

Fasting and Prayer Devotional



The Saint Paul's Baptist Church

Belt Campus: 700 Belt Boulevard

Creighton Campus: 4247 Creighton Road

Elm Campus: 29 Elm Street

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Dr. Lance Watson, Senior Pastor/Chief Dreamer

“A Church for People On the Grow”

God is Moving Us Forward!

Quick question. Which is the best mover? Allied? Mayflower? Two Men and a Truck? Nope. It is none other than our Lord and Savior! God is in the moving business. He is always in the process of moving His people.

Although we are often happy with our current address, God loves us enough not to leave us there. Sometimes we can get a little stubborn - either because of comfort or fear - about changes that He has in mind for us.

For example, when the children of Israel were moving from Egypt to the Promised Land, God sent miracle after miracle to get them out. But they did not want to go in and possess what He intended for them. In fact, in Numbers 14:3, they said, "... Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" It seems God could physically take His people out of Egypt, but His people could not mentally leave Egypt behind.

The old song says, *"I have decided to follow Jesus - No turning back, no turning back."* Paul says in Philippians 1:6, *"Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."*

God has begun a spiritual project for His people everywhere, and you can see the makings of it at the Saint Paul's Baptist Church. There were many who never wanted us to create additional locations beyond Marshall Street and definitely not beyond Creighton Road.

Had we not heeded that call, many people would not have walked down our aisles and been touched by our ministry. Now we stand at over 12,000 souls strong, one of the largest ministries in the Commonwealth of Virginia. That is not by accident or by our own efforts. It is His design, through us being obedient to what He called us to do.

During this period of 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting, I'm praying that Saint Paul's Church continues to take heed of the lesson we learned from the children of Israel going to the Promised Land. Our earthly Promised Land is not just the City of Possibility project, it is the small groups that permit us to build relationships with each other and grow.

It is enhanced programs for our kids and teens to experience Christ as early as possible. It is community partnerships so we can continue to make a difference in Central Virginia. It is helping to direct another 12,000 down the aisles, and into a closer relationship with God.

Pray that God will continue to move you in the right direction over the next 40 days. Pray that our faith will remain strong as we continue with this vision He has given our church. Thank the Lord for loving you enough not to leave you where you are. Also, thank Him for what He will do in our lives during this 40-day journey!

CORPORATE WORSHIP

Please remember to use any weekend worship service as an opportunity for further spiritual renewal during the fast. Additionally, each gathering of THE BRIDGE during the week on any of our campuses will allow for prayer, beginning 30 minutes prior to service (at 11:30am and 6:30pm).

BELT CAMPUS

Sundays at 10am

Tuesdays at 11:00 am and 7:00 pm

700 Belt Boulevard

Richmond, Virginia

CREIGHTON CAMPUS

Sundays at 9am and 11am

Thursdays at 11:00am and 7:00pm

4247 Creighton Road

Richmond, Virginia

ELM CAMPUS

Sundays at 10am

Wednesdays at 12:00noon and 7:00pm

29 Elm Street

Petersburg, Virginia

WHY FAST?

Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD. - Joel 1:14

1. *Jesus fasted.*

Before He began His ministry, Jesus fasted forty days. He knew He was going to need spiritual strength to fulfill His purposes. Fasting makes us physically weak but spiritually strong and prepares us to do God's work.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. - Matthew 4:1,2

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. - Luke 4:14

2. *Fasting is an act of humility and consecration.*

"... I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting..." - Psalm 35:13

Humility results in the grace of God. When we humble ourselves in prayer, we have instant access to the heart of God. As we deny ourselves as an act of consecration, we are able to exercise self-control. We can keep our emotions and desires under control.

3. *Fasting helps us become sensitive to the Holy Spirit.*

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." - Acts 13:2

When we deny ourselves of our natural cravings, our spiritual antennas become sharper. We become more sensitive to His voice as we divest ourselves of worldly distractions. We are better able to focus on God and submit to His will. This opens the door for the Holy Spirit into our lives.

4. *Fasting brings revival.*

"... in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes." - Daniel 9:2,3

Fasting helps us prevail in prayer and intercession. Daniel understood that Israel was headed for destruction. He also knew that in times like these, there is only one recourse - intercession through praying and fasting. Throughout human history, God has brought revival and delivered nations from destruction in response to prayer and fasting.

5. *Fasting is healthy.*

Fasting cleanses your digestive system from toxins. Doctors consider fasting a cure for certain allergies and diseases. By learning to deny ourselves and exercising discipline, fasting breaks unhealthy addictions in our lives.

HOW TO FAST SAFELY

As you begin your fast, you may hear from concerned loved ones and friends who urge you to consider your health, and they are right. You should protect your health. But I assure you, if done properly, fasting will prove to be a spiritual and physical blessing.

By all means, consult your doctor before you begin your fast. But, be aware that many doctors have not been trained in this area, so their understanding is limited. Even so, it would be wise to ask your doctor for a physical exam to make sure you are in good health.

You may have a physical problem that would make fasting unwise or dangerous. Also, if you are on any type of medication, make sure you talk to your doctor before changing your regimen. Prudence and caution are in order.

When you are assured that you are in good health, you are ready to begin your fast. Despite the absolute safety and benefits of fasting, there are certain persons who should NEVER fast without professional supervision.

For example:

- ✓ Persons who are physically too thin or emaciated
- ✓ Persons who are prone to anorexic, bulimia, or other behavioral disorders
- ✓ Those who suffer weakness or anemia
- ✓ Persons who have tumors, bleeding ulcers, cancer, blood diseases, or who have heart disease
- ✓ Those who suffer chronic problems with kidneys, liver, lungs, heart, or other important organs
- ✓ Individuals who take insulin for diabetes, or suffer any other blood sugar problem such as hyperglycemia
- ✓ Women who are pregnant or nursing

PREPARING TO FAST

"... Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the King, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." - Esther 4:16

Spiritual and physical preparation is vital in sustaining a fast, no matter how long it may be.

1. **Proceed in faith!** Prayerfully and thoughtfully, fill out the daily reflections of this guide. Choose a prayer partner to stand in agreement with you; this person will be your accountability friend helping you stay on target from dietary and spiritual standpoints. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance.

Be clear and specific about your faith goals in your personal life, family, finances, and church as seen on the back cover. These are what you will believe God for during the fast and the entire year. Expect God to answer. Maintain a thankful heart throughout and after the fast.

2. **Plan your calendar.** Limit your physical and social activities during this period. You need to conserve physical energy and devote more time to prayer and reading the Bible.

3. **Prepare spiritually.** In preparation for this special time with God, examine your heart and detect any sin not yet confessed. Scripture records that God always requires His people to repent of their sins before He will hear their prayers. In your prayers, confess not only obvious sins, but less obvious ones as well. These may be worldly-mindedness, self-centeredness, spiritual indifference, unwillingness to share your faith in Christ with others, not spending sufficient time in God's Word and in prayer, a poor relationship with your family members, your pastor, or other members of your church.

4. **Prepare physically.** Be smart as you enter into this fast. Do not go to a buffet restaurant on the eve of the fast, hoping to stock up on food in your body. The key is to gradually prepare your body. Start eating smaller portions and meals seven days before you begin your fast. Cutting down on your meals a few days before you begin the fast will signal your mind, stomach, and appetite that less food is acceptable. Avoid food that is high in sugar and fat. Two days prior to the fast, eat raw fruit and vegetables only. Consult a physician if you need to.

COMMON FAQs

What about prepared foods?

Read the labels of all prepared foods. Remember, the Daniel Fast is sugar-free and chemical free. If you use any canned fruits, vegetables, packaged foods, or prepared sauces, you must read the label to be aware about just what is in there.

What about pasta?

Make sure the label says whole grain pasta with no additives. (Watch for sugar.) Whole grain pasta offers 7 grams of protein per serving (3/4 cup of dried pasta).

What about salad dressing?

Olive oil, lemon, or limes are options. You may also try looking for organic options at your local grocer.

What about nuts? I know it says raw, unsalted nuts, but what about roasted nuts?

The goal would be to stick to raw, unsalted nuts, but these are harder to find. In a pinch, just make sure you get plain roasted, unsalted nuts with no preservatives.

How do I get enough protein in my diet while on the fast?

The following protein-rich foods are allowed on the Daniel Fast: almonds, sunflower seeds, lentils, quinoa, brown rice, split peas, whole grains, and tofu.

What kind of peanut butter is allowed?

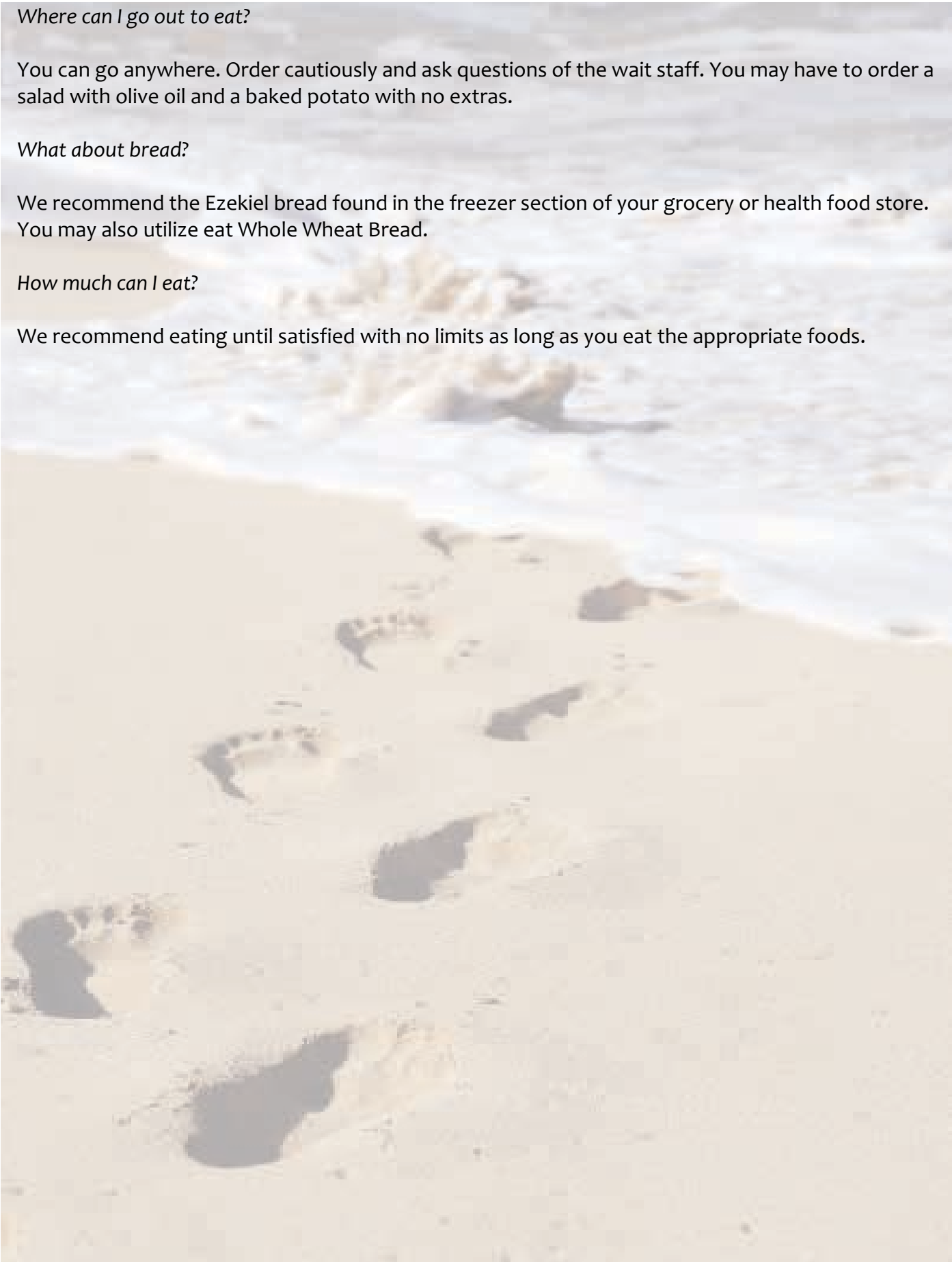
A natural peanut butter with no additives. Watch for sugars including molasses. Smucker's creamy natural peanut butter has nothing but peanuts in it.

How can I identify whole grain foods?

Typically, if the ingredient lists "whole wheat," "rolled oats," or "whole corn" as the first ingredient, the product is a whole grain food item. Another way to identify whole grains in the foods you eat is to look at the nutritional facts information and check to see if the food item contains dietary fiber. If it contains a significant amount, it most likely contains whole grains. "Wheat flour" is not a whole grain and therefore does not indicate a whole grain product.

Do I need to eat organic foods while on the fast?

No, but it is suggested because organic foods are produced without the use of feed or fertilizer of plant or animal origin and without employment of chemically formulated fertilizers, growth stimulants, antibiotics, or pesticides.



Where can I go out to eat?

You can go anywhere. Order cautiously and ask questions of the wait staff. You may have to order a salad with olive oil and a baked potato with no extras.

What about bread?

We recommend the Ezekiel bread found in the freezer section of your grocery or health food store. You may also utilize eat Whole Wheat Bread.

How much can I eat?

We recommend eating until satisfied with no limits as long as you eat the appropriate foods.

FOODS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR DIET DURING THE DANIEL FAST

All fruits. These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned. Fruits include but are not limited to apples, apricots, bananas, blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, cantaloupe, cherries, cranberries, figs, grapefruit, grapes, guava, honeydew melon, kiwi, lemons, limes, mangoes, nectarines, oranges, papayas, peaches, pears, pineapples, plums, prunes, raisins, raspberries, strawberries, tangelos, tangerines, watermelon

All vegetables. These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned. Vegetables include but are not limited to artichokes, asparagus, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, chili peppers, collard greens, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, ginger root, kale, leeks, lettuce, mushrooms, mustard greens, okra, onions, parsley, potatoes, radishes, rutabagas, scallions, spinach, sprouts, squashes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, turnips, watercress, yams, zucchini, veggie burgers are an option if you are not allergic to soy.

All whole grains, including but not limited to whole wheat, brown rice, millet, quinoa, oats, barley, grits, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat tortillas, rice cakes and popcorn.

All nuts and seeds, including but not limited to sunflower seeds, cashews, peanuts, sesame. Also nut butters including peanut butter.

All legumes. These can be canned or dried. Legumes include but are not limited to dried beans, pinto beans, split peas, lentils, black eyed peas, kidney beans, black beans, cannellini beans, white beans.

All quality oils including but not limited to olive, canola, grape seed, peanut, and sesame.

Beverages: spring water, distilled water or other pure waters.

Other: tofu, soy products, vinegar, seasonings, salt, herbs and spices.

FOODS TO AVOID ON THE DANIEL FAST

All meat and animal products including but not limited to beef, lamb, pork, poultry, and fish.

All dairy products including but not limited to milk, cheese, cream, butter, and eggs.

All sweeteners including but not limited to sugar, raw sugar, honey, syrups, molasses, and cane juice.

All leavened bread including Ezekiel Bread (it contains yeast and honey) and baked goods.

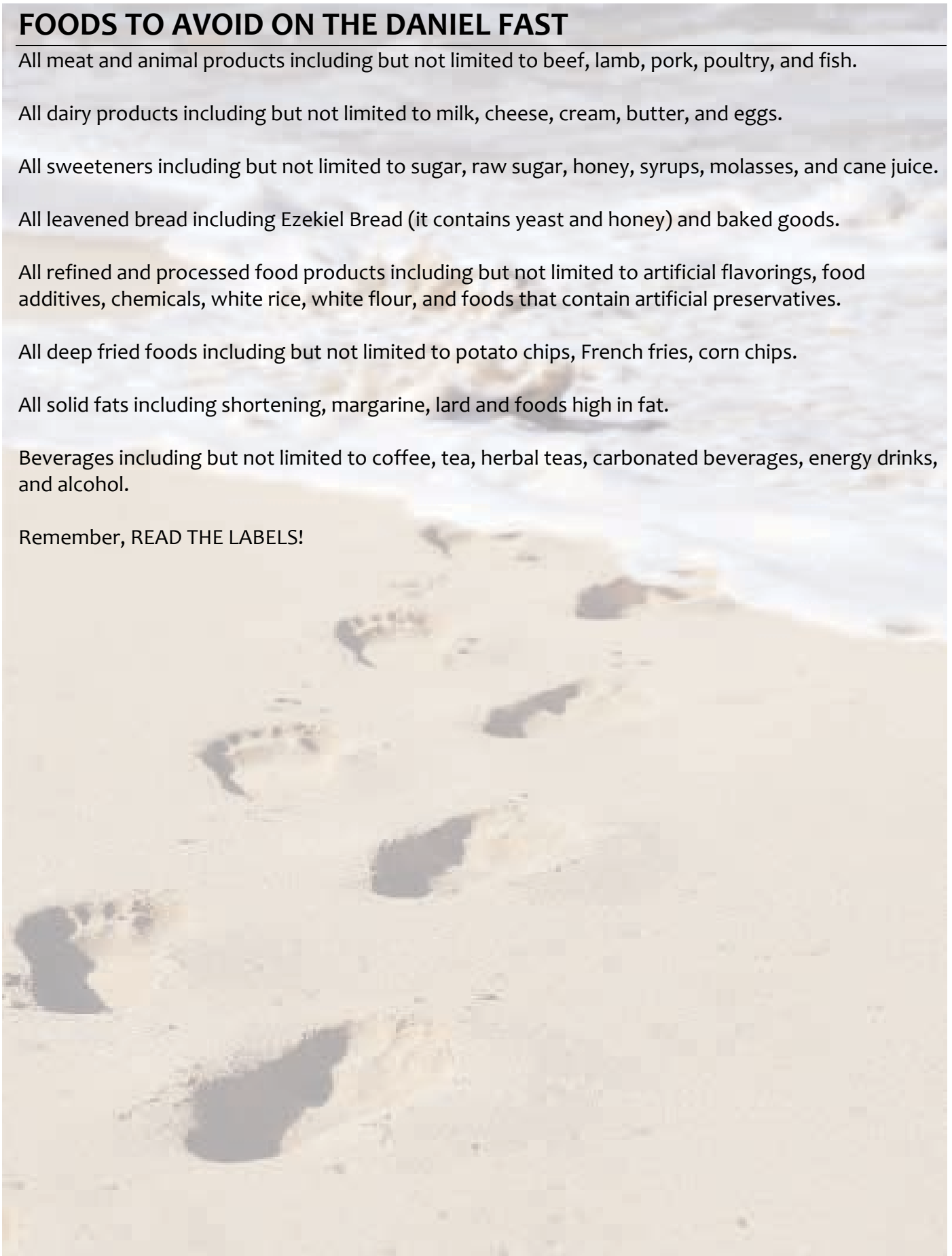
All refined and processed food products including but not limited to artificial flavorings, food additives, chemicals, white rice, white flour, and foods that contain artificial preservatives.

All deep fried foods including but not limited to potato chips, French fries, corn chips.

All solid fats including shortening, margarine, lard and foods high in fat.

Beverages including but not limited to coffee, tea, herbal teas, carbonated beverages, energy drinks, and alcohol.

Remember, **READ THE LABELS!**



Sample Recipes

Raw Veggie Burgers

Diets: Raw, vegan, dairy-free, gluten-free, soy-free

Makes: 18 burgers

Ingredients

- 1½ cups (240g) almonds
- 1½ cups (180g) pecans
- 4 large (450g) carrots
- 1 med (150g) brown onion
- 2 handfuls (30g) parsley
- ¾ cup (90g) lemon juice
- 1½ tsp. salt
- 3 tsp. rosemary
- 1½ tsp. tarragon
- 2 tsp. mild curry powder

Method

1. Roughly chop carrots and onions.
2. Add everything to food processor and process until finely chopped and well mixed.
3. Shape into burgers, by hand or using an egg ring (or similar).
4. Dehydrate for 5-6 hours at ~40, turning burgers once after about 2 hours.

Preparation

Before: -

During: 40 mins

After: 6 hrs. (dehydrating)

Need: Food processor, dehydrator

Nutrition Information

Calories: 2930

Raw Taco Salad

Diets: Raw, vegan, dairy-free, gluten-free, soy-free

Makes: 1 serve

Ingredients

Walnut Taco Meat (4 serves)

- 1 cup (150g) walnuts
- ½ packed cup (50g) sun-dried tomatoes, soaked 2-8h and drained
- ½ tsp. cumin
- ¼ tsp. garlic powder
- ⅛-¼ tsp. salt (adjust to taste)
- pinch chili (or more if you like it hot)
- pinch cayenne pepper

Cashew Sour Cream (12 serves)

- 1 cup (140g) cashews, soaked 1-2h (soaking optional)
- scant ¼ cup (55g) lemon juice
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ⅓ cup (85g) water
- ⅔ cup (95g) ice

Salad (1 serve)

- 2 cups rocket (arugula)
- ¼ cup Walnut Taco Meat (see above)
- ½ avocado
- 1 med tomato
- 1 tbsp. Cashew Sour Cream (see above)
- 1 tbsp. spring onion, sliced

Method

1. Cover the sun-dried tomatoes in water and leave to soak for 2 to 8 hours. Drain.
2. Process all of the walnut taco meat ingredients in a food processor until well combined, but still chunky.
3. Blend all of the cashew sour cream ingredients in a blender until smooth and creamy.
4. Assemble salad ingredients in a large bowl (one per person), serve and eat.

Nutrition Information

Calories: 478

DURING THE FAST

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

- Matthew 6:16-18

1. *Seek the Lord.*

Commit to prayer and Bible reading the times you usually allocate for meals. Be ready to respond when you hear from God. This guide also has a devotional that we encourage you to go through daily during the fast.

2. *Commit to change.*

Whatever God tells you or puts His finger upon, apply it immediately. If you need to make restitution, immediately contact people you have broken relationships with. If there are habits that need to change, make the adjustment immediately. Ask a trusted friend from your church to hold you accountable. (Have that person sign the back of this book.)

3. *Practical tips*

- a. Avoid medical and even natural herbal drugs. However, if you are under medication, these should only be withdrawn upon the advice of your doctor.
- b. Limit your physical activity and exercise. If you have a workout routine, adjust it accordingly. A daily two to five kilometer walk should be your maximum amount of exercise during on extended fast.
- c. Rest as much as you can.
- d. Maintain an attitude of prayer throughout the day. Intercede for your family, pastors, church, nation, our missionaries, world missions, etc.
- e. Drink plenty of fresh water.
- f. As your body adjusts, be prepared for temporary bouts of physical weakness as well as mental annoyances like impatience, irritability, and anxiety.

BLESS MY FIVE

Pray for FIVE people specifically. Pray for their personal needs. Try to look at life from their standpoint. What are the worries and joys, pressures and decisions, dreams and fears that they face? Pray for those things.

Pray about their spiritual life. What are the things that are keeping them away from God? Pray that God would soften their hearts and bring them to faith in Christ.

If you are doing this as a group or with a friend, pray for their five friends also. Pray that the Lord would give opportunities to share His love with them.

Believe that these five people will change during the 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting.

BREAKING THE FAST

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. - Acts 14:23

1. *Reintroduce solid food gradually.*

You should break your fast the same way you prepared for it. It will take your body just as many days as you fasted to adjust to a normal diet. Begin eating gradually. Do not eat solid food immediately after your fast. Start with fruits, juices, and salad. Then, you can begin adding vegetables and boiled potatoes. Take it slowly from there. Eat small portions spread throughout the day.

2. *Continue praying.*

Do not let your prayer life end on the day you finish the fast. Build from the momentum you gained during the fast. Let it transform your prayer and devotional life. Carry the new found passion with you throughout the year.

3. *Be expectant.*

Proceed in faith and believe God will answer your prayers soon! Do not give up; persevere in prayer, even if you do not see the answers immediately. Make sure you keep the copy of your prayer points. You can check it at the end of the year and see how God has answered your prayers. It can be your thanksgiving list at the end of the year.

CONCLUSION

If our fasting is not unto God, we have failed. Physical benefits, success in prayer, endurance, and spiritual insights—these must never replace God as the center of our fasting. - Richard Foster

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. - Ephesians 3:20

Just as Jesus fasted for forty days in the wilderness, our 40 Days of Prayer & Fasting gives us the opportunity to realign our lives according to His will and consecrate the coming year to Him. As we humble ourselves corporately to Him in prayer, we can expect Him to move mightily in our midst.

God's will is for each and every one of us to experience breakthrough and victory in our lives. Proceed in faith for God to move miraculously in your life this year beyond what you can ask or imagine. You have a fresh mandate. Be ready for God to accomplish greater things through you this year!



Day 1

Bread Alone

“But He answered, 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” - Matthew 4:4 NKJV

READ

The fourth chapter of Matthew contains this famous interaction between Jesus and Satan in the wilderness. Jesus was just finishing a forty-day fast, and He “was hungry” (Matthew 4:2). What Jesus affirms during this exchange is an eternal truth and one that still bears upon our lives today: Food is not the only thing that sustains us.

As we fast, we are forcing ourselves into a position of weakness and humility. God designed us to take in life giving nourishment through food and water, but as we are fasting, we focus upon the deep truth that God's word is actually more vital to our living than bread. However, this is a lesson not learned lightly, but through experience.

We are generally controlled greatly by our bodily impulses. We have impulses to eat, sleep, drink, or even go to the restroom. When we fast, we deny our flesh control over this extremely important aspect of our life. As we hunger for food, we are constantly aware of our weakness. Fasting is a way to connect to God in a more powerful way than ever before because we are placing our total dependence on God for every thing that we need.

REFLECT

Spiritual fasting has a place, purpose, and a unique benefit for God's people today. Fasting requires self-control and discipline as you deny the natural desires of the flesh. It allows you to move away from the physical things of this world and concentrate on God. Spiritual fasting draws you closer to God. How can you become closer to God?

RECITE

I am fasting because I want to be closer to God.

REQUEST

Dear Heavenly Father, I humbly come before you in thanksgiving for my life and for sustaining my life with Your Word. I love you, Lord God, and I thank You for all of my blessings. I ask for a closer relationship with you. I ask for your strength to complete this 40-day fast. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Day 2

Don't Listen to Negativity

Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth." But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it attacked me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God." - 1 Samuel 17:33-36 NIV

READ

In the scripture, although everyone else doubted that David could conquer the giant, David knew the God he served. And just as the Lord rescued him from the paw of both the lion and the bear, allowing him to strike and kill them, the Lord would do the same for David when he fought the giant. David refused to allow negative comments to turn him from what he knew the Lord could do for him.

We all have areas in our life we are praying and believing God to bless us, whether it be our relationships, health, career, finances, marriage, or some other area that is significant to us. The Lord has heard every one of your prayers, so put your Armor of God on and know when all is said and done, the goodness of the Lord will prevail.

When others try to discourage you or speak negativity in your direction, don't buy into it. There will always be people who only view the negative side of things. These people see the glass as half empty in most situations and are determined to have others think like them. But you are a person who sees the glass as half full because you believe God for your blessings. God has not forgotten about you. His goodness, mercies, grace and favor are upon you.

REFLECT

Although Satan is a clever spirit, he is not an intellectual one. He can try to get inside your head with negative thoughts, but no strong man can enter your house unless you first allow him to. But you know you serve a powerful God who will never leave nor forsake you.

RECITE

My Father will never leave me nor forsake me, and I know He is not a man that He would lie. I refuse to allow negative thoughts and attitudes to keep me from what God is trying to do in my life. I am victorious!

REQUEST

Father, I thank you for your constant presence in my life and the strength and courage to fulfill your will. I thank you for your power. Because of You, I know I am a conqueror. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Day 3

Faith

“The Lord answered, 'If you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'May you be uprooted and thrown into the sea,' and it would obey you.’” - Luke 17:6 NLT

READ

Sometimes, we wish, worry, and wonder why our lives are at a standstill and nothing seems to go our way. Our lives are moving too slowly with little to no progress or not moving at all, and it seems like it will be too long before you reach the top of the mountain. We struggle trying to make ends meet while paying bills, supplying food, or raising a family. We also may continue to remain discouraged about our circumstances, while not realizing there is a greater and higher power that is beyond comprehension and understanding that controls our every existence.

Sometimes, we feel like the burdens, worry and stress won't leave because with each new day, a new problem occurs: an eviction letter, a utility shut-off notice, or the car is down and there is no way to get to work. No matter what problems surface, we must remain hopeful and know that God will provide and make a way for us even in the midst of our adversity. When we build our faith, we please God. We will manifest things in our lives according to our faith. Faith is built up every day that we are here on this Earth. With every new day, God has blessed our minds, bodies, and health. He will supply everything we need.

REFLECT

God has not given us a spirit of fear; but of love, power and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). We can move mountains and accomplish what seems impossible if we have the faith of a mustard seed. How much faith do you have?

RECITE

I trust God with all my heart and know He supplies everything I need. He will make a way for me.

REQUEST

Father, Your word declares in Philippians 4:19, “My God shall supply all my needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” God, please bless me with a miracle to fit my personal needs today. In Jesus' holy name, I pray. Amen.

Day 4

Learning to Listen in Stillness

“Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still.” - Psalm 4:4 NKJV

READ

While we appreciate the convenience of technology, it does come with a cost: the huge temptation to feel a greater sense of urgency throughout the day. We have to check our email, reply to that message, listen to this voicemail, or return the phone call. Those of us who text, tweet, and post items to Facebook, Tumblr, Instagram, or other social media sites rarely disconnect. We are continually overwhelmed with demands for our attention. Periods of silence, where we can cultivate inner stillness and wait for the promptings of the Holy Spirit, are increasingly rare. Yet, as Habakkuk realized, it is in those moments of quiet reflection that we can hear God's voice.

“I will climb up to my watchtower and stand at my guard post. There I will wait to see what the Lord says...” (Habakkuk 2:1, NLT).

As you seek to gain a deeper fellowship with God during the fast and beyond, be sure to make a standing appointment with Him to pray, listen, and reflect on what He says to you. Find a quiet place where you can forget the busyness of life, silence your thoughts and emotions, and quiet your flesh. By focusing on the Father instead of the world, you will gain a better understanding of Him, revitalize your relationship with Him, and develop a renewed reliance on Him.

REFLECT

Find a quiet place where you can disconnect from the world and fellowship with the Father. When you still your thoughts, what does He say to you?

RECITE

I will be still and know that you are God.

REQUEST

Dear Lord, I'm going to dedicate myself to you daily and disconnect from the demands of my technological reality so that I can hear from you without distractions. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Day 5

The Fire Went Out!

*“Why is the house of God neglected? Then I called them together and stationed them at their posts.”
- Nehemiah 13:11 NIV*

READ

When the Olympics come to America several years ago, part of the experience was to see the Olympic flame. For every Olympics, a flame is lit from the eternal Olympic flame in Greece and then carried to wherever the Olympic games are being held.

The flame made its way to Atlanta for the opening ceremonies by traveling all over America first. Volunteers and heroes from all over America carried torches holding the flame from place to place. While the flame was passing through Jackson, Mississippi, Harley Sheffield had the honor of carrying it on his bicycle. As he was crossing the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, the expansion gate caused the tire on his bike to blow. The torch popped out of its holder, fell onto the bridge, and broke into pieces. The Olympic flame was extinguished.

Sheffield was horrified. They would have to go all the way back to Greece and start over again! He would go down in history as the man who allowed the flame to go out! His panic was unnecessary because a “mother flame,” along with a replacement torch, was present in a trailing van. Thus he could resume his duty, and the Olympic flame traveled onward.

This story provides a great illustration of our walk with God. Too many times we stumble and allow our flame to go out. If your flame has been doused, there is a “mother (and a father) flame” to restore it: God will keep it lit!

REFLECT

Have you lost your enthusiasm for God? Are you doing less in the church than you used to do? What in life is taking precedence over following Christ to the best of your ability? Is the pressure of life clouding your ability to see the goodness of God?

RECITE

I will put aside the distractions that have stolen any piece of affection for God.

REQUEST

Father, I confess that my passion for you is not RED HOT. I repent of allowing the world and its concerns to distract me from pure zeal for your kingdom. Stir up the flame within me and renew my joy. Help inspire me to do all I can for you. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Day 6

Anger

“For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” - James 1:20 ESV

READ

Anger is an emotion that can be very dangerous and deter us from the path God has set for us. When we are angry, we tend to make poor decisions and harbor the emotion, which affects our future decisions, interactions, and treatment of others. If we are striving to be like Christ, we must learn to deal with anger and not allow anger to deal with us. Getting to the root of the issue and learning to forgive is a huge step in the right direction. Let us not allow an emotion to keep us from all that God has for us.

REFLECT

Do you remember the last time you were angry? Recall your thought process during that moment of anger. How did you handle the situation? What will you do differently the next time anger attempts to rear its head?

RECITE

Anger is an emotion, not a determinant of how I respond to displeasing situations and circumstances.

REQUEST

Father, thank you for the peace you provide. Please help me to deal with anger in accordance with your Word. In the mighty name of Jesus, Amen.

Day 7

That's Just the Way I Am

“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.” - 1 Corinthians 13:11 (NIV)

READ

How often have you said, “That's just the way I am?” This phrase is a common disclaimer. It proclaims to you and to others, “don't expect me to ever be any different than I am right now: deal with it.”

“That's just the way I am,” is a convenient phrase that allows you to stay entrenched in the comfort zone of all your shortcomings. If you were nothing more than flesh and blood, the phrase would be true. You would be limited and your options would be limited. Of course, you know that you are so much more than your flesh and blood limitations. You know that you have already gotten better at many things. Chances are, you are better at expressing yourself now than you were as a toddler. Chances are that you are a better driver than you were when you first got a learner's permit. Chances are that there are many things that you used to do that are not a part of your behavior today. The proof is all around you. You can clearly see that **you are not limited to who you used to be**. You can be better tomorrow than you are today. You can change.

REFLECT

Are you looking at yourself as the person you have always been or are you looking at yourself as the person you could be? Are you resisting changing your heart and mind because you are comfortable with your shortcomings? Does it seem that change would require too much effort?

RECITE

Since I know better, I must do better.

REQUEST

Lord, help me to face and take responsibility for my shortcomings. Guide me to grow in spiritual maturity so that I may put away the childish things of my past. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 8

Eyes Wide Open

“And Elisha prayed and said, 'Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.'” - 2 Kings 6:17 NKJV

READ

2 Kings 6:17 reads: *“And Elisha prayed and said, 'Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.' Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”*

When Elisha prayed for this young man, his servant, it wasn't because he was physically blind, but because he was afraid; he had just seen an impending Syrian army that outnumbered Israel about to attack.

The young man saw the soldiers, weapons, chariots, and the spoils of past Syrian victories, and he was confused and frightened. However, when his spiritual eyes were opened as Elisha prayed, he saw differently and was no longer afraid. Now he could see God's army of angelic horses and chariots fulfilling God's word to Elisha: *“For those who are with us are more than those who are with them, do not be afraid!”* (v. 16). Consequently, the Syrians were blinded and defeated.

How do you see the situations around you? How do you see the events and circumstances of your life? If you just look with your natural eyes, you will be like Elisha's servant: fearful, confused, and anticipating defeat. However, if you look with the spiritual eyes of faith and the vision that God's Word gives you, you, too, will see the hand of God in your situations.

God's promises, His presence, and His power are accessible to you. You just need to stand like Elisha, trusting God for the victory every single time during the fast and for the rest of your life.

REFLECT

How are you viewing this 40-day fast? Do you doubt your ability to complete it? Are you setting yourself up for failure? What can you do to strengthen yourself to finish it successfully?

RECITE

My spiritual eyes are opening during this fast. Thank you, Lord!

REQUEST

Dear Heavenly Father, I humbly come before you in thanksgiving for all of my blessings. As I fast and pray today, I must remember the Word and cry out: *“Lord, open my eyes that I may see things differently today according to the sight that faith, trust, and the Word of God brings into focus!”* I ask for clarity in this season. In Jesus' holy name, I pray. Amen.

Day 9

Work Your Plan

“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.’ - Jeremiah 29:11 NIV

READ

How often do we doubt what God is going to do? How often do we block our own blessing? How many times have we talked ourselves out of things that God wants us to have? We are so bombarded by negative things in the newspapers, on TV, and in our communities that we have lost faith in what God has planned for us. We are so busy looking at what’s going on that we fail to see what God wants to do and has done.

You may not have a big shiny new car, but you have access to transportation. You might not live in a mansion, but you have a warm place to sleep every night. God has the ability to breathe peace and prosperity on all of our problems and situations. Remember God can take the ordinary and turn it into the extraordinary. With God, all things are possible, so stay focused on what God has done, can do, and will do instead of the things He has not done.

REFLECT

What are some of the things God has done for you? Take time to thank Him for His blessings. As you go through the day, ask God to show you His plans for you and to give you the wisdom and strength to fulfill them.

RECITE

I thank God for the many ways in which He has blessed me, and I will work the plans He has for me.

REQUEST

Heavenly Father, I come with an open heart and mind, asking you to guide me on this path of life. I ask that you help me recognize my purpose and your plans. I ask that you give me wisdom and strength to pursue them. In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

Day 10

I Had a Dream

“Then God remembered Rachel; He listened to her and opened her womb.” - Genesis 30:22 ESV

READ

Rachel was Jacob's dream wife. They were very much in love. Like most married couples, they desired to have a child so their love could walk upon the earth. God listened to Rachel's dream for a child, and He answered her prayer by giving them a son. Their dream became a reality named Joseph.

It is impossible to overestimate the power and role of dreams in human existence. Dreams have brought us lifesaving medical breakthroughs and soul stirring revival movements. Some of our greatest athletic achievements are the result of a personal dream.

Years ago, I dreamed of thousands attending Saint Paul's Church, even though at that time, we had significantly fewer in the pews. The United States of America is the result of a dream of real democratic government by a group of patriots. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. changed the conversation on civil rights because he had a dream. Your world and “the” world can be changed because of the dream inside you.

These dreams are your daytime dreams - your vision, your hopes, your aspirations, and your desires. A God-given dream won't go away. Search your heart and mind to get in touch with the dream God has put inside you. Then pray about it and take action!

REFLECT

Are you able to make a distinction between visions that come from God and those that come from the enemy of your soul? Have you deferred your dream due to a setback?

RECITE

Without action, a dream is just an idle thought. Strengthen me to continue the pursuit of life goals.

REQUEST

Lord, I pray that our church's vision will become a reality in God's perfect timing. I pray that my dreams of my friends and family having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ will come about as we expand ministry. Please reveal or clarify my personal dream that is your will for my life and direct me in acting appropriately on it. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Day 11

Confusion

“For God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” - 1 Corinthians 14:33

READ

There have been moments when we've made a decision and the direction we went in left our lives in a state of confusion. We began to wonder if we made the right decision, questioning why God would send us in this direction into total chaos or if He even told us to take that path. Well, often times, we made that decision on our own. The spirit of God is not one of confusion. He will provide us with clear instructions. Though we may not understand the purpose of the instructions, we will understand what He's asking or telling us to do. Many times, our lack of understanding stems from our opposition to the very thing God wants us to do. We tend to think that we know what's best for us, forgetting that God knows everything and is everywhere. Therefore, He protects us from dangers seen and unseen. So, let's learn to trust God more than we trust ourselves, learn His voice, distinguishing between God's instructions and the devil's temptations.

REFLECT

Can you recall the last time you felt confused about where you were and the direction of your life? How did you get to that point? Were you listening to God or walking your own path?

RECITE

I will trust God more and deny my flesh.

REQUEST

Lord, thank you for watching over me and protecting me from decisions that would lead to chaos and confusion. Help me to trust you more because you know what's best for me. Amen.

Day 12

Finding Your Inner David for Your Outer Goliath

“David said to the Philistine, 'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands.'” - 1 Samuel 17:45-47

READ

As you live, you have things and situations happen in your life that may cause you to feel weary and defeated. But God is always with you during the ups and downs of life. Even when the downs seem as deep as valleys, know that you can have victory over the enemy as you live for Christ.

“No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from me,” says the Lord.” - Isaiah 54:17 (NKJV)

It's not about how big or terrible the situation looks. Instead, it's about your knowing in your heart of hearts that God has the last and final say regardless of what anyone else says. And as the lyrics to “Giants” by Donald Lawrence indicate, “Giants do die. The bigger they are, the harder they fall.” Be comforted in knowing you serve a God who has power over it all.

REFLECT

Just as a boy named David, the youngest son of Jesse, conquered and killed Goliath, a giant who was more than nine feet tall and was feared by an entire army, you, too, can and will conquer those things you see as giants in your life. You are a child of the almighty God, and He gave you the power, so speak boldly to that giant and command it to obey. What “giants” do you fear? How do you plan to conquer them?

RECITE

As a child of God, He has given me the power to command those things that attempt to hold me back from my rightful inheritance to leave. Victory is mine!

REQUEST

Lord, I thank you for your power, grace and mercy. I pray you continue to build up in me a courageous spirit as you did in David. I know you are always with me, even in the valleys of life, for you are God Almighty. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Day 13

A Mind to Work

“So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.” - Nehemiah 4:6 (KJV)

READ

One challenge of a mega-church is having enough volunteers to serve in the various ministries. The Scripture above references the will of the people rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Chapters 4-7 of Nehemiah detail how different forms of opposition were overcome because **the people had a mind to work**, a determination to rebuild the wall, and a resolve to finish the task. They were ridiculed, threatened, discouraged, extorted, and slandered, but they continued forward in the work for which they were commissioned.

Often times, we must approach tasks with the same mindset. We must be able to see beyond the opposition so that we persevere and finish the work. Stephen Covey tells us to begin with the end in mind. During Black History month, we are often reminded to keep our “eyes on the prize.” However, the Bible simply directs us to *have a mind to work*. It is only when we have a mind to work that we can complete a task and exclaim that it is finished.

REFLECT

Do you have a set of goals for this year that you are determined to complete? Have you put a plan in place to complete those goals? Set aside some time to identify those goals, then put together a list of short-term tasks that pave the way to completing the overall goals. Set your mind to work and finish the task.

RECITE

Today, I will construct the plan to complete my long-term goals. I will remain focused on the task and not give energy to the opposition. I will track my progress and set my mind to work, making the work greater than the obstacle.

REQUEST

Lord, I thank you for the strength to overcome any and all opposition as I serve in whatever capacity the Holy Spirit leads. I thank you for reminding me that the task will never be more than I can bear, and I thank you for blessing me with a mind to work. In the Mighty name of Jesus, Amen.

Day 14

His Wonders Remembered

“He has caused His wonders to be remembered.” - Psalm 111:4

READ

Sometimes it's a challenge to be a spiritual person. Have you ever wondered to yourself, “Why am I doing this? Why am I trying to live like this? Why did I tell God I would obey? Why have I promised to love those who are unlovable? This is so hard!” Then, God blesses you with demonstrations of His matchless love, faithfulness, forgiveness, sovereignty, and greatness, and you are filled with great joy as you recognize the wonder of God and remember exactly why you have chosen to submit your life to Him.

“Many, O Lord my God, are your wonderful works which you have done; and your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to you in order; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.” - Psalm 40:5 (NKJV)

REFLECT

Let's propose that the next time being a Christian gets hard, we won't express frustration or ingratitude, or forget the blessing and privilege of being in a relationship with the God of the universe! What wonders has God shown you?

RECITE

I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

REQUEST

Lord, You are good, and your mercies endure forever. Help me to always remember and never forget the wonderful things you have done for me. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Day 15

How Much is Too Much?

“She broke the jar and poured the perfume on His head.” - Mark 14:3b

READ

The story of the Bethany anointing is one of the few stories of Jesus' life that is contained in all four of the gospels. So impressive was this event that it was indelibly written upon the disciples' hearts so that they never, ever forgot this act of devotion. Mark uses it as a prelude to the passion events. It contrasts the hatred and rejection that Jesus was receiving at the hands of the rulers and the people. This act of worship and devotion stood out as an act of love that the Lord deserved from all, but was only given by a few.

May this deed be received as a call to worship for us today. May this deed make us ask ourselves the question, “How much is too much?” This woman's act set a standard of sacrifice, which none can better, but all can match. That alabaster bottle was very valuable. It was worth a year's wages. Plus, it was to be saved for the most important occasion of one's life. What is the most extravagant thing you have done for the Lord? What can we learn from this Scripture?

- ✓ Real love is always extravagant.
- ✓ Extravagant love is always criticized.
- ✓ Jesus always comes to the defense of those who are criticized for being extravagant in their devotion towards Him.

REFLECT

Actions speak louder than words. Do your actions for His church show Him how much you love Him? Do you find yourself doing more for an employer than you do for your church? Have you made personal sacrifices to assist with His work?

RECITE

Because He has given me everything, nothing I give Him will ever be too much.

REQUEST

Father, may all the people connected to my church love Jesus so much that they will be extravagant with the giving of their time, talent, and treasures. In the Awesome name of Jesus, Amen.

Day 16

Beautiful Feet

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” - Romans 10:14-15 (KJV)

READ

The Scriptures above come from a passage in Romans that expresses the desire for readers to be saved. This passage includes the familiar scripture, “... if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

However, the last two scriptures from this passage ask very pointed questions to the believers. How shall unbelievers call on him in whom they have not believed? How shall unbelievers believe in him of whom they have not heard? How can unbelievers know, unless they be told?

The Information Age in which we live provides numerous vehicles by which to spread the glad tidings of good things. Many times, a smile, a kind word, or a simple “God bless you” could make the difference in a person's day.

REFLECT

Take this moment to consider the different ways you can share the gospel with others. Be mindful that while we are used to planting the seed, it is God that does the watering, pruning, and growing from the vine. With whom can you share the Gospel of Christ?

RECITE

I will add the term sower to my job title. I will make it a point to share the spirit of Christ with someone new and plant a seed for God to water, prune, and grow for service in His kingdom.

REQUEST

Dear Lord, I thank You for blessing me with another day and providing me with yet another opportunity to serve You. On this day, I am promised a sure reward of beautiful feet without the extra cost of a pedicure. All I need to do is share the gospel of peace and joy with someone. I thank You for good memories to share and life-changing Scripture to plant into the lives of Your children. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 17

Turn the Page

“Do not remember the former things; neither consider the things old. Behold I am doing a new thing! Now it springs forth; do you not perceive and know it and will you not give heed to it?” - Isaiah 43:18-19

READ

After the clock struck midnight on this year, did you recognize the opportunity God gave you to let go of the past and start over? Or did you allow past mistakes and problems to enter into the New Year with you?

God chose to allow you to see another day and another year. Why? Because He has a plan for your life if you are willing to let go of the past and get in agreement with Him. Every day, you have a chance to be better than you were the day before. God did not bring you to this point in life to leave you stuck on this page or chapter in your life. In order for you to be in agreement with the plans of God, **you have to turn the page**. Keep moving forward, turning the page day after day until you get to where God wants you to be. After all you have been through, how do you turn the page? Take whatever it is to God and leave it there. There is no need for you to tote what God has already taken.

REFLECT

Each day, our goal should be to get in agreement with God's plan for our life. The question is not whether He will perform a new thing in us, but whether we are ready and willing to receive it. What do you need to let go of to move forward in your relationship with God?

RECITE

I will let go of the past and turn the page because God is calling me to move forward.

REQUEST

Lord, I thank You for the opportunity to move beyond my past. Clear my mind and open my heart as I move forward in faith. Lord, I thank You in advance that my future is so much greater than my past. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Day 18

Faith Your Way Through

“We walk by faith, not by sight.” - 2 Corinthians 5:7

READ

We've all heard the phrase “I'll believe it when I see it.” In fact, some of us have used this phrase quite frequently. However, our use of this phrase during our everyday dealings with other human beings usually means that we live by it. But living by sight puts limits on our life. If we live each day believing that we can only have and accomplish things that we can see, we won't have or accomplish much.

Let's not set limits on our lives when **we have a limitless God**. He has the power to make the impossible possible. But to turn on His power in our lives, we must demonstrate our faith in Him. How do we demonstrate our faith? By walking in victory and believing it's already done simply because of who He is. So whatever you are fasting and praying for, have faith and believe that it's already done and live as such. Faith your way through!

REFLECT

Each day, we have a choice to believe only what we can see and limit our own possibilities or to believe God for His word and live life accomplishing what many say is impossible. Consider things you've done that someone said you could not do. How did you do it? Did you faith your way through?

RECITE

With God, all things are possible. - Matthew 19:26

REQUEST

Lord, I thank you for the gift of faith You've given to me as I commit myself to you. Please help me to grow in faith. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Day 19

Restoring Peace to Your Spirit

“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
- Philippians 4:4-7 (NIV)

READ

When was the last time you yelled or snapped at someone? When was the last time that you said something harsh, rude, contrary, or highly critical to someone close to you? It's not uncommon for us to use others to outwardly vent the fears, worries, and anxieties we feel inside.

Our closest relationships often bear the brunt of any discontent or distress we feel inside. When your spirit is disquieted, it's easy to lash out or overreact to the small stuff that annoys you. You may find yourself rehashing old gripes or starting arguments with the very people you care about the most.

Next time you feel your level of irritation rising, press pause. Step away for 5-10 minutes to commune with God. Philippians 4:6 advises you that instead of being anxious and distressed, give your concerns to God in prayer and petition. It offers an assurance that if you do, the “peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

REFLECT

When I pray and surrender my distress to God, He can and will exchange my distress for His protective, transcendent peace. Instead of being harsh, today I will let my gentleness be evident to all.

RECITE

Lord, transform my distress into peace.

REQUEST

I surrender all of my distress to the Holy Spirit for guidance. I open my mind to receive the peace of God. Help me to demonstrate a gentle manner in my interactions with others. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Day 20

Do You REALLY Trust God? REALLY?

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all ways acknowledge him, and He will make your paths straight.” - Proverbs 3:5-6

READ

To be perfectly honest, there are really only two ways people live their lives as they pass through this world - either remembering God or forgetting Him. They either acknowledge His presence, living their lives in dependence on Him. Conversely, the others pay little attention to His claims on them and live a life on the basis of their own understanding and abilities. This includes the “lip service,” one may give.

Often that you can tell a person’s heart (and priorities) by simply looking at their checkbook, and their calendar. If your time and your treasure cannot be found guilty of being in support of God’s kingdom, you are not much different from nonbelievers. The question we must ask ourselves is, “Do we trust God?” The very nature of this question produces two possible meanings:

First: can you trust God? Is God trustworthy? Can God handle the decisions and the problems in our lives?

Second: can YOU trust God? That is, do you have the ability and willingness to trust Him?

The Scripture is very telling about trusting God: the matter of trust is an all or nothing thing. Notice how many times the word “all” is used. The command to trust precedes the promise. Blessing comes after trust is expressed. The promise is conditional. Unlike many of the unconditional promises in the Bible, this promise of direction is given only to those who exercise trust in God.

REFLECT

Is your trust in God conditional? Is your faith in God followed by continual worry about the problem? What areas in your life are places where you need to yield to Him and look for His direction?

RECITE

Trust in God is on all or nothing endeavor. I will trust Him with everything.

REQUEST

Lord, I pray that my faith and trust in You will grow. I ask You to help me lean on You and allow You to have total control so that Your will be done. I pray that the fruits of my deepened trust result in deeper guidance. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Day 21

God's Mighty Power

“My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” - 2 Corinthians 12:9

READ

God tells the Apostle Paul something very powerful. The choice to live within the grace of God is deliberately designed to discipline, and develop us. It is not others that keep us consecrated to the Lord; it is only God's grace that enables us to choose a lifestyle of consecration, and only by God's grace are we able to stay committed to a lifestyle of consecration to God.

In 2 Corinthians 11:22-28, Paul describes some of the consequences of his choice to live a life consecrated to God when he says, “... imprisonments, beaten with countless stripes, and frequently at the point of death, once stoned, three times shipwrecked, many times on journeys, exposed to perils from rivers, perils from bandits, perils from my own countrymen, perils from the Gentiles, perils in the city, perils in the desert places, perils in the sea, perils from those posing as believers, in hunger and thirst, frequently driven to fasting by want, in cold and exposure and lack of clothing... and besides those things that are without, there is the daily inescapable pressure of my care and anxiety for all the churches.”

In all this, Paul concludes in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, “I take pleasure in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong.” God's manna is new every morning and so is God's grace to meet the need of each day for each one of us. If we continually call on the Lord in our times of weakness, we will feel God's presence and power working in and through us.

REFLECT

Without a doubt, we are all inadequate to face life's difficulties on our own. Therefore, we need God's help and his resources. We may feel weak at times, and we may feel strong at times. We know the strength we feel comes from the Lord.

RECITE

God's grace is sufficient for me, for God's strength is made perfect in my weakness.

REQUEST

Dear Heavenly Father, I humbly come before You in thanksgiving for Your grace and your strength during my times of weakness. I ask that You empty me so that I can be filled with the Holy Spirit and commit to Your will for my life. In Jesus' holy name, I pray. Amen.

Day 22

Do You Love Me?

“The most important one is this,” answered Jesus, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” - Mark 12:29-30 (NIV)

READ

We love God because He first loved us. We are not saved by the law; we are saved by the grace of God. God sent his son Jesus to earth to save us by shedding His blood on the cross. Now that's good news! It is also God news. There is no other entity that can accomplish the same thing. Our response then, is to demonstrate our love for Him by living a life that is pleasing to Him.

God's Word includes the prescription for how we are to live. The 10 Commandments are relevant to our lives and provide a foundation for all of God's instructions to us. Jesus fulfills the law; therefore, when we believe on Him, we are empowered to follow God's commands. Our love for God will lead us to desire to obey Him, and our relationship with God gives us the power to obey Him. When we are tempted to sin, the Holy Spirit empowers us to obey His word. When we love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind, our motivation is to please Him, our thoughts are towards Him, and our actions reflect Him. When we live a life of surrender to God and love for God, we are blessed. We are assured of God's guidance, peace, revelation, comfort, joy, and so much more.

REFLECT

How do you demonstrate your love for God? What can you do to make sure your life is pleasing to Him?

RECITE

I love the Lord with all my heart, soul, and mind. My love for God will lead me to obey him.

REQUEST

Lord, I thank You for the sacrifice of Your son Jesus on the cross. Thank You for providing a way for me to have a relationship with You. Help me to please You by obeying You and doing what You have commanded me to do in Your Word, in the power of Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 23

For Real, For Real?

“This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the Day of Judgment: in this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.

Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.” – 1 John 4:17-21 (NIV)

READ

Many years ago, recording artist Chubby Checker recorded a song entitled, “Do You Love Me?” He was attempting to gain the attention of a young lady by performing the latest dances for her. In the kingdom of God, our love is foundational, established, and unconditional. It is not performance based or so much a feeling, but a commitment.

After we develop a love relationship with God, we are also commanded to walk in love with other people. “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:39). The Bible also encourages us to “owe no man anything, but to love one another, for he that loves another hath fulfilled the law” (Romans 13:8).

There will be people that we will connect with more than others, but it is not about us-it is about God. How does this agape (unconditional love) manifest itself? We must all constrain ourselves from our natural inclinations and work to prefer others above ourselves, preserve each other's integrity, and be quick to forgive, repent, and reconcile. This is not easy, but it is possible when we have the indwelling Holy Spirit, who gives us the power to do those things that are ordained of God.

REFLECT

The love of God is unconditional, not based upon performance. God loves us; therefore, “we ought also to love one another”(1 John 4:11). Let us not destroy others with judgment, gossip, and criticism. Instead, we must love others and lift them up. Think of people who might need your love, support, and encouragement. What can you do to lift them up?

RECITE

I love my brothers and sisters, as I love God-unconditionally.

REQUEST

Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you for loving me with an unfathomable love. Help me to demonstrate a portion of that love to other people, as a witness of your love. In the power of Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 24

The Good Report

“And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, ‘Let us go up of once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.’” - Numbers 13:30 (KJV)

READ

God's chosen people of the Old Testament were brought out of Egypt and headed for the Promised Land. Once they reached the Promised Land, 12 men, one from each tribe, were sent to survey the land. Upon return, only 2 of the 12 men had a good report. The 10 men with negative reports all died of a plague in the wilderness, never receiving the blessing of the Promised Land.

As Christians, we must always prepare to give the good report. Caleb reminds us in the Scripture above that we are well able to overcome any hardship or challenge whatever they may be.

REFLECT

Prepare yourself in prayer to provide a positive response to all communication that comes your way. Receive the blessing from above by publishing God's good report and sharing it with others who could be in a dark place. What can you do to overcome life's challenges and provide a good report?

RECITE

I will focus on giving a good report, allowing God's light to shine through me in every situation that comes my way. Through Christ, all things are possible; therefore, I am able to overcome every situation of the day.

REQUEST

Lord, I thank You for increasing in me as I decrease. I know all things are possible with You, and I ask You to let Your light shine through me so I can be a blessing to others as well as myself, with the good report of salvation. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Day 25

Keep Pushing!

“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.” - James 1:12

READ

Trials are so difficult for many of us. We tend to dread our season of storms. We sometimes become discouraged and broken when we are faced with trials, wondering why we must endure such difficulties. However, we must not forget that God had to allow the storm to come our way. Surely He would not permit us to enter a storm for which we are not prepared.

God has provided each of us with the tools and resources necessary to persevere. Therefore, we must use the strength God has given us to push our way through every storm, holding fast to our faith that He will fulfill every promise He has made. We must dig deep inside ourselves and locate those seeds we planted that are ready to bear fruit and push through until we see the sunshine. God will surely reward our faith and perseverance because His Word says so.

REFLECT

With each storm, we should grow and mature spiritually as we gain more insight, more faith, and more knowledge. Consider your last storm. Can you see your growth in how you approached this storm in comparison to your last storm?

RECITE

I will conquer this storm because God has prepared me to do so.

REQUEST

Lord, thank you for showing me that I can conquer my storms as You have prepared me for them. Help me to use the tools You have given me to persevere, acknowledging your presence and remembering that with You all things are possible. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Day 26

Tell the Devil NO!

“...so let God work his will in you. Yell a loud no to the Devil and watch him scamper. Say a quiet yes to God and he'll be there in no time.” - James 4:7-8 (MSG)

READ

There's an old joke that says, “If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans.” Have your well-crafted plans been plagued with fears, doubts, and discouraging self-criticism? Recognize these as the handiwork of the devil.

When you fast, your submission to God empowers you to conquer the impulses of the body. This is a perfect time to submit your mind to God as well. As you do, you will be able to discern the conniving words of the enemy.

The devil is a bully. Every day he tries to fill your mind with nonstop negativity with one purpose: to make you a miserable failure for all to see. Like all bullies, the devil succeeds by getting you to believe in and subscribe to his power. He is a liar. The truth is that God gave you the power to control your mind. So use your power for good. As soon as the negativity starts up, tell the devil, “NO! Stop it!” Say it loud like you mean it and like all bullies, he will depart.

REFLECT

In the quiet moments that follow, open your heart and your mind to receive what God has for you. Say, “Yes” to God, to His will, and to His plan. Let God have His way. He will show up for you. Soul-satisfying victory will surely follow.

RECITE

My YES to God is a NO to the devil.

REQUEST

Father, I open myself to your will. I want what You want for me. Today, I say yes to your will. Yes to your plan. Not my will, but Your will be done, in, through and around me. In Jesus' name, I command the devil to depart. I put the bully in his place under my feet. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Day 27

I'm a Waiter!

*“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him. Those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land.”
- Psalm 37:7*

READ

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.” It is resting in the Lord, in His will, His promise, His faithfulness, and His love that makes patience easy. And the resting in Him is nothing but being silent unto Him, still before Him. Having our thoughts and wishes, our fears and hopes, hushed into calm and quiet in that great peace of God that passes all understanding.

That peace keeps the heart and mind when we are anxious for anything because we have made our request known to Him. The rest, the silence, the stillness, and the patient waiting all find their strength and joy in God Himself.

Adapted from “Waiting on God Patiently” by Andrew Murray

REFLECT

One of the hardest traits to learn is patience. We have a tendency to want things when we want them. The Bible encourages us to be patient and to let God work: Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him” (Psalm 37:7). For what do you need to wait on the Lord?

RECITE

I wait patiently for the Lord to answer my prayers and cooperate with His plans for me.

REQUEST

Father, let me be quiet in Your presence and allow You to fight on my behalf. I trust You to go before me. Make me more patient so I can hold on until you turn things around in my favor. Help me to know when to act and when to stand still. Allow me to win victories in my personal life, and in all my relationships. Help me to submit and be patient, waiting for You to resolve difficulties that are beyond me. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Day 28

I Have BECAUSE I Give

*“One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.”
- Proverbs 11:24 (NIV)*

READ

Do you know others who make much less than you who always seem to be blessed over and above? They prosper, and you can't understand how because you're doing some of the some things yet you're struggling. Or, maybe you are that prosperous person. But if not, why aren't you? You don't feel you're doing anything differently than they are.

There are areas of believing that put you in a place of receiving God's blessings. When you come with a spirit of stewardship, gratitude, and generosity, you increase your relationship with the Father. Everything you have is yours only because of His blessings, mercies and grace. If God has blessed you with a gift or talent, volunteer in a group that allows you to share that gift or talent. God did not give you gifts and talents to keep to yourself; they are to be shared with His people to further the Kingdom.

If you miss Sunday service or Bible study, do you make sure to also give tithes and offerings for the services you missed? God blesses us with a source of income, and all He asks is that we give a portion in tithes and offerings. When we consistently give in tithes and offerings, we begin to see God move in miraculous ways. As disciples, we should have a servant's heart, share our gifts, and support the mission of God's church by attending faithfully, participating in ministry, and giving in tithes and offerings. Giving back a portion of what He has blessed us with, when we know it all belongs to Him, is showing our obedience to God's Word, and He will bless us for it.

REFLECT

The Lord has blessed you with gifts so you can be a blessing and help expand the His kingdom. How can you use your gifts to serve God and bring others to Christ?

RECITE

All I have belongs to the Lord. I will give my tithe, time, talent, and talk—gifts God has blessed me with to further His Kingdom. I know the Lord will bless my obedience in ways I could never imagine.

REQUEST

Lord God, I thank You for Your promise and Your blessings. I pray that You would shake my heart to be obedient to Your Word and become the disciple You are leading me to be. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Day 29

Harvest

*“And let us not grow weary while doing good for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”
- Galatians 6:9 (NKJV)*

READ

Harvest is very powerful! The spiritual and physical side of harvest is the reaping and sowing of what you put out (prayed) that is produced on Earth. A harvest in the natural world includes farming and crops. The harvest in the spiritual realm is unseen with the natural eye, harvested during the seasons in which the Lord brings to fruition. This could be planting seeds of prosperity, good deeds, ministry work, or prayers concerning your family and marriage. The Bible speaks on harvest and seedtime, referring both to people coming to Jesus Christ and to Christians growing spiritually. When you plant seeds during the spiritual harvest, it could be training up your children or grandchildren in church to follow God (Proverbs 22:6, NKJV). If you want to mend a marriage or repair a relationship with a loved one, especially a child or parent, you would plant seeds according to Galatians 5:22-23: The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

REFLECT

Planting seeds in the ministry is a good thing for everyone to do. The Bible says it is wise to win souls. Proverbs 11:18-19 states, “... he who sows righteousness will have a sure reward; as righteousness leads to life.” If you are working in the area of ministry or evangelizing for the Lord, understand that your seeds are being planted. What are you planting?

RECITE

I will plant the Fruit of the Spirit.

REQUEST

Heavenly Father, help me to plant seeds for a harvest. Father, guide and show me the seeds I need to plant today to reap during the harvest season. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Day 30

Time

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” - Matthew 6:6

READ

A few years ago, one of my resolutions was to spend more time with God praying. Like most of us, my schedule is busy, so I just didn't want to find time: I wanted it to be the right time. I did pray, but it was usually five minutes in the morning when I got up and five minutes before bed, and it just didn't feel right. So I had to examine my day and find out when it was the most quiet and when I wasn't being interrupted by anyone or anything. For me, it was the early morning. I had to give up the morning news and spend that time in prayer. Just like I did, you have to find your time—your right time. We all need that one-on-one time with God. It makes my day seem much more peaceful, and I am sure it will change your day as well. God wants to hear from us; He wants us to pray and make him a priority. Find your right time, and enter into your closet and pray.

REFLECT

Psalm 5:3 says, “In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.” How is your relationship with God? When can you spend one-on-one time with Him to strengthen your relationship?

RECITE

I will make prayer a priority in my schedule.

REQUEST

Oh Father God, I thank you for the time we spend in prayer together. Thank You for watching over me and directing my life. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen

Day 31

When Do We Get to the Good Part?

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” - James 1:17

READ

During the 80s, a group named Whodini recorded a popular song called, “When We Gonna Get to the Good Part?” The opening line of the song states, “You were at the good part, you just didn't know it...” That opening lyric exemplifies many people's daily experience. Ads in magazines and on billboards, TV, and radio feature models and actors who appear to be happy and complete once they have obtained shiny, glittering, better performing, or expensive things. We are bombarded with messages telling us that when we earn “X,” we can afford a “Y” lifestyle. Once we are able to afford a “Y” lifestyle, we will have achieved success, or reached the good part.

However, the Bible reminds us that we have already reached the good part—without a credit check or any type of financial qualification—because the gospel is free. God has already given us good and perfect gifts. We have been given all that we need through Christ: The Holy Spirit, grace, mercy, wisdom, repentance, faith, guidance, and eternal life. Therefore, there is no need to enter into prayer wondering, “When we gonna get to the good part?”

As we begin this day of fasting, let us be mindful of the good and perfect gifts given us from above. Let us remain focused on the Bible truth that our God shall supply all our needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

REFLECT

Instead of pursuing the earthly treasures of the world, we should focus on the heavenly gifts that God has for us. What must you do to become richer in God?

RECITE

God is my “sun and shield” (Psalms 84:11), and I will seek Him first in all things.

REQUEST

Father, You are Lord of my life. I know if I seek Your presence, Your provision and protection are guaranteed. Help me stay focused on You so I can do Your will Your way and live the life You have planned for me. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Day 32

I Didn't Make the Law!

"Give and it will be given unto you, a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over; will be poured into your lap. For with the same measure you use, it will be measured to you."

- Luke 6:38

READ

According to the Law of Miraculous Multiplication, the economics of stewardship is governed by the mathematics of the supernatural. When we are faced with a major need, we need to express confidence in God and share! The Laws of Guaranteed Return and Absolute Harvest indicate that as we give, it will be given to us. If we sow sparingly, we will reap sparingly; if we sow bountifully, we will reap bountifully (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

I struggled to tithe in the beginning of my life because I lacked discipline and faith. However, God kept working on me: alleluia! Eventually I realized that God's way was the best way, and I began to honor God by giving a tithe. I cannot tell you how incredibly blessed by life has been, all I can say is, "You have to try God enough to trust God, and trust God enough to try God."

It may not make sense to us, but God calls us to live with confidence that He is more than able to meet our needs. In many ways, living a triumphant life in the realm of Christianity is like developing an eternal investment portfolio. What we contribute will reap dividends. If we are faithful in our living and giving, we will be blessed in return.

REFLECT

Everything we have comes from God. Because He gives us so much, we should be happy to give to Him in return. What are you giving to Him during this time of fasting, prayer, and meditation?

RECITE

I will be a faithful and cheerful giver.

REQUEST

Lord, I am thankful and grateful for the many blessings You have showered upon me. Help me be an even better steward of all that You have entrusted to me, including my time, talents, and treasures. Guide me such that I will seek You first in all I do and store up treasures for myself in heaven. Continue to give me strength as I give myself to You during this time of fasting. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Day 33

Watch and Pray!

*“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”
- Matthew 26:41*

READ

The disciples were directed to watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation. This direction is still valid to believers. The distractions of the world vie for our attention every moment of the day. We are bombarded with commercials, billboards, text messages, email, special alerts, music, movies, sports, and various modes of entertainment. How often are we directed to quiet time simply to “watch and pray” so we do not enter into temptation? Only our Lord and Savior offers this direction to keep us in line with purpose.

Fasting gives us a great opportunity to manage the temptations of our appetite, keeping our flesh under subjection of the Holy Spirit as we meditate and pray.

REFLECT

In these moments of reflection, consider activities that keep your flesh from straying from the willingness of your spirit to serve the Lord. Schedule activities that help you remain on the narrow path of salvation. Incorporate those activities into your daily routine to make each today better than yesterday. What are some activities in which you can engage?

RECITE

Today, I will be more alert. I will be mindful of activities that keep me inside God's covering, and I will incorporate more of those activities into my daily schedule. I will spend more time in prayer as I shed those activities that weaken my spiritual relationship with God.

REQUEST

Lord, I thank you for new mercies daily and for divine instruction on how to walk worthy. Thank you for keeping me alert, and thank you for hearing my prayers. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray.
Amen.

Day 34

Equipped for Any Storm

“If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For if it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, if it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?’ So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.” - 1 Peter 4:15-19

READ

Storms occur naturally in the environment. Meteorologists announce the expected arrival of a storm, and local municipalities sound on alarm to alert residents that a storm is coming. Citizens are encouraged to maintain emergency supplies (e.g., flashlights, bottled water, extra batteries, etc.) to endure the storm. Some people purchase generators to ensure that their power is not interrupted.

Disciples of Christ can expect trials and tribulations (spiritual storms). The Bible sounds the alarm for believers, warning us that trouble will come. As Christians, we need a constant source of energy—a relationship with Christ, from whom we draw guidance, discernment, understanding, strength, and peace in the midst of our storms.

Our emergency pack includes the Bible, which is full of inexhaustible revelation, and the church, which offers a multitude of gifts, including people who instruct, encourage, and support us. Natural storms are sometimes so intense that people must take shelter in a basement or storm cellar.

Sometimes, our spiritual storms are just as intense. Our trials often push us to the point of a deeper commitment to, greater faith in, and profound surrender to Christ. We understand God is in control and draw closer to Him. When God sounds the “all clear,” we must be sensitive to the good He has worked in our hearts as we surrendered to His process.

REFLECT

Have you ever experienced a spiritual storm? Remember, Jesus is your true source of victory. He allows the storm and wants to infuse more of His image in you as you trust Him in the midst.

RECITE

I surrender to God's process in my life. I understand that all things work together for my good, and nothing can separate me from His love.

REQUEST

Lord, I thank You for loving me and leading and guiding my life. Help me to surrender to You and to trust You during the storms of my life. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Day 35

The Agony of Defeat

“I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.” - Joshua 1:3

READ

Abraham Lincoln is widely recognized as one of the greatest presidents in history. As a leader, he stood tall and strong in a very critical and decisive time in our history. We certainly would regard him as a successful man, but he experienced many failures throughout his life.

When Abraham Lincoln went off to the Black Hawk War he was a captain. Through no fault of his own, he returned a private, bringing an end to his military career. His little country village shop “winked out” as he used to say. So he failed as a businessman. As a lawyer in Springfield, Illinois, he was too impractical, too unpolished, and too temperamental to be successful.

Turning to politics, he was defeated in his campaign for the legislature. He was defeated in his first attempt to be nominated for Congress and in his application to be Commissioner of the General Land Office. He was defeated in the Senatorial election of 1854 and in his aspirations for the Vice Presidency in 1856. Finally, he was elected President of the United States and fulfilled his destiny and the destiny of a nation.

Although maybe not as dramatic, Lincoln's experience is the experience of many of God's people. The enemy of our soul comes to us after repeated defeats and whispers in our ears. “You're a failure!” He tells us we will never win that we are trapped forever where we are, and will never fulfill our God-given destiny. Remember, the enemy is a liar—failure is pointing you to victory.

REFLECT

God is greater than whatever hardships, trials or difficulties that we may experience. He uses these things to make us more dependent upon Him. When we feel defeated we can get back on track by living victoriously in Jesus believing that he will comfort and help us.

RECITE

I will not allow setbacks and disappointment keep me from doing the right thing.

REQUEST

Lord I pray that you bind the spirit of fatigue and discouragement, so that I will not throw in the towel or lose heart when I come up against the same problems over and over again. Help me to remember that reaping a harvest almost never happens on the same day as sowing the seed. I may not even see a harvest in this life from what I have sown. Nevertheless, help me to stay the course and never give up, because I know that at the proper time You will return and reward those who have been faithful servants. In the mighty name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Day 36

Clean Me Up!

“Blessed be God who has not turned away my prayer nor His mercy from me.” - Psalm 66:20

READ

As we come to the Lord in fasting and prayer, we can be assured of many things. God will hear our prayers and never turn away from us. We need to trust Him! He will never leave us or forsake us. Maybe there have been people in our lives that have rejected or turned away from us, but Jesus never will. He loves us. Even when our prayers are weak, infrequent, or said with little faith, He still hears us.

Sometimes, our actions and attitudes—including sin (Psalm 66:18), disobedience (Proverbs 28:9), disbelief (Hebrews 11:6), and disingenuousness (Isaiah 29:13), may affect our appeals. Therefore, we must come to God with the right heart. We must keep our hearts open to correction and repent and pray. Just as we are feeding our bodies with healthy foods during the fast, we must feed our minds with good things (Philippians 4:8). We can read and reflect on the Word, listen to Christian music, and surround ourselves with positive people. We must focus on doing good (Acts 11:23) and seek God with all our heart (Psalm 119:2). In addition, like David, we must ask the Lord to cleanse us: create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10). As we cleanse our bodies during the fast, we will also cleanse our hearts and minds—and establish a closer relationship with God.

REFLECT

We must have confidence today as we fast and pray. God has not turned away from our prayers. God is there, He is listening, and He is answering. We must repent of any sin, any iniquity, and confess it before the Lord. We should ask to be cleansed so that we can come to Him with clean hands and a pure heart. Then, we can proclaim the truth given in verse 19: “But certainly God has heard me, He has attended to the voice of my prayer.”

RECITE

I am seeking God with all my heart and feeding my mind and my body with wholesome things.

REQUEST

Dear Heavenly Father, I humbly come before You in thanksgiving. I ask that You, Lord God, fill me with the knowledge of Your will for my life through all spiritual wisdom and understanding during our fast. Create in me a clean heart, and fill it with Your joy and wisdom. Give me the strength to complete the fast as I cleanse my mind, body, and spirit to be closer to You. In Jesus' holy name, I pray. Amen.

Day 37

It's the Way You Remember

*“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
- Ephesians 4:32*

READ

We've all heard the phrase “I will forgive them, but I will never forget.” In fact, many of us have used this phrase quite frequently. However, our use of this phrase during our interactions with others means that we carry burdens and weights on our shoulders every day. Forgetting is a huge part of forgiveness, but if you cannot forget, you can change the way you remember.

Stop replaying, rehearsing and reminding yourself of what happened. Forgive others as God has forgiven you. When God forgives us, the deed is erased as though it never occurred. Could you imagine what would happen to us if God held on to every sin we committed? We don't want to remember every sin we have committed, so why remember every sin others have committed against us? Forgive, forget and if you can't, remember it differently (without malice) and release it.

REFLECT

People don't do things against you; they do things for themselves. Why hold on to a bad memory that can keep you from what God has for you? Whatever happened, its over! Leave it in the past so that your future does not consist of a rearview mirror.

RECITE

I will forgive, forget and move forward.

REQUEST

Lord, thank you for forgiving me time and time again and erasing my sins, including those times when I failed to forgive others. Help me to forgive in accordance with Your word and not based on my feelings. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 38

Praying for a LOT, and receiving a LITTLE

“If that is how God clothes the gross of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?” - Matthew 6:30

READ

Faith is essentially your vessel. It's the thing that moves you through to the change you pray will occur. Your blessings must come to you through your vessel of faith. So the question is, “Can you receive a reservoir of blessings through a thimble?”

You can pray Jabez prayer to enlarge your territory every day until Kingdom comes. But if you do not enlarge your faith, it simply can't manifest in your life. You will seem to be making only incremental progress even though you asked for so much more.

Here's something else to consider: If you do not grow in your faith and your Christian maturity, how on earth would you manage to stay upright if a flood of blessings entered your life right now?

REFLECT

What size is my vessel? How often do I not FULLY trust God in hard times? How many times have I deviated from something I know God wants me to do? Do I believe that I am worthy of the big blessing for which I have prayed?

RECITE

Lord, prepare me to receive all that you will pour into me.

REQUEST

Holy Spirit, in Jesus' name I ask that you counsel me to enlarge my faith to encompass the magnitude of blessings for which I have prayed. Speak to me at those times when I am tempted to lose faith in the very thing for which I have prayed. In the matchless name of Jesus, I pray, Amen.

Day 39

The Worst is Over

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” - Revelation 21:4 (NIV)

READ

When you are a child of the most High God, you know as you go through life you will experience storms. You will experience a broad range of storms. Whether your storms are small, medium, large, extra-large, or gigantic, you will survive them. The only difference is how you look and where you are at the end of the storm. There are some Christians who have survived a storm only to find themselves marooned on an island. Because they believe they are stranded, they do not even take the time to realize they are only steps away from being rescued.

You were not created to give up and allow the enemy to defeat you. God has prepared and equipped you long ago for whatever storm, trial, or tribulation you face. The devil thinks if he can just get inside your head and begin creating doubt, you will give up in defeat. But you have all you need to overcome and destroy your enemy; just stay strong in the circumstance. When you get on the other side, you will look back at that thing you thought would take you out, and you will see how small it was compared to the power of your God.

REFLECT

As you go through life, you will experience many challenges. The Lord has provided you with all you need to come through victorious. So, be encouraged because the worst is over. Don't give up because your blessing is right around the corner. What gifts or abilities has the Lord given you so that you can endure any storm or challenge?

RECITE

I know there will be storms, trials and tribulations. God has equipped and prepared me to conquer anything that tries to destroy me. I know whatever I have gone through is preparing me for where God wants to take me.

REQUEST

Jesus, thank You for saving me. You held me up when I didn't think I could make it. In my darkest of hours, You have been the shining light I never knew could ever exist again. You have led me through and helped me survive situations that would have taken others out, and I count my blessings. Because of Your love, I am saved. Alleluia! In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Day 40

Power for the Future

“Moses answered the people, 'Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today ... the Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.’” - Exodus 14:13-14

READ

God's power does not operate until we move beyond the realm of our possibilities. As long as we can do it in our own strength, there is no need for God to display His power. We must move beyond our abilities if a watching world will ever see the power of God. This fact is seen clearly in our text as the recently freed Hebrew slaves found themselves surrounded by impossibilities.

Before them was a sea that could not be crossed. Beside them was a barren wasteland. Behind them was an enemy that desired to capture them and take them back to where they had been. In this difficult situation they had three options: Go back, stand still, or go forward.

For the children of God there is only one real option; go forward! As we move forward under God's direction and by His power, we must be careful. Around us are many roads that can only lead to defeat and death. Doctrinal deviation, isolation, cowardly compromise, and division are to be avoided. *Before us* there is a future. There is a land that flows with milk and honey. This future is as bright and powerful as the promises of God that we find in Scripture.

REFLECT

What are some areas in your life that are standing still? Have any retreated and gone backwards? Pray about those areas that need movement.

RECITE

As a child of God, I am always moving forward.

REQUEST

Lord, I pray that I will never be afraid to move forward. I believe in your promises, and that they will never return to me empty. I also pray that my church family will continue to move forward, regardless of the challenge or uncertainty. In the matchless name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

THIS YEAR I BELIEVE GOD:

FOR MYSELF

Spiritual Revival • Physical Healing • Prosperity and Abundance • Rich Generosity

MY FAMILY

Restoration of Relationships • Household Salvation

MY CAREER/SCHOOL

Excellence • Promotion

MY MINISTRY

Victory • Group Growth • Salvation of Colleagues, Classmates, Bosses, Employees

Select a Prayer and Accountability partner who will join you in this journey to help encourage you and pray with you.