



24/7

FULL SURRENDER TO LIFE WITH JESUS



**TWENTY ONE DAYS FOR FASTING,
PRAYER, & DEVOTION**

Introduction

2023 was an incredible year at Believers Church. We witnessed the power of God through our outreach, life change in Sunday morning worship, growth for kids and students, and deep relationships were built within our groups. From feeding Green Tech on Mondays to car loads of donated goods to eastern Kentucky, God worked in so many ways. The highlights are numerous and the hard times served as incredible growth moments.

For me, this all began in January with *Messy Faith*. Many of us made the decision to spend an intentional twenty-one days in God's Word accompanied with prayer and fasting. This time of devotion was built around our vision series, *A Mess Worth Making*.

This year, *24/7* will serve the same purpose as it ushers in our 2024 Vision series, *More than Sunday*. And we have a completely new group of contributors that have written the daily devotionals! There has been a lot of time and planning go into this effort and I'm so excited about the work God is going to do. As we begin, I want to provide some helpful information if this experience is new to you:

Daily Devotional

24/7 is a daily devotional that we read together for twenty-one days. Day 1 begins on Monday, January 8th. Day 21 will be January 28th. We will have a Worship Night on February 4th to celebrate the work God performed during the twenty-one days. We invite you to join us!

We urge you to take your own notes. Use the time of day that works best for you. And don't get discouraged if you miss a day. It's easy to catch up and still participate. There aren't any rules. This is about your time with God for the purpose of shaping a strong 2024!

Prayer

Each day includes a personal prayer, but we encourage you to develop or deepen your own prayer life during this time. Talk to God about what you're learning. Ask for His will to be done in your life. Ask Him to open your eyes to things you need to see during this time. Seek Him in ways you never have before.

Fasting

Fasting is way of abstaining from daily needs or routines in order to focus on growing closer to God. We recommend you pick something that is part of your daily life that would be hard to go without. This could be a certain kind of food, a special diet, caffeine, social media, sleeping in, TV, reduce screen time, or something else that might serve as a daily distraction.

People often wonder what purpose fasting serves. If you decide to fast, you realize on Day 1 how hard it is and also how it begins redirecting your thoughts, revealing your weaknesses, and bringing a new desperation. When considering what to fast from, think about your daily life and something that is often a go-to for comfort. This is often going to be what you should choose to fast from. Don't choose anything that could be detrimental to your personal health.

Final Thoughts

In closing, I have two strong recommendations. First, consider the outcome of this important time. Develop one important question you'd like to work through during this experience. Some examples: *God, what is my next step? God, what are doing in my life that I need to be aware of? God, how do I learn to trust you deeper and follow you closer? God, how do I overcome this pain or this area of doubt?*

Second, walk through 24/7 with someone else in our church. This is for the purpose of companionship, accountability, and to learn from others. This might be your spouse, child, parent, or even your community group. God wants to do amazing things! And I will be on this journey with you.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Matt

Day 1: Living God's Word

by: Mark Seymour

Ask God for insight as you read: James 1:22-25

I hate being deceived. It makes me mad. Mad at the person I trusted. Mad at myself for letting it happen. Mad at the situation, and whatever loss accompanies it. It's just not right!

It's easy to be critical of those who deceive others – those who ignore, omit, or misrepresent the truth. But, if I'm honest, the person who deceives me the most is me. In fact, James says that every time I *hear* the word, and don't *do* it, I'm deceiving myself.

Paul told his disciple, Timothy, that the Scriptures are there "to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us **to do** what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people **to do** every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17) The Word is not meant to be a source of *information*, it's meant to be a catalyst of *transformation*.

James describes it as looking in a mirror. We get to see ourselves as we really are – the way others see us. At times we are affirmed – seeing the growth and improvement our efforts to be more like Jesus have produced. But often, it shows us the imperfections – the contrasts between our own lives and the one we seek to follow. We are confronted with truth. We are given a choice – will we act on that truth, or not. Choosing to do nothing is equivalent to saying that the truth doesn't matter. We're lying to ourselves. It is not the reading or listening that brings about change. It's the act of doing that brings transformation.

Let's stop deceiving ourselves. Let's get into God's word. And let's do what it says!

Day 1 Prayer

Father, help me to let your word take root in my heart. Help me to let it change me, from the inside out. Help me to take action, and be a doer of the Word – today, and every day hereafter.

Amen.

DAY 2: Be Present

by: Hannah-Dawn Fisk

Ask God for insight as you read: Hebrews 12:2

In scripture we read that if we lay down every weight and sin, then we can run with endurance. We cannot do this alone; we must keep our eyes fixed on the Lord!

God promises in James 4:7 that if we submit to Him and resist the devil, he WILL flee from us. I believe that living 24/7 for the Father means we have to submit. We can't submit without giving Him complete Lordship over our lives and recognizing that we will never be able to run the race we are supposed to without Him.

I encourage you to spend time today with Jesus. Quiet and still your heart. Pray that He would remove anything from your life that would prevent Him from being Lord over ALL. We live in such a "loud" world. Everyone has an opinion about everything. I wholeheartedly believe one of the steps to hearing what He wants for you is to simply be present with Him. Be present with the One who loves and cares for you so deeply that He would send his ONLY son to take your sin and wash you completely clean! Wow, what an amazing and unmatched love story! He sees you and wants you. He knows your messes, your mistakes, your sins and still gave His all. Thank You, Lord!

Day 2 Prayer

God, stop us in our busy lives and pull on our hearts. Grow in us a hunger that cannot be satisfied without You. Help us get quiet to hear your voice. We want to know you, Lord. You truly are the lover of our souls, and we trust You. We trust You with our mess. Your sacrifice was more than enough for sin! We give You all the glory today. Help us run this race set before us.

In Jesus's mighty name we pray,

Amen

Day 3: Delighting in Law of the Lord

by: Rebekah Grindstaff

Ask God for insight as you read: Psalm 1:1-2

(Psalms belong to the literary genre of Hebrew poetry. These particular verses are meant to be didactic psalms which mean that it is intended to teach) Jewish Study Bible Commentary

In the day to day grind of life what are you doing to “Delight in the Law of the Lord”? What exactly does that mean anyway? What is our foundation? The law (God’s teachings that help to keep us safe and bring fruitfulness to our lives), or the wicked ways of this world?

To begin with, let’s dive into the Hebrew meaning of the words delight and meditate. Delight can be three different words in Hebrew: hepes (to bend towards, to be inclined towards), rasa (to delight or take pleasure in), and chephets (to desire to acquire something valuable). The main word in Hebrew for meditate is haga (meditate, mourn, mutter, speak, study, talk, utter). I did find that meditate in Hebrew can lead from haga to devekut (cleaving to God). Wow, “cleaving to God” like allowing God’s law, his teachings to stick to us, and permeate who we are by keeping our thoughts and hearts tuned to God.

Once I know the meaning of what I need to do, it’s helpful to hear how it’s been applied. The disciples delighted in God’s law and meditated on it, sharing it and clinging to it as they endured throughout the Bible. For me, there was a time in my life when almost everything I had known was crumbling around me. I couldn’t eat without feeling sick, I couldn’t sleep without getting nightmares, and I could hardly get out of bed in the morning without just crying and willing the day to be over. During this time, I had a lot of choices to make, and one was definitely how I was going to deal with everything. What was going to be my foundation? The ways the world deals with things, my emotions, or delighting in God’s law and seeking Him for answers. Even if I didn’t understand what God wanted me to do, would I seek Him, His law, His will for what needed to happen? I’m thankful that during that time I learned to delight and meditate in the Lord and it left me cleaving (clinging) to God as I depended and trusted in Him for everything. At night when the nightmares came, I would pray scripture; during the day I put notecards pretty much everywhere with scriptures for me to read and pray. I listened to worship music including the songs that are completely made from scripture, and I journaled everything as an outlet and a way to pray. It didn’t just change things overnight, but it built a solid foundation for me to rely on.

The process isn’t over. I still choose to delight in the law and meditate in the Lord. It doesn’t mean everything is perfect and life is easy, but I know whose I am, where my foundation is, and what I’m clinging to get through everything in life. I am blessed because God’s law is my foundation!

Day 3 Prayer

Father God, thank You! Thank You for blessing us day after day. For helping us to find a way to delight in You and Your law. I pray we will bend towards Your will, desire to know Your ways more, and meditate on Your word to help us through this life each and every day. Thank You for Your goodness to us and Your many blessings!

Amen

Day 4: Hospitality

by: Mark Phillips

Ask God for insight as you read: Hebrews 13 1-3

I was thinking back to the first Christmas I was dating Carly. I had met her immediate family, but not all of her extended family. She had talked about how Christmas Eve at her mamaw's house was her favorite place to be. When I first walked through the front door, there was a massive amount of people. Even though it was cold outside, I felt an immediate warmth as I entered their home. Everyone was coming up and introducing themselves, shaking my hand, and giving me a hug, even people I had never met. Everyone was so kind and welcoming. They quickly directed me to the kitchen and told me to help myself to the big spread of food they had. After sitting down and eating with everyone, I spent the rest of the night socializing and getting to know them better. I was blown away by her family's hospitality as a stranger in their home.

What is hospitality?

Simply put, hospitality means to love strangers. Before I started this study, I assumed it meant to open up your home. While this is definitely one way to be hospitable, there are many ways we can show brotherly love to others. The best definition of hospitality I found came from John Mark Comer. He says, "Expressing the welcome of God the Father to all through tangible acts of love, namely through giving food, shelter, and relationship" define hospitality.

How would you treat an angel? In Hebrews, we are commanded to continue brotherly love: to love strangers as we would love our brothers and sisters; to remember those in prison and those who are mistreated, those less fortunate, and some may even be angels.

How can we be more like Jesus to strangers? I know that all I have is because of God. I also know that all I have is God's. One way we can show the love God has shown us is to share our blessings with others, especially those who are not always in our circle of friends. We could share a meal in our home with new acquaintances, invite the new neighbors over to roast marshmallows and have a s'more, or invite a new family from church to meet at Just Jump, or ask a coworker or friend at school to come sit with you at lunch. Most of the time, it is as simple to think about what I do with my close friends and then do that with someone who you don't know as well. These are examples of how we can love others and build community through hospitality.

Day 4 Prayer

Father, allow me an opportunity to show Your love to someone in need. Use me and what You have given me for Your kingdom. Remind me of brotherly love towards others this year.

Amen

Day 5: Intercessory Prayer

by: Nicole Honeycutt

Ask God for insight as you read: Nehemiah 1:4-7

In these verses, Nehemiah's profound connection with Jerusalem moves him to tears, revealing a passionate intercessory prayer. Today, inspired by Nehemiah, let's reflect on moments when our hearts were stirred. Like Nehemiah, let's pour out our souls in prayer, bringing concerns, burdens, and hopes before our heavenly Father. This devotional prompts sincere reflection, urging us to acknowledge brokenness around and within us. In pursuit of restoration, we humbly approach God, recognizing our shortcomings and the need for transformative grace.

Nehemiah, a source of inspiration in the Bible, embodies character, confession, concern, and courage.

A Man of Character: Before God uses Nehemiah, He works within him. Our character is shaped through sanctification, molding us into the image we were designed for. God cleanses us from the inside out for His purpose.

A Man of Confession: Nehemiah's first prayer confesses his sins and the sins of his people. Confession lies at the heart of the gospel, aligning our hearts with God. No sin is too big for God's forgiveness; honesty leads to confession, and confession leads to transformation.

A Man of Intercessory Concern: Nehemiah's genuine care moves him to meaningful action. His intercessory prayers for Jerusalem fuel his leadership in rebuilding. Likewise, our prayers should flow from a heart that genuinely understands others' needs, carrying their burdens with authentic compassion.

A Man of Courage: Nehemiah's courage is seen in acting despite fear, equipping others with the Word of God. We need courage, armed with the spirit's sword, to rebuild the walls of our lives. Courage is the form of every virtue at its testing point.

Conclusion: Nehemiah teaches us to stay faithful in prayer, trusting God's perfect plan. His story inspires us to fix broken things, reminding us that, with God's help, we can make things right. As followers of Jesus, let's embody Nehemiah's qualities —honesty, repentance, care for others, and courage.

Day 5 Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Nehemiah's lessons. Today, we align our hearts with Yours, confessing sins and seeking transformative grace. Help us embody character, concern for others, and the courage to stand for what is right. Grant us wisdom and strength, shaping us into vessels of love and purpose. Guide us in every step, and may our lives witness your grace. In Jesus' name, we pray.

Amen.

Day 6: Kindness

by: Maison Harwell

Ask God for insight as you read: Ephesians 4:32

To be asked to cover this topic meant a lot to me, as this is a topic I've many times in life walked circles around and observed from a distance in my mind. I have tried to dissect it and apply it to my circumstances and feelings toward a person (or myself) who I didn't feel deserved kindness. I haven't always been kind; I haven't always received kindness when I needed it in the moment. I think you can probably relate to that too.

I think for a long time I based my decision to be kind to someone on whether or not I felt they were worthy. I think it's our old nature to justify this mentality. But using that mindset isn't how we should approach anything in life as redeemed followers of Christ. We cannot make ourselves the judge. We must leave God to be the judge, and we need to obey accordingly as we're commanded. Because, after all, we aren't worthy of anything. Yet Christ still forgave us. How can we as believers afford not to be kind to others?

Kindness is the bare minimum.

Jesus performed the ultimate act of love and kindness for us on the cross. Kindness wasn't His first nature - it was His only nature. We are robbing others around us of the chance to see Jesus through us if we can't be kind before anything. The Holy Spirit is pure gentleness and cannot be otherwise, and cannot do work through us if we close the window. Or worse - don't open the window to begin with.

Day 6 Prayer

Lord, help me to be kind. Remove my stubbornness and heal any hurt and anger preventing me from being kind. Let me be like Jesus. Let me be quick to love and consistent with my words and actions.

Amen

Day 7: Living Out His Love by Sharing the Gospel

by: Tasha Coleman

Ask God for insight as you read: 1 John 3:16

There are lots of ways to live the love of Christ. We can give sacrificially to those in need, spend our time ministering to brothers and sisters with problems, or participate in service projects for individuals in crisis. However, the most important way we can show love is by sharing the Good News with those who don't know Jesus as their Savior.

When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, it means that we're saying yes to His ways and His plan for our lives. We have a responsibility to share the life-changing power of Jesus with everyone around us.

Why is this important for us as followers of Jesus? Because Jesus said to do it in the last words He spoke to His disciples (Matthew 28). He told them to "go and make disciples of all nations..." And they did, and so should we! Knowing Jesus is not only good news, it's the best news! We have the cure for the human condition, so let's share God's love with the people around us.

Why is it important to share the truth about what God has done for us? God created us for a relationship with Him. (Genesis 1:26) But, we sinned and because of that, we deserve punishment. (Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23) Thankfully, God made a way for us to know Him by sending His only Son, Jesus, to save the world by dying on a cross and rising up from the grave three days later. (John 3:16; Romans 5:8-9) And once we believe in Jesus and accept Him as our Savior, we receive eternal life. (Romans 10:9-10) Sounds almost too good to be true, doesn't it? We messed up, but then a loving, perfect Heavenly Father sent His only Son to save us from ourselves. Right now, God is giving us a chance to repent. We need to get the Gospel message out!!! Until the good Lord calls me away from this world to go home, I want to make it very clear that I believe in Jesus Christ as the one and only true Savior. Despite the fact that we are human, and we fail a lot, Jesus, the Son of God, provided the way to salvation for us. He came as an infant. He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, and He rose from the dead on that third day.

Jesus is in heaven right now preparing a place for all those who believe and trust Him as their Savior. He loves us all dearly (far more than we deserve) and forgives our sins when we repent. In John 3:16, Jesus said, "Whosoever believeth in Me should not perish but have ever lasting life." In Matthew 10:33, He says, "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which art in heaven."

Spend some time praying and asking God to put people on your heart who need Him. Then, begin praying for God to soften their hearts so that you can be a Christ influence in their lives.

Day 7 Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, We give You our hearts today. We give You our souls today. We give You everything in our lives. We kneel before You and hand You everything. We lay down our lives so as many as possible can experience You. Will You please shape and mold our hearts where they need to be? Help us to not compromise with sin. Help us to not take advantage of Your grace. Help us to understand that the chains have broken, and we are no longer bound. Please place Your armor on us Lord. We love You so much.

In Jesus precious name.

Amen

Day 8: Living Sacrifice

by: Janette Smith

Ask God for insight as you read: Romans 12:1

Sacrifices under the law were to be set before God at the altar, ready to be offered to Him. The offerings, which were sacrificed by a priest, were to be perfect, without spot or blemish. Presentation was a voluntary act, a freewill offering, an act of worship. But the offering had to be dead; blood had to be spilt. Sacrifices were to be holy, set apart. Perfect.

A living sacrifice is a living body sincerely devoted to God. It is Christ having died in our place, being raised from the dead, and our living by faith that makes our bodies a living sacrifice. Through Christ, we are molded in both the nature and the will of God. There can be no uncleanness or sin but praise God, in Christ we are set apart and holy to Him.

As we present our bodies as a living sacrifice, we are obedient, giving honor, adoration and praise to God with a heart of gratitude. This is our true worship - a complete and total surrender of our lives to God.

Are there areas in our lives that are off limits to God? We cannot give a little here, a little there and say we are a completely surrendered vessel. Are we willing to lay down every part of our being - every hurt, every shame, every ounce of pride? This is an everyday, all day surrender, as we give ourselves completely to God.

DAY 8 PRAYER

Father, I ask that Your Holy Spirit reveal to me areas of my life that I am not surrendering to You. Father, help me to be obedient in every part of my life. Thank You for the sacrifice of Jesus in my place so that I can be holy and set apart to You. I want to live my life, every part of my life, completely surrendered to You. Give me a heart and desire for true worship.

Amen

Day 9: Living Transformed Beyond Sundays

by: Cody Honeycutt

Ask God for insight as you read: Romans 12:2

Living a transformed life beyond the confines of Sunday worship is the essence of our Christian journey. In scripture, we're urged not to conform to the patterns of this ever-changing world but to undergo a profound transformation by renewing our minds.

Conforming to “societal trends and values” is a relentless and exhausting journey, often leading to materialism and self-gratification. For me, it eventually led to a destructive path of addiction. This scripture urges believers to resist conformity, prompting a journey toward transformation aligned with God's will.

Transformation involves becoming more Christ-like and living according to God's principles. The renewal of the mind is a lifelong process, encompassing scripture study, prayer, meditation, mentorship and community engagement. As we grow in God's word, humility flourishes, and a deep desire for continuous learning and growth takes root.

I believe having a mentor with fruit in whom I can trust is a vital part of my journey. One way I like to evaluate the relationship is this: A real Christ-centered relationship will not have “Shame” in it. I can share my deep struggles without judgement.

Amid this transformation, for myself, making amends with those we've hurt is vital. It's a step toward freedom from the bondage of past pain. This radical change, sparked by a single scripture, has the power to reshape every aspect of our lives. It will make room for God to begin a radical change!

Aligning our thoughts and actions with God's intentions leads to contentment and understanding of His divine purpose. This journey is about recognizing the weight we carry and finding freedom through God's transformative grace.

Nugget: How to get through a good day that's gone bad...Richard, a mentor, once reminded me that when our days take a turn, it's often because we've momentarily left God out. Simply stop and invite Him back into your day. Then prayerfully thank Him for carrying you this far.

In prayer, we seek strength and wisdom to walk this transformative path, renewing our minds through study, prayer, meditation, and togetherness in the fertile ground of “Chesed”. May our lives reflect His love and grace, even in the face of challenges!

Day 9 Prayer

Heavenly Father, grant us strength to live out our faith holistically, standing firm in Your truth amidst worldly pressures. Teach us selfless service, bringing hope to those we encounter. Give us the perseverance to grow closer to You each day. Father I pray that I won't be a hindrance to Your spirit, or the work You are doing in our Believers Church Family. Father, may Your beautiful essence radiate through us and Your legacy of love impact the community for generations to come.

In Jesus' name, we pray.

Amen.

Day 10: Materialism vs. True Contentment

by: Ashlee Wilkinson

Ask God for insight as you read: 1 Timothy 6:6-7

The Bible is clear. No one can serve two masters. So why do we hold on to material possessions? Why do we have to have all the latest collectible trinkets? Why do our minds get so addicted to stuff, and what's next?

Materialism is defined as the preoccupation with material things, versus spiritual and intellectual things. If you ask me, materialism is the easy way out. Digging into scripture and finding peace in His word is HARD. It is very difficult to be disciplined and to live your life as the Bible says. The world tells us to work for the next promotion, get a raise to afford the next car, or to upgrade our house.

Scripture tells us that true contentment lies in Jesus. We will never find contentment in life without the Lord. The love of money will never bring us peace, but bring us suffering and sin. Paul tells Timothy that the richness of life comes from his relationship with the Lord and his diligence in learning Jesus' teachings.

Ask yourself, "what is something I do every day that should be replaced with time in His Word and prayer?" For me, it's scrolling on my phone at bedtime. I call it 'doom scrolling'. I open my phone and scroll and scroll. I can't tell you 5 things that I look at during this time; it's mindless. Instead, I have started listening to the Bible - mind you, I do listen to it on speed read x2. That is something I can hold onto. I get to take that with me when I die.

Day 10 Prayer

Lord, I want to ask You to quiet our minds. I ask that You allow us to see that despite what the world tells us, seeking You is enough. Raising our family to know and love You is enough. Help us submit to You, Lord. I pray that each of us continue to seek You, and do so diligently because the true riches in life are built upon our relationship and friendship with You, Lord.

Amen

Day 11: A Consistent Mindset

by: Joe Muscianese

Ask God for insight as you read: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-16, Philippians 4:6

What is Prayer?

Prayer is communication with God in supplication, thanksgiving, adoration or confession. My friends, if we had any idea of the incredible power that is available to us through prayer, I think we would find it so easy to understand Paul's promoting to "pray without ceasing". Intercession is a privilege that belongs exclusively to mankind. However, as long as the enemy can keep the people of God convinced that they are powerless against the circumstances that they face, their impact on the earth will be anemic and of little influence. But that is not what God has in mind for His people. There's much, much more.

Always remember throughout your day Philippians 4:4-7. This is where the peace of God that surpasses all understanding is found. Pray as talking with the Father who loves you, seek Him first and all your needs will be met, trust in the Lord always - it is as easy as breathing once you submit and commit.

God has given us not only the authority but also the responsibility to influence events on the earth for His glory through prayer, thanksgiving and supplication. Our prayers are one vehicle through which God has chosen to impact the world. Take time to pray throughout your day. Ask others how you can pray for them. Remember this, out of all that the disciples witnessed Jesus do, they asked our Lord to teach them how to pray. Activate the gift given to you.

Prayer

Lord God, let us grow as men and women of prayer. Father, continue to stir me toward a consistent attitude of prayer so that my sensitivity to immediate and momentary times for prayer is increased. Help me not only to pray without ceasing but to jump to special invitations to pray. Thank You for drawing near to me as I draw near to You!

Let us pray in faith for ourselves and others with confidence that You hear our prayers and will answer them. I commit this day, my life, and my talents unto You so that Your will be done.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Day 12: Purpose and Calling

by: Ed Thomas

Ask God for insight as you read: Jeremiah 1:4 – 7

In times such as ours, I often feel eclipsed by the enormity of the daily news: by the power of the forces that contend with each other on the battlefield, in the houses of political power, in the ivory towers where banking and financing moguls make the decisions which control us, and in the conference rooms of social media companies where they decide what free speech should look like.

How can I make a difference, in my everyday life, against these kinds of influencers and keyholders for our society, our culture, our country, our world?

Some version of that thought must have passed through young Jeremiah of Ananoth's head as he listened to the voice of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob call him out to be a prophet to the nations in our passage today, Jeremiah Chapter 1 verses 4 through 7.

Jeremiah's protests of being too young were disregarded by God, who let him know that his age made no difference to his call in the Kingdom. To whomever the Father sent him to, he would be able to speak the holy words of prophecy placed in his mouth. Those holy words would be key words of warning to a nation of corrupt politicians, priests and people of influence, who were soon to be overrun by the emerging empire of the day, the Babylonians, as punishment for their disregard of YHWH's instructions to His people.

If our placement in the factory production line, the post office delivery truck, the customer service phone line, the restaurant kitchen, and elsewhere, sometimes makes you and me wonder what useful purpose we're serving (compared to a Jeremiah) in God's overall plan, we need to make sure we don't sell ourselves short.

The job you hold, the church you attend, the street you live on, the circle of acquaintances you know – all may have you uniquely positioned for a mission you may not have even realized was written in the books of heaven before you were born.

The key is to find and know our purpose for being on earth, and let that guide our lifestyle and steps, 24/7.

DAY 12 PRAYER

Heavenly Father, this is the time more than any other that I need to know what You formed me for and molded me to do in this day and age. Let me be a tool for You in my job, my household, my family, my church and my community, to bring the human race back to You and out of darkness. Give me an understanding and a strategy.

In Jesus's name,

Amen

Day 13: Radical Obedience

by: Callie Austin

Ask God for insight as you read: 1 Samuel 15:22, 2 Cor. 10: 5-6. Proverbs 19:16, Psalms 128: 1-2, and 1 Peter 1: 14-16

I am thrilled to be able to be a part of your day and share what God has laid on my heart these past weeks. Five years ago, my mom got very sick following the birth of my brother. During this time, the world was facing a global pandemic, my mom's life was flipped upside down, and I started a new high school where I knew no one. I was also grieving the news of my grandfather's tragic and unexpected death. Throughout this time, I continued to ask God to use me and repair my life.

I came to believe that God's desire for my life was to take care of everyone around me. I would come to realize that I was getting in the way of what I had asked God to do. As my mom started to recover and my family began to mend broken hearts, one would assume that I felt relief. However, it was the complete opposite. Not having someone to take care of made me feel worthless and sad. I had become addicted to the rush of being at someone's aid and avoiding my own issues.

One day, I had a doctor's appointment to start a new anxiety medicine. My doctor looked at my tired eyes and asked what was going on. I told him I reached a point where I was scared for my life because of the thoughts I was feeling. I was aware that when doctors heard this, normally they had to get immediate help. However, in this case, my doctor simply told me to "hang in there and call if it got really bad." His response sunk to the pit of my stomach and solidified my feelings of emptiness. After this, I broke down and convinced myself that it was over. I got home that night after doing my friends' makeup for homecoming court to find all of my family sitting in my living room. Seeing them show up and listen to how I felt allowed me to begin the healing process.

Reaching what felt like my end, showed me my beginning. There have been so many times in my life that felt inescapable, but at the bottom was just another door God had waiting for me. Leaving the life my family and I had gave me new opportunities, restoration of my mom's health, and a stronger support system for what was to come. My grandfather's passing allowed my family to be brought together and lean on each other in a new way. My struggles with mental health have given me a unique perspective to be a voice for God. In times where you feel like you're at the bottom, obey His voice and know it is just another pathway into his plan.

So how do we choose obedience in the darkness? How do we radically choose Jesus when nothing makes sense? It starts with trust. If you are having issues with obeying God, ask yourself if you trust him. We tend to avoid those we don't trust. The song, *"I sought the Lord, And He heard, And He answered"* reminds me of what He has done for me many times before. In our most challenging times, we have to surrender.

I did not have control over my mom's health.
I did not have control over my grandfather's death.
I did not have the ability to take care of everyone.
God is the Healer... Not me.
God is the ultimate caretaker... Not me.
I am not the author... God is.
He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.... Not me.

God didn't want me to be that. That was not his plan for me. (1 Peter 1:14-16)

When we trust and obey in who HE is, even in the times when it breaks our hearts, God is able to rebuild us in His correct image.

Day 13 Prayer

Dear Lord, please be with all those in desperation and darkness. Keep them close to Your heart, show them Your love, and through that, give them wisdom. Flood our hearts with peace and instill trust in Your divine plan. Thank you for being all fulfilling, all powerful, and such an awesome God. Amen

Day 14: Resolve

by: Jamin Arnold

Ask God for insight as you read: Daniel 1:8

Resolve is defined as “deciding firmly on a course of action” and can also be labeled as “purposed” as was the case in this passage of Scripture. To someone that's returned to their daily walk as a Christian, such as myself, it is a vital and crucial characteristic that keeps me grounded firmly to The Rock and brought me back to my Christian way of life and values.

Daniel displayed this time and time again to the point of being sentenced to death near the end of his life. Even in the throes of a most certain grim ending, Daniel knelt steadfast in prayer and operated within the confines of his endearing faith. In the end, God delivered him from his enemies. For the entirety of his time in captivity, he was a passionate example of an unshakeable prayer life and obedience. May this be our testimony as well!

In closing, I have learned many lessons from Daniel and the situations in which God placed him. With this return to my earlier Christian roots, I have been able to put my old life and distractions in the past and focus on the path God wants for me. Unhealthy thoughts, bad habits and my former culture have been exchanged for the same type of faith Daniel possessed as he stood against King Nebuchadnezzar's edict and later in Darius' lion's den.

Will you commit alongside me to making following Christ our course of action in 2024? As we start this new year, make this your purpose and priority in life going forward.

Day 14 Prayer

Abba, I pray as a church body, and personally, that our resolve strengthens to relinquish any and everything that doesn't reflect Your Will that guides us daily. Give us undeniable insight and prepare us to be willing servants to the direction in which we are being led.

In Jesus Christ name we pray,

Amen

Day 15: Single-eyed Focus

by: Katie Stokes

Ask God for insight as you read: Philippians 3:13b-14

Coaching is not for the faint of heart - correction, make that coaching *middle school GIRLS*. Imagine squirrels scurrying frantically in a forest.

Distraction is at every turn.

During a game, there are many things that can redirect a player's focus. To combat this, practices have to be dedicated to building mental toughness and hearing the coach's voice in chaos. If mental toughness has not been practiced, there will assuredly be crumbling to the distractions at the first wrong play, mistake, or close, pressure-filled game. Suddenly, chaos will become the focus.

Life is really the same way. Our minds and lives are just as distracted day-to-day. There must be practice of looking upward and toward our heavenly calling.

Without being in the Word, can one really know the language of God? Without prayer and solitude, can one ever hear from God? Just like a group of middle schoolers playing ball - trouble, inconveniences, relationships, mistakes, and much more can cause chaos and rob us of our focus on our upward calling.

Your calling in Christ is dependent on your daily practice.

Is your daily focus on your Coach, or is your focus on the distractions around you? Past mistakes or new mercies?

Choose today to practice, focusing solely on your Coach.

Day 15 Prayer

Lord, I pray that You give me the diligence today and every day to focus on YOU. You are the ultimate prize that I am striving for - not the things of this world. Let my day - and life - be spent refocusing all my attention on You.

Amen

Day 16: Soul Searching

by: Rebecca Sherfey

Ask God for insight as you read: Psalm 139:23-24

David wants God to know him intimately, to reveal to him anything that is not of God, and to set him on the right path. How often do we look to secular things to set us on the right path? Advice from friends or family, self-help books, social-media, or popular opinion are things we look to for guidance in our lives. They are our quest to find ways to weed out the “unacceptable”, to make ourselves feel better, look better, act better, or to fit the world’s view. Do we ever consider that those things may not fit the view God has for us?

I can remember in 2004, I was searching for answers to fix a situation in my life. I had been through Christian counseling, read Christian self-help books, dove into the Bible, and had sought advice from well-meaning friends, family, and even a pastor or two. However, I had not really searched myself and allowed God to search me, to know me, and to show me His path.

I remember that night and many other nights praying, “God please fix this situation; please, I don’t want to walk through this pain or this circumstance.” And then a voice gently said, “What if all this is for a purpose?” I recall asking God to show me the things in my life that would hinder my growth in Him, things that would take me off the path He had for my life, and things that prevented my will from matching His will.

I had no idea what journey God would set me on. He wrecked me that night and has continued to wreck me. He persists in working in me as I learn more and more about submitting to Him.

Following 2004, God reminded me of a call into the ministry He had placed in my life when I was a teenager. He reminded me that all the things I had gone through would not be without purpose. I just had to be obedient. I was willing and ready to begin the journey and move forward in ministry. I thought the journey would be easy because God called me to it.

After graduating in 2014, and experiencing many trials, I wondered if God had made a mistake, and I almost gave up on everything in 2016. God doesn’t make mistakes, but His time is not our time. I had tried to rush ahead of God and let my impatience and pride get in the way. I had to ask Him to reveal to me the path He intended and to place me on it again. I will admit, I have to continually pray that God help me not take my eyes off of Him. It’s getting easier every day.

Day 16 Prayer

Father, I pray that You will search my heart, reveal to me the things that You desire for my life, the path you have set me on. Reveal to me the things that are not of You, the things that would offend You. Father, I pray that You will help me to rid myself of those that don’t bring You glory.

Amen

DAY 17: Surrender/Submission to Christ

by: Harley Jeter

Ask God for insight as you read: Luke 9:23

As we do this daily twenty-one-day devotional together, the word that stands out the most to me is **DAILY**. Daily means something that you do every day - even on the weekends. It's a choice. Some things we do daily can be as simple as making a pot of coffee in the morning, cooking breakfast, feeding the animals, or watching the news.

Taking up your cross may sound simple, but to me, it is a difficult thing to do. I struggle every day to make sure I set aside some time with God in scripture. To be honest, I have failed multiple times. In today's society, there are distractions everywhere - social media accounts, television in the background, children's activities, even laundry that is piled up from the previous week. When the day is done, where did God fit in?

In our Submission Series, Part 4, we learned, "We are all helpless in our sin, when God is pushed away our life is chaos, and we find something to numb the pain. We cannot function without the connection of our parent - Jesus Christ. Sometimes we have to give that chaos up, and it will be hard, but it is worth it and there will be a masterpiece waiting in your life." -Matt Smith

That chaos is preventing us from having the connection we need - one that will take all the pain away and not just numb it. You may think that you have a beautiful life, and you do, because God has provided all that you have. However, He wants to give you more - a masterpiece that you can't even imagine. All you must do is take up your cross daily and follow Him.

The unknown can be scary, yet we do a lot of unknown things. For example, we start a new job (unknown co-workers), start a family (unknown parenting skills), and retire (unknown what to do with ourselves). We trust God to get us through the bigger moments in our lives, and we can trust Him in our daily surrender.

Day 17 Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank You for loving me and helping me through each stage of my life. Thank You for always fighting for me even when I have pushed You away. Please open my eyes for a time during my day that I can set aside time for You.

Amen

Day 18: Trust

by: Carly Phillips

Ask God for insight as you read: Genesis 15:5-6

“Just trust me.” If we don’t know someone very well or haven’t spent much time with them, it’s going to be hard for us to trust them completely. Understandable, right?

What about when these words are said to us by a spouse, close friend, or coach that we love and know very well? While we know they have our best interest at heart, when we can’t see the outcome or don’t like where things are going, this can still be challenging to do.

It can even feel difficult to trust God when we can’t see the outcome. Trusting God means you have completely surrendered your life to Him. Recently in our community group, we discussed the popular “Christianese” phrase: Let go and let God. Our study directed our thinking to: trust God and get going. Trusting God doesn’t mean we sit back and let Him do all the work. It means you know he is walking in front of you and you are willingly following His lead. This is not easy. You need other believers around you cheering you on. I encourage you to let them walk with you, too.

When reading today’s passage, I picture looking up at all the stars and feeling completely lost in disbelief. But because of trusting God, that disbelief is exchanged for confidence. Have you ever been let down with something you trusted God with? I’ve been there too, friend. It hurts.

In 2022, I lost my precious mom and grandmother just months apart. Trust became a real struggle for me in that season. After spending a lot of time with God, I began to truly believe that His character is always good, despite what I was walking through. He walked with me. He cares about our heart in all the situations we walk through. He cares about what is heavy on your heart today. He sits with you and holds you. He goes before you. He listens to you.

Consider spending time with God today and telling Him what you truly believe about His character and also maybe what you don’t believe. Confess this to Him. When you open this conversation up with Him, it eventually will allow your trust to overcome any disbelief. When you know someone who is struggling with trusting God, tell them what He has done for you and explain what that entire walk looked like. Tell them it wasn’t easy for you to trust at times either, but you did it because you have surrendered your life to Him. You never know what he is doing in your current trial to prepare you for what he has prepared for you.

Day 18 Prayer

Jesus, help us to trust that Your character is always good. Shatter any walls that are keeping us from following Your lead. Help us to know who else to trust in our lives that will walk with us on our journey and help keep us accountable. Help us to lead others in trusting You, Jesus. We love You, Lord. Thank You for this body of believers who want to pursue You in all of our days.

Amen.

Day 19: Unashamed

by: Tina Muscianese

Ask God for insight as you read: Matthew 28:19; Philippians 1:20

One of the last things spoken by Jesus to the Disciples was a command (Matt. 28:19). After this command was given, He told them, as He tells us, you will be able to teach all the things I have shown you because I will be with you. This is known as the Great Commission. According to a recent Barna study in 2019, only 17% of church attenders knew what the Great Commission was and what it meant. In 2021, only 21% knew the scripture for the Great Commission and could identify it. 25% of the church body believe the call is not for them, but believe it is for the church leaders or evangelist to do. According to a study done in 2009, 95% of Americans have never won a soul for Christ.

According to Jesus's words Himself, this charge is for ALL. We are to do this daily - day after day until His great appearing. We are to continue to display Christ so that He will be openly revealed to others through us (Philippians 1:20) - to live a life unashamed every day that ends in "y". It is something so dear to His heart that it is the last command Jesus gave while on the earth, but it is the least acted upon by the church today.

Growth moments: Is Jesus magnified in your life in such a way that others will be drawn to Him allowing you to share your amazing testimony of what He has done in your life on a daily basis? If not, what are some things that need to be laid down in prayer so you can live a life that radically portrays the gospel?

Day 19 Prayer

Precious Father, forgive me for the times I do not make Your commission a priority due to busyness. Lord, give me a heart for Your children who do not know You yet. Today and every day to follow, show me the one You have for me to share Your grace with. Challenge me to be transformed from the inside out in the process and to live a life bold and unashamed for You.

Amen

<http://www.barna.com/research/half-churchgoers-not-heard-great-commission>

<https://bible.org/illustration/evangelism-statistics>

Day 20: Walking Day by Day in the Spirit

by: Mark McGill

Ask God for insight as you read: Galatians 5:25 and John 14:16-17

As we are getting close to the end of our 21 days, it is important that we are walking in the Spirit every day. We have already learned many things that we can use to ensure that we are not only living for Christ, but representing the Kingdom well.

Paul is telling the Galatians that if they are living in the Spirit, they need to be walking in the Spirit. In other words, if you are a Christ-follower, you need to be acting like a Christ-follower at all times. This has been a struggle for me in the past, and a point of emphasis for me now. One of my greatest fears is acting in a way that would reflect badly on God's people. I strive to be the same person all week that I am on Sunday. Given our sinful nature, this is not always easy.

Fortunately, scripture assures us that God will give us a helper, The Spirit of Truth, or the Holy Spirit, which will help us accomplish this. This Spirit of Truth involves a "second-level" of understanding of God's word, and its meaning. A deeper relationship with God will keep us on the right path.

So, how do we accomplish this Walking Day by Day in the Spirit? I know that for myself, I try to keep God right in front of me all day long. If you are focusing on Him, it is easier not to stray. I stop and pray intentionally every morning, and before bedtime at night, but during the rest of my day, I carry on a sort of running conversation, if you will, with God. Not a "Dear Heavenly Father" and "Amen" prayer, but as I go through my day I just talk to Him as if He were a friend who is my constant companion. "Thank You for this beautiful scenery", "sorry for acting that way, please help me to do better", "thank You for putting this person into my life", whatever comes up, I just talk to Him about it. The things I read, the music I listen to, the shows I watch, all these things have a bearing on whether my focus is on God, or somewhere else. It takes an intentional effort to get into that habit, especially in today's world, where the enemy uses his favorite tool, distraction, but every minute spent with God is well worth it.

Day 20 Prayer

Father, help us to stay in the Spirit, and focused on You. Help us to ignore the distractions, and to intentionally do the things that keep You directly in front of us. Help us to hear the Spirit of Truth, and let it guide us daily. We want to be examples to those in the world around us of what it means to live for You.

Amen

Day 21: Faith, Action and Focus (or just get out of the boat)

by: Nathan Endicott

Ask God for insight as you read: James 2:17-26 and Matthew 6:33-34

In the Gospel of Matthew, we find the familiar account of Peter walking on water. It's a story that has captivated the hearts of believers for centuries, revealing profound truths about faith and trust in God. These passages provide a powerful lesson about the synergy of faith, action, and unwavering focus on God.

James reminds us that faith without works is dead. Likewise, in the stormy seas of life, Peter's faith was put to the test when he stepped out of the boat to walk towards Jesus. In Matthew 14:28-30, we see Peter's bold request, "Lord, if it's You, tell me to come to You on the water." Jesus responds with a simple, yet profound, invitation, "Come."

Often, our spiritual journey parallels Peter's walk on the water. We hear God's call, beckoning us to step out of our comfort zones and trust Him in the midst of life's uncertainties. However, our faith is not just a passive belief but an active response. James emphasizes that genuine faith is demonstrated through actions. In this narrative, Peter's faith was displayed when he took that daring step out of the boat.

Yet, as Peter walked on water, his gaze shifted from Jesus to the raging storm around him. Fear crept in, and doubt caused him to sink. How often do we find ourselves sinking in the turbulent waters of life because we take our eyes off the Source of our faith? Scripture directs us to seek first the kingdom of God and trust that He will provide for our needs. It's a call to fix our gaze on Jesus and not be consumed by the worries of the world.

Walking on water requires both audacious faith and a steadfast focus on Christ. It demands that we leave the safety of our proverbial boats — our comfort zones, fears, and doubts — and step into the realm of the miraculous. This act of stepping out is an expression of our trust in God's promises and His ability to sustain us, even in the midst of life's storms.

The call to walk on water is an invitation to a life of radical faith, where our actions align with our beliefs, and our focus remains on the Author and Perfecter of our faith. May we, like Peter, hear the voice of Jesus amid life's storms, step out in faith, and experience the miraculous as we keep our eyes fixed on Him.

As we reflect on these passages, let's ask God in prayer:

Day 21 Prayer

Lord, help me to keep my eyes open for opportunities to step out of the boat and walk on the waves with You. Show me what fears or doubts are holding me back from fully putting my faith in you. Lead me like You led Peter, into a life of the miraculous where my eyes are more on You than life's waves.

Amen