I must prepare the next generation to carry on the Gospel message for the day I'm gone. Paul mentored Timothy (1 Tim., 2 Tim.), and I believe every Timothy needs a Paul to mentor him or her to carry on for the day they are gone. When I began my writing career many years ago, the very first book I wrote was on apologetics because I taught Sunday school to youth for over 20 years. Time after time, when the children left home, they would leave the church. It grieved me to see these young people turn their back on their faith and on God. Are you presently leading someone to carry on the Gospel message? Is it your children, your grandchildren, someone in your Sunday school class, or just someone you know?

From Elijah to Elisha

When Elijah knew he was about to leave his earthly ministry, he sought out and mentored Elisha because he knew that someone would need to carry on his ministry after he was gone. Elisha willingly left all he had to follow and be mentored by Elijah. Elijah trained him well for what Bible scholars believe was 12 years in all. This gave Elisha adequate time to be trained by his mentor to carry on the message of God. Elisha's name means "God is salvation," while Elijah's means "my God is Jehovah." Elijah's view of God shaped Elisha's. He knew that there must be someone to carry on this message and ministry. Elisha showed his willingness to forsake all as he left his plowing in the field, used the wooden yoke to cook the slaughtered oxen, and simply became Elijah's servant (1 Kings 19:21). When Elisha picked up Elijah's cloak, it was like a runner passing on the baton in a relay race. From that point forward, Elisha would carry on where Elijah left off (1 Kings 19:24).

From You to Whom?

You may not have 12 years to mentor someone to carry on the Gospel. It could be longer, or it could be shorter. The point is, from you to whom? Who will carry on when you are gone? If you are a younger person, seek out an Elijah today for someone to mentor you because someday you may be needed to mentor the next generation to carry on the Gospel message. Who will that be? Have you even thought about it? Are you even mentoring someone right now? If you're a younger person, is there someone mentoring you? If so, who is it? If not, why not? I still have a mentor, and I don't believe you will ever outgrow the need for one. For me, he is an elderly man, a retired pastor for whom I have much respect. He has a lot more experience than I do. He is quick to correct me, and I thank him for that. I talk to him frequently just to unload my ministry issues, and he gives me experienced, wise counsel that you can't learn from of a textbook, once again proving the fact that every Paul needs a Timothy, but every Timothy needs a Paul.

[<https://www.rhetoricaljesus.com/are-you-leading-the-next-generation-to-carry-on-the-gospel-message/>]

Reflection

Carry the Message: In Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), this primarily refers to the act of sharing one's experiences of recovery, the strength garnered during this process, and the hope that emanates from a life of sobriety.

Sounds familiar? Tell your salvation story this way. Your life before Christ, in accepting Christ, and since Christ.


How often am I hearing the message of Christ? How often am I sharing the message of Christ?

A person finds joy in giving an apt reply — and how good is a timely word!

Proverbs 15:23



How to Live a Good Life

 What is God saying to me today?



AFTER THIS THE LORD APPOINTED SEVENTY-TWO OTHERS AND SENT THEM ON AHEAD OF HIM, TWO BY TWO, INTO EVERY TOWN AND PLACE WHERE HE HIMSELF WAS ABOUT TO GO. AND HE SAID TO THEM, “THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL, BUT THE LABORERS ARE FEW. THEREFORE PRAY EARNESTLY TO THE LORD OF THE HARVEST TO SEND OUT LABORERS INTO HIS HARVEST.

LUKE 10:1-2 ESV

LEAD THE WAY

JESUS IS LORD OF THE HARVEST

Harvest has always been an important time of year when hard work bears fruit of the labors. It is symbolic of bounty, health, and abundance. Throughout the Bible, harvest carries spiritual significance. It is the result of God’s work in the heart of man. It is His provisions and blessing for us. As with physical growth of a field, the spiritual growth of people is overseen by God Himself. As Lord of the Harvest, Christ uses His disciples as workers of the harvest, gathering others by their faith in Him. The words spoken by Jesus are still true today, “the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few” (Matthew 9:37). Faithful followers of Christ are needed to pray for the lost, show God’s love, and share the Good News of Jesus Christ. The time for spiritual harvest is now, whenever, and wherever a lost person exists.

Matthew 9:37-38, “Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’”

What does harvesting symbolize?

Spiritual harvest is a resurrection to eternal life in God’s kingdom.

Who is the harvest?

People are the harvest – lost souls to be saved by faith in Jesus Christ. John 4:35 “Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”

Who are the laborers?

Followers of Christ who faithfully share the gospel. Galatians 6:9, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

Pray

Heavenly Father, I pray the heart of Your followers do not sit idly by but actively reach out, sharing the gospel, to those who are hurting and lost. Lord, as Your Word says, “the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” Open our eyes so that we may see those in need of hearing Your Word. May we be constantly on our knees, calling out to You to raise up laborers for the advancement of the gospel to the ends of the earth. I pray You send us out to make a difference for Your kingdom. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Reflection

Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.

- Robert Louis Stevenson

Before the reward, there must be labor. You plant before you harvest. You sow in tears before you reap joy. - Ralph Ranson

Am I a laborer in God's fields? Am I a reflector of Jesus' light?

He who gathers crops in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.

Proverbs 10:5



How to Live a Good Life

[<https://christiangrandparenting.com/jesus-is-lord-of-the-harvest/>]



What is God saying to me today?



FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL, FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES, TO THE JEW FIRST AND ALSO TO THE GREEK. - ROMANS 1:16 ESV

LOVE THE GOSPEL

In Romans 1, Paul addresses the Gentile believers at Rome and begins by explaining his mission, which was to preach the gospel to everyone. He concludes his explanation by saying, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’” (Romans 1:16–17; cf. Habakkuk 2:4).

The word translated “ashamed” means “disgraced” or “personally humiliated.” A person “ashamed” in this way is like someone singled out for misplacing his confidence—he trusted in something, and that something let him down. The word can refer to being dishonored because of forming the wrong alliances. So, when Paul says that he is not ashamed of the gospel, he is saying his confidence in the gospel is not misplaced. There is no disgrace in declaring it. Paul had given his life to proclaiming the truths that Jesus Himself had revealed to him (Acts 9:3–6; 2 Corinthians 12:2–4). He explained to the Romans why he did not believe that he had wrongly identified with Jesus and why proclaiming Jesus’ message was his life’s work.

The application can extend to us as well. Just as Paul placed his confidence in the gospel of Christ, so can we. We can proclaim with boldness the truths that God has revealed in His Word, with no fear that our confidence is misplaced. “Anyone who believes in Him will never be put to shame” (Romans 10:11; cf. Isaiah 28:16). We can rest in the knowledge that the Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of Scripture never changes (2 Peter 1:21; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8). What was true thousands of years ago is still true. The offer of salvation that was presented to people of the first century is still open to us (Acts 2:39; John 17:20).

To live unashamed of the gospel means we proclaim it, but it also means we apply it to our lives and show we believe it. Paul’s life choices supported his message. He did not preach one thing and live another. We are “ashamed of the gospel” when we allow sin in our lives to go unchecked (Matthew 3:8). When we indulge in worldliness and carnal desires or blatantly disobey scriptural standards, we indicate that we lack confidence in our own message (1 Corinthians 3:3; 1 Peter 2:11). When we “walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the path of sinners, and sit in the seat of scoffers” (Psalm 1:1), we are being ashamed of the gospel. We are not allowing its truth to penetrate our lives so that others see its changing power. To live unashamed of the gospel means that we, like Paul, allow it to dominate our lives to the extent that everyone within our sphere of influence can see that we have “been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

Reflection

We do not need to be ashamed of Christ and His message. It is the Spirit of God that draws. We make the call and allow others to answer.

“Here’s the truth: You cannot do God’s work without God’s help. It’s impossible to live a godly life or fulfill your purpose without the Holy Spirit. This isn’t about trying harder or doing more; it’s about surrendering to the one asset in your spiritual life that empowers everything: the Holy Spirit.” - Dr. Dharius Daniels

How do I handle shame in my life? How is my faith being renewed by the Spirit of God?

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 1:7



How to Live a Good Life



What is God saying to me today?

[<https://www.gotquestions.org/not-ashamed-Gospel.html>]



THEREFORE, IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, THE NEW CREATION HAS COME: THE OLD HAS GONE, THE NEW IS HERE! ALL THIS IS FROM GOD, WHO RECONCILED US TO HIMSELF THROUGH CHRIST AND GAVE US THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION: THAT GOD WAS RECONCILING THE WORLD TO HIMSELF IN CHRIST, NOT COUNTING PEOPLE'S SINS AGAINST THEM. AND HE HAS COMMITTED TO US THE MESSAGE OF RECONCILIATION. WE ARE THEREFORE CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS, AS THOUGH GOD WERE MAKING HIS APPEAL THROUGH US. WE IMPLORE YOU ON CHRIST'S BEHALF: BE RECONCILED TO GOD. - 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-20 NIV

MAKE THE APPEAL

He Is Making His Appeal Through You...by Janet Scott

2 Corinthians 5:19-20, that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God.

Do you see yourself as an ambassador for God to help draw others to Him? No matter what your occupation, you are called to be an ambassador for Him. God wants to use you to help others come to Him and accept Him as their Savior! How exciting that you can have that kind of impact on someone else's eternity. I think that too often we ignore eternity and act as though life on earth is the end when the reality of life on earth is just a drop in the bucket. We really need to grasp that because eternity is a long time for someone you love to be in Hell. I heard a preacher say one time that if we could really get a grasp of how terrible hell is we would be willing to crawl on our hands and knees over glass shards to tell the world about Jesus. I believe he was right. We need to take Jesus and other people's eternity more seriously.

The best way to reach others is to be an example of who Jesus is. Be His light. Don't worry about what others may think as far as your fitting into the world's standard (when the world actually has a standard). Make sure that your life lines up with Scripture! Ask God to reveal to you anything that may need to change in you in order for you to best serve Him. God wants to use your story, no matter what that may look like. Don't allow your past to keep you from serving God. Instead, allow God to use your story to reach others for Him! Dare to be different for God. Dare to give Him all you've got in order to reach this lost and dying world.

You matter! God sees you and He wants to walk closely with you through this life so He can shine through you. Remember Jeremiah 29:11-13, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." See? He has a plan specifically for you! That plan fits into the "Big Plan" He has for the world and you are a significant piece to Him. If you want true success in this life you must seek Him with your whole heart. That means there will be times that He will ask you to do things that don't line up with the way the world thinks, but that's ok because His best is found in Him, not in the world. Walk in the confidence that if He has called you to it, He will give you everything you need to do it. He's got you.

Get excited about the fact that the God of all wants to walk with you and He wants to use your life to further His mission. He loves you! He wants to heal your wounded and broken heart. He wants to use your story to change the lives of others. Ask Him today what His dreams for your life are. Ask Him to guide you into all He created you to be knowing that then you can know that truly His best is yet to come!

Reflection

As ambassadors, our lives and words are a direct appeal from God to the world, urging everyone to come back to Him.

This responsibility is profound, reminding us that we carry the message of hope and salvation not in our strength but as representatives of Christ Himself.

- Marisa D'Amore

Do you know The Lord? Have you accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

Have you committed your life to Christ? If YES, you are a new creation, and Jesus wants you to be His ambassador. Can God make His appeal through you?

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Proverbs 31:8-9



How to Live a Good Life

[<https://chocolateandgod.com/he-is-making-his-appeal-through-you/>]



What is God saying to me today?

DAILY CHALLENGE

"A message discovered is more powerful than a message delivered."
(Unknown)

DAY 14: JUST THE RIGHT TIME

Share what you learned today with one friend who has family members or friends who have been resistant to accepting Christ.

PRAY FOR and/or WITH THEM

DAY 15: PREPARE

Spend a few moments quietly preparing your heart and mind for the Word and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

There is power and beauty in this time.

DAY 16: MEDITATE

Consider the words of the scripture.

What do they mean to you?

Quietly talk to God, responding to the scripture and how it spoke to you.

These words are between you and God.

DAY 17: CONTEMPLATE

Pause in silence to consider the scripture and let God's message to you resonate.

There is power and beauty in this time.

DAY 18: SHARE & CONNECT

Take a moment to share an area where God is meeting you today.

What is something you've heard?

Say a short prayer of gratitude for this time together!

DAY 19: RESET

Write down the things you learned in Days 1-7.

How are you going to apply them in your life rhythms going forward?

- **What is your prayer plan going to be?**

DAY 20: READJUST

Write down the things you learned in Days 8-14.

How are you going to apply them in your life rhythms going forward?

How can I have discovery, obedience, and accountability in my life?

DAY 21: REFOCUS

Write down the things you learned in Days 15-21.

How are you going to apply them in your life rhythms going forward?

Read Ephesians 3:20

Take some time to ask God who is able to do immeasurably more than all you could ask or imagine, what you would have Him do through you as you pursue the life of a disciple?

Write out your specific requests, and use them for how you pray for yourself going forward

RE-SET

RE-ADJUST

RE-START

RE-FOCUS

JUST DONT QUIT.

NEWSTART
Lifestyle Program

DAILY CHALLENGE

*"A message discovered is more powerful than a message delivered."
Unknown*

NOTES:

7 STEPS TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY

1. Pray Effectively
2. Live Victoriously
3. Walk Circumspectly
4. Communicate Gracefully
5. Give Generously
6. Worship Wholeheartedly
7. Pursue Good Earnestly

ESSENCE OF DESTINY

- Watch your thoughts, for they become Words
- Choose your words, for they become Actions
- Understand your actions, for they become your Habits
- Study your habits, for they become your Character
- Develop your character, for it becomes your Destiny

"Prayer is therefore not an option for mankind but a necessity. If we don't pray, heaven cannot interfere in earth's affairs.



"Time spent in prayer is not time wasted but time invested."

— Myles Monroe

**"A day without prayer is a day without blessing,
and a life without prayer is a life without power."**

—Edwin Harvey

SOURCE: 21 DAYS TO BECOMING A DISCIPLE MAKER - JIM BRITTS

WEEK 3

SHOW CHRIST

Dear Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we continue our faith journey together, I remind all that our call as believers is to reflect Christ in every area of our lives. We embody His love, character, and teachings at home, work, or in the community.

**“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.”
(Colossians 3:17)**

This verse reminds us that our lives should be an offering to God in every area. No part of our lives should be separate from our commitment to Christ. We are called to honor Him in all things, seen and unseen.

Our actions often speak louder than words. How we treat others, work, or respond to challenges reveals what Christ looks like to the world. Jesus said,

**“Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”
(Matthew 5:16)**

Ten Ways to Show Christ:

- 1. **Love others unconditionally:** This is considered Jesus's core teaching, so showing genuine love and kindness to everyone, even those who may not deserve it, is a primary way to represent Christ.
- 2. **Serve others:** Actively seek opportunities to help people in need, whether through volunteering, offering support, or simply performing acts of service.
- 3. **Practice forgiveness:** Forgive others readily, just as Jesus forgave those who wronged him.
- 4. **Demonstrate compassion:** Be empathetic and understanding towards others' struggles, showing concern and offering support when needed.
- 5. **Live with integrity:** Be honest and truthful in your words and actions, upholding high moral standards.
- 6. **Pray regularly:** Spend time in prayer to connect with God and seek guidance in your life.
- 7. **Attend church:** Participating in religious services and community activities at your church can deepen your faith and connect you with others.
- 8. **Share your faith:** When appropriate, talk openly about your beliefs with others and be ready to answer questions about Christianity.
- 9. **Study the Bible:** Regularly reading and reflecting on the scriptures can help you better understand and apply Jesus' teachings to your life.
- 10. **Be generous:** Share your time, talents, and resources with others, demonstrating a spirit of giving.

Let's live intentionally, reflecting Christ's love in every interaction. Our lives should be living testimonies to the power of the gospel. Even in difficult times, we are not alone. The Holy Spirit strengthens and empowers us to live the life Christ calls us to.

Thank you for being a faithful and loving community. Let's commit to showing Christ in everything, so His name may be glorified and His Kingdom expanded.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Spencer

Here is a curated
worship playlist for this
week's fasting focus. Be
blessed as you worship,
reflect, and meditate.



IN THE SAME WAY, LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE OTHERS, THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD DEEDS AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN. - MATTHEW 5:16 NIV

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

WALKING THE WALK

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." - Matthew 5:16

In the journey of faith, it's not only about the words we speak but also about the steps we take. It's easy to talk the talk, to profess our beliefs and express our convictions, but the true essence of our faith is revealed in the way we walk the walk. Our actions speak louder than words, and the world around us is paying attention to the life we lead.

Think about it. When someone observes us, what do they see? Are they witnessing a life that is aligned with the principles of our faith? Are we demonstrating the love, kindness, and compassion that we proclaim? Our actions have the power to illuminate our beliefs in the most profound way, allowing our faith to shine brightly and touch the lives of those around us.

It's often said that people may forget what we say, but they rarely forget how we made them feel. Our actions create lasting impressions, far more than our words alone. When we embody the teachings of Christ, when we extend a helping hand to those in need, and when we treat others with respect and understanding, we are painting a vivid picture of the faith that resides within us.

Our lives are a living testament to the transformative power of faith. Others are watching us, seeking authenticity in a world filled with noise and distractions. They are looking for something genuine, something that stands out from the ordinary. By walking the walk, we provide a compelling example of what it truly means to follow Christ.

Our actions not only impact those who are watching us, but they also have a profound impact on our own spiritual growth. When we actively live out our faith, we are engaging in a continuous process of self-examination and refinement. We learn to navigate challenges with grace, respond to adversity with resilience, and extend forgiveness and reconciliation in the face of conflict.

So, let's challenge ourselves to go beyond the words we speak and embrace the significance of our actions. Let's be intentional about aligning our behavior with our beliefs, about embodying the love and light of Christ in every aspect of our lives. As we walk the walk, may our actions serve as a source of inspiration, encouragement, and hope to those around us, ultimately bringing glory to our Heavenly Father.

[<https://delmancoates.org/blog/2023/09/08/walking-the-walk?>]



What is God saying to me today?

How to Live a Good Life

Proverbs 4:18

The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.



Reflection

Jesus calls us to live in such a way that our lives reflect His light and goodness, leading others to give glory to God. This verse encourages us to be active in our faith through our actions. When we live out the teachings of Jesus, our lives become a powerful testimony to those around us. Our good deeds should not be for our own glory but as a signpost pointing others to God.

Because I am freely loved, I will love freely. Can I say this with great conviction and resolve?

TO THE WEAK I BECAME WEAK, TO WIN THE WEAK. I HAVE BECOME ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE SO THAT BY ALL POSSIBLE MEANS I MIGHT SAVE SOME. - 1 CORINTHIANS 9:22 NIV

BECOMING ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE

Gospel contextualization—the presentation of the biblical gospel in ways appropriate to a particular culture without compromising it—is both required and fraught with peril. For instance, early on the church learned that the gospel would not be confined to Jewish culture with all its particular traditions but would also go forth to the gentiles and would be received without gentiles’ being forced to culturally transform themselves into Jews (Acts 10). For the gospel to cross cultural boundaries, it must be to some degree “translated” when it meets a new culture in order for that culture to be able to make sense of it. Doing this without compromising the gospel is often more difficult than we imagine, and church history is filled with people and churches that ceased to be effectively Christian in their zeal to reach a culture. Sometimes a commendable zeal to see lost people saved is not matched by an equal zeal for biblical truth.

First Corinthians 9:19–23 is one of the most important biblical passages on gospel contextualization. However, we must be careful lest we misinterpret and misapply it. Many people have tried to adopt Paul’s approach of becoming “all things to all people” (v. 22) without also adopting his controlling principle of doing so not “outside the law of God but under the law of Christ” (v. 21). In fact, there was a limit to how Paul became “all things to all people.” He would not do anything that violated the “law of Christ.” Essentially, the law of Christ is the law of love, the eternal moral law of God that was given to the ancient Israelites along with specific, temporary provisions for sacrifices and the Israelite civil order. This moral law is unfolded with particular clarity by Jesus and His Apostles (Ex. 20:1–17; Matt. 5:17–20; Rom. 13:8–10). Whether Paul was seeking to save Jews or gentiles or trying to bring weaker Christians to maturity, he did not do anything to break the law of Christ. As John Calvin comments, “It was only in things indifferent, that are otherwise in our choice, that [Paul] accommodated himself to the weak.”

Calvin goes on to say that it is a great error not to distinguish between things indifferent and things unlawful. When believers surrender their freedom and adopt some of the practices of the culture they are trying to reach, they dare not fail to make the distinction between indifferent matters and evil matters. The only way we can do this is to know the Scriptures, to have a thorough understanding of the law of Christ, the eternal moral law of God.

[<https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/all-things-to-all-people>]



What is God saying to me today?

How to Live a Good Life

Proverbs 28:21

To show partiality is not good,
Because for a piece of bread a man will transgress.



Reflection

Paul's adaptive approach to ministry showcases his deep desire to connect with people from all walks of life. This verse encourages us to meet people where they are, adapting our approach to share the Gospel in ways that resonate with their individual experiences and backgrounds. This strategy requires us to step outside our comfort zones and engage with people in a way that speaks directly to their hearts.

Have I become all things to all people [within Christ] that you might save some?

BE WISE IN THE WAY YOU ACT TOWARD OUTSIDERS; MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY. LET YOUR CONVERSATION BE ALWAYS FULL OF GRACE, SEASONED WITH SALT, SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW HOW TO ANSWER EVERYONE. - COLOSSIANS 4:5-6 NIV

WISE ENGAGEMENT

Walk in wisdom toward those *who are outside*, redeeming the time. *Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*

a. **Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside:** The Christian life isn't only lived in the prayer closet. There also must be practical, lived-out Christianity, which lives wisely **toward those who are outside**. How we *speak* has a lot to do with this, so we must let our **speech always be with grace**.

i. "Distorted accounts of Christian conduct and belief were in circulation; it was important that Christians should give no color to these calumnies, but should rather give the lie to them by their regular manner of life." (Bruce)

ii. **Let your speech always be with grace:** "The word 'grace' has, in Greek as in English, the possible double meaning of God's grace and human graciousness." (Wright)

iii. "In classical writers 'salt' expressed the wit with which conversation was flavored." (Peake) "Grace and salt (wit, sense) make an ideal combination." (Robertson)

b. **That you may know how you ought to answer each one:** Paul believed that Christians would **answer** others from Biblical truth, and that they would work at knowing how to communicate those answers to **those who are outside**.

i. Barclay translates **Colossians 4:6** this way: *Let your speech always be with gracious charm, seasoned with the salt of wit, so that you will know the right answer to give in every case.* He explains: "Here is an interesting injunction. It is all too true that Christianity in the minds of many is connected with a kind of sanctimonious dullness and an outlook in which laughter is almost a heresy... The Christian must commend his message with the charm and the wit which were in Jesus Himself."

ii. "They must strive to cultivate the gift of pleasant and wise conversation, so that they may be able to speak appropriately to each individual (with his peculiar needs) with whom they come in contact." (Peake)

iii. **Colossians 4:2-6** shows that God is concerned *both* about our personal prayer life *and* our interaction with the world. He cares both about the prayer closet and the public street, and He wants us to care about both also.

iv. This is also an important idea to connect with the earlier passages of Colossians. Paul spent considerable time in this letter explaining the truth and refuting bad doctrine. Yet all the correct knowledge was of little good until it was applied in *both* the prayer closet and the public street of daily life. We could say that here, Paul genuinely completes his letter.

[<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/colossians-4/>]

How to Live a Good Life

Proverbs 12:15

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.



Reflection

This passage emphasizes the importance of wisdom and grace in our interactions with those who do not yet know Christ.

It reminds us to be intentional in our conversations, looking for opportunities to share our faith in ways that are respectful and thoughtful. This approach requires sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading, ensuring our sharing is both timely and relevant.

Additional Scripture: Eph. 4:11-16, 25-29

Are my actions wise? Do I seize opportunities and make the most of them?



What is God saying to me today?

THEN CHRIST WILL MAKE HIS HOME IN YOUR HEARTS AS YOU TRUST IN HIM. YOUR ROOTS WILL GROW DOWN INTO GOD'S LOVE AND KEEP YOU STRONG. - EPHESIANS 3:17 NLT

MY HEART, YOUR HOME

“O That Christ May Make His Home My Heart”

O that Christ may make His home my heart,
Spread Himself in every part!
Saturate and life impart!
That with all saints, I may apprehend
All the vast dimensions of my loving Christ.

Father God, forgive me if I groan;
For so long I've been on a plateau.
Now with tears, I bow my knees and pray
By Your Spirit make my spirit strong today.

O that Christ may make His home my heart,
Spread Himself in every part!
Saturate and life impart!
That with all saints, I may apprehend
All the vast dimensions of my loving Christ.

As I came this morning to Your Word
With no strength to even read a verse;
Yet my plea, is “Lord, I do need You!”
How You strengthen me, Your power within to prove.

O that Christ may make His home my heart,
Spread Himself in every part!
Saturate and life impart!
That with all saints, I may apprehend
All the vast dimensions of my loving Christ.

I myself was losing heart each day;
Then the Lord brought some saints my own way;
I alone could not Thee apprehend
But with all the saints You now my joy have been.

O that Christ may make His home my heart,
Spread Himself in every part!
Saturate and life impart!
That with all saints, I may apprehend
All the vast dimensions of my loving Christ.

All these years I've come the church to know,
Yet O Lord, there're things I can't let go;
Yet within me there is an “Amen”;
O now joy I never knew in me's flowin'.

O that Christ may make His home my heart,
Spread Himself in every part!
Saturate and life impart!
That with all saints, I may apprehend
All the vast dimensions of my loving Christ.

How to Live a Good Life



Reflection

Jesus Christ is living in our spirit. But from there, **He wants to spread into the rest of our inward being**, that is, into our heart. Our heart includes our mind, emotion, will, and conscience. The Lord doesn't want to just visit our heart, like a guest visits a hotel. He wants our heart to be His home, where He has the freedom to live and move.
- ECFA: “The Christian Life”

If my heart is God's home, does He have access to every room and the green light to move freely? As I live life, how much of it includes God? Do I consult Him often and do I consult Him first?



What is God saying to me today?

WHAT GOOD IS IT, MY BROTHERS, IF SOMEONE SAYS HE HAS FAITH BUT DOES NOT HAVE WORKS? CAN THAT FAITH SAVE HIM? IF A BROTHER OR SISTER IS POORLY CLOTHED AND LACKING IN DAILY FOOD, AND ONE OF YOU SAYS TO THEM, “GO IN PEACE, BE WARMED AND FILLED,” WITHOUT GIVING THEM THE THINGS NEEDED FOR THE BODY, WHAT GOOD IS THAT? SO ALSO FAITH BY ITSELF, IF IT DOES NOT HAVE WORKS, IS DEAD.- JAMES 2:14-17 ESV

LIVE OUT YOUR FAITH

“Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” – James 2:17 (NIV)

In a world that often seems filled with noise, distraction, and constant challenges, living your faith can be a struggle.

The essence of Christian living is not about avoiding life’s storms, but learning to sail through them with grace, guided by the light of Christ.

Faith is more than a Sunday commitment—it’s a lifestyle. Keep reading to learn some practical ways to incorporate Christian values into your daily life. The best thing? You can start today!

Start Your Day With God

The first moments of your day set the tone for everything that follows. By beginning your day with prayer, meditation on Scripture, or a devotional reading, you invite God into your plans, worries, and interactions. This practice doesn’t need to be time-consuming; even five minutes can shift your perspective, reminding you of God’s presence and love.

Practice Gratitude

Gratitude is a cornerstone of Christian faith (see what we did there?), transforming how we see the world and our place in it. Make it a habit to acknowledge the blessings in your life, whether through prayer, a gratitude journal, or sharing with others. This habit can change your heart, helping you to see God’s hand in everything from the mundane to the magnificent.

Serve Others

Service is a powerful way to live out Christian values, reflecting Jesus’ call to love and serve one another. Look for opportunities to help those around you, whether it’s volunteering at a local shelter, doing chores for a neighbor, or simply offering a listening ear. These acts of kindness are a testament to the love of Christ. Plus, it just feels good to know you helped impact someone’s life in a positive way!

Build Community

Christianity was never meant to be a solitary journey. Building relationships with fellow believers can encourage you, challenge you, and provide a network of support. Participate in church activities, join a small group, or gather with friends for prayer and fellowship. These connections deepen your faith and remind you that you don’t need to go through things alone.

Incorporate Scripture in Your Life

The Bible is not just a book; it’s a living guide. Make Scripture a part of your daily routine by memorizing verses, reflecting on passages, or incorporating biblical principles into decision-making. This practice can anchor you in truth, provide comfort, and guide your actions.

Live Intentionally

Christian values call for a life lived with intention and purpose. This means making conscious choices that reflect your faith, from the way you spend your time and money to how you interact with others. Ask yourself regularly if your actions align with your beliefs and make adjustments as needed.

Seek Forgiveness – Extend Grace

Finally, living your faith means recognizing your own need for grace while being able to extend it to others. Practice forgiveness, both in seeking it from those you’ve wronged and in offering it to those who’ve wronged you. This mirrors the forgiveness we’ve received through Christ and is essential for healing and reconciliation.

Living your faith in everyday life is a journey of small steps and big leaps, moments of doubt, and times of joy. By incorporating these practical tips into your daily routine, you can grow closer to God and reflect His love to the world around you. Remember, it’s not about perfection but progress, and every day offers a new opportunity to live out the values at the heart of Christian faith.

How to Live a Good Life

Proverbs 3:6

In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.



Reflection

So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.
- James 4:17 ESV

If I never spoke another word, would my works reflect my words? Would my actions display my faith?



What is God saying to me today?

BUT, BELOVED, WE ARE CONFIDENT OF BETTER THINGS CONCERNING YOU, YES, THINGS THAT ACCOMPANY SALVATION, THOUGH WE SPEAK IN THIS MANNER. FOR GOD IS NOT UNJUST TO FORGET YOUR WORK AND LABOR OF LOVE WHICH YOU HAVE SHOWN TOWARD HIS NAME, IN THAT YOU HAVE MINISTERED TO THE SAINTS, AND DO MINISTER. AND WE DESIRE THAT EACH ONE OF YOU SHOW THE SAME DILIGENCE TO THE FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE UNTIL THE END, THAT YOU DO NOT BECOME SLUGGISH, BUT IMITATE THOSE WHO THROUGH FAITH AND PATIENCE INHERIT THE PROMISES.- HEBREWS 6:9-12 NKJV

GOD WON'T FORGET

God Does Not Forget Your Labor of Love

God does not forget the labors of love we do for Him, but so many people today forget God; and that is dangerous. The Bible says, The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God (Psalm 9:17).

God told the Israelites never to forget all He did for them. Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life (Deuteronomy 4:9). God does not instruct His people to do something He would not do, so this demand for remembrance was not one-sided. God remembered the Israelites too.

Unfortunately, the Israelites did forget God many times; and because of that, they had to go through many unnecessary trials and tribulations. They should be an example to all of us never to forget God.

God Notices Every Effort

People have a tendency to think that God only remembers the bad things they do, and the devil is right there to agree with them; however, the Bible tells us that God can indeed forget the bad when people will sincerely repent. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more (Hebrews 10:17). When you are saved, God does not remember that you ever sinned. You stand in His presence as holy as He is, and your heart beats in rhythm with His just like the hearts of Adam and Eve did before they fell into sin.

God keeps record of every good work and every labor of love you do in His name. For God is not unrighteous [not unjust] to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister (Hebrews 6:10). God does not overlook anything you do for Him.

Jesus remembered the woman with the alabaster box who anointed Him for His burial, and He made sure it was mentioned in the Bible so all people would know about it. Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat (Matthew 26:6,7).

Jesus told His disciples, For she hath wrought a good work upon me. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her (Matthew 26:10,12,13).

Child of God, if the Lord never forgot that woman's act of love, then He will not forget when you minister kindness to someone in His name either. Your labor of love may look insignificant to others, but God sees it; and He is not unrighteous to forget it.

[https://ernestangle.org/read/article/god_does_not_forget_your_labor_of_love#]



What is God saying to me today?

How to Live a Good Life

Proverbs 17:17

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity.



Reflection

Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.
- Ephesians 6:7 NLT

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 NIV

Do I encourage others and build their confidence to continue doing God's work and labor of love?

“YOU HAVE HEARD THAT IT WAS SAID, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AND HATE YOUR ENEMY.’ BUT I SAY TO YOU, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU, SO THAT YOU MAY BE SONS OF YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN. FOR HE MAKES HIS SUN RISE ON THE EVIL AND ON THE GOOD, AND SENDS RAIN ON THE JUST AND ON THE UNJUST. FOR IF YOU LOVE THOSE WHO LOVE YOU, WHAT REWARD DO YOU HAVE? DO NOT EVEN THE TAX COLLECTORS DO THE SAME? AND IF YOU GREET ONLY YOUR BROTHERS, WHAT MORE ARE YOU DOING THAN OTHERS? DO NOT EVEN THE GENTILES DO THE SAME? YOU THEREFORE MUST BE PERFECT, AS YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS PERFECT. - MATTHEW 5:43-48 ESV

LOVE WITHOUT BORDERS

As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison.~ Nelson Mandela

To love our enemies does not mean that we suddenly become their friends. If it is our *enemies* we are to love, they must remain enemies. Unless you *have* enemies, you cannot love them. And if you have no enemies, I wonder if you have any friends. The moment you choose your friends, their enemies become your own enemies. By having convictions, we make ourselves the enemies of those who oppose these convictions. But let's be sure we agree on what we mean by terms like Friend, Enemy, Hatred, or Love.

The mutual intimacy we share with our best friends is one of the greatest gifts of life, but it is not always given when we call someone a friend. Friendship need not even be mutual. How about organizations like Friends of Our Local Library? Friends of Elephants and of other endangered species? Friendship allows for many degrees of closeness and takes many different forms. What it always implies is active support of those whom we befriend, engagement to help them reach their goals.

With enemies it is the exact opposite. After all, the very word “enemy” comes from the Latin “*inimicus*”, and means simply “not a friend”. Of course, not everyone who is not a friend is therefore an enemy. Enemies are opponents – not opponents for play, as in sports or games, but in mutual opposition with us in matters of deep concern. Their goals are opposed to our own highest aspirations. Thus, out of conviction we must actively try to prevent them from reaching their goals. We can do this lovingly, or not – and thus we find ourselves head-on confronted with the possibility to love of enemies.

Love makes us first of all think of romantic attraction, affection and desire – a whirlwind of emotions, yes, but that is only one of countless forms in which we experience love. In so many different contexts do we speak of love that one may actually wonder what they have in common, if anything: Love between teacher and pupil, love of parents for children, of children for parents; love of your dog or your cats, your country, your grandparents. Again, how different our love for a grandmother is from that for a grandfather and both of them from love for a pet geranium among our potted plants, let alone love for a sweetheart. Is there a common denominator for all these varieties of love? Yes, indeed, there is.

Loving our enemies is an ideal for human beings of any spiritual tradition.

...continued on the next page.



What is God saying to me today?

How to Live a Good Life

Proverbs 3:3a & 3:4

Let love and faithfulness never leave you. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.



Reflection

Now there is a final reason I think that Jesus says, 'Love your enemies.' It is this: that love has within it a redemptive power. And there is a power there that eventually transforms individuals.
- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Many claim to have unfaithful love, but a faithful person who can find? The righteous lead blameless lives; blessed are their children after them.
- Proverbs 20:6-7

LOVE WITHOUT BORDERS, CONT.

Love in every one of its forms is a lived “yes” to belonging. I call it a “*lived* yes”, because the very way loving people live and act says loudly and clearly: “Yes, I affirm and respect you and I wish you well. As members of the cosmic family we belong together, and this belonging goes far deeper than anything that can ever divide us.” In an upside-down way, a “Yes” to belonging is even present in hatred. While love says this yes joyfully and with fondness, hatred says it grudgingly with animosity, gall. Still, even one who hates acknowledges mutual belonging. Have there not been moments in your life when you couldn’t say whether you loved or hated someone close to your heart? This shows that hatred is not the opposite of love. The opposite of love (*and* of hatred) is indifference.

How, then, can we go about loving our enemies?

- Show your enemies the genuine respect that every human being deserves. Learn to think of them with compassion.
- **In cultivating compassion, it may help to visualize your enemies as the children they once were (and somehow remain).**
- Do not dispense compassion from above, but meet your enemies in your imagination always at eye-level.
- **Make every effort to come to know and understand them better – their hopes, their fears, concerns, and aspirations.**
- Search for common goals, spell them out, and try to explore together ways of reaching these goals.
- **Don’t cling to your own convictions. Examine them in light of your enemies’ convictions with all the sincerity you can muster.**
- Invite your enemies to focus on issues. While focusing on the issues at hand, suspend your convictions.
- **Do not judge persons, but look closely at the effect of their actions. Are they building up or endangering the common good?**
- Take a sober look at your enemies’ goals and evaluate them with fairness. If necessary, block them decisively.
- **In order to counteract your enemies effectively on a given issue, join the greatest possible variety of likeminded people.**
- Wherever possible, show your enemies kindness. Do them as much good you can. At least, sincerely wish them well.
- **For the rest, entrust yourself and your enemies to the great Mystery of life that has assigned us such different – and often opposing – roles, and that will see us through if we play or part with love.**

Loving our enemies is an ideal for human beings of any spiritual tradition. Mahatma Gandhi practiced it no less inspiringly than St. Francis. But it calls to mind the saying of Jesus: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Mt. 3:43f) And this, in turn, calls to mind what G. K. Chesterton said: “The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried.”— Difficult, yes, but eminently worth trying, especially in our world torn by enmity. In the mess we are in, we don’t have much to lose by trying anything. Who knows? To love our enemies may be our only way out.

[<https://grateful.org/resource/love-your-enemies/>]



What is God saying to me today?

How to Live a Good Life

Proverbs 8:35

For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord.



Reflection

Love is the only thing that can turn an enemy into a friend.
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

You don’t love in your enemies what they are, but what you would have them become by your prayers.
- Saint Augustine

*If you only do what the world does,
what more are you doing than others?
Am I walking in the Word?*



THRIVE

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A DIVIDED HEART LOSES BOTH WORLDS. - A. B. SIMPSON