

Dr. Damian Hinton, Sr., MDiv, MTh, DMin



**REBUILDING,
BUILDING, &
ADVANCING:
100 DAY DEVOTIONAL**

Damian Hinton

**REBUILDING,
BUILDING, &
ADVANCING: 100 DAY
DEVOTIONAL**

© 2023Damian Hinton

Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973,1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation Used by permission." (www.Lockman.org)

Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture taken from the New Century Version®. Copyright © 2005 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Damian Hinton
Baltimore, MD

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Year of Tefillah! The word tefillah or tfillah simply means prayer. The most important part of every believer's prayer life, whether it is a prayer of supplication, a prayer of thanksgiving, a prayer of praise to God, or a prayer of confession, is introspection, which is when we take the time to look within ourselves and recognize our role in the universe and our character, it focuses on our relationship with God.

The term "Tefillah" originates from the Hebrew word "l'hitpalel," encompassing the concepts of introspection, contemplation, and self-evaluation. It is also associated with the act of judgment, as seen in Exodus 21:22. Additionally, in Genesis 25:21, "l'hitpalel" is translated as entreaty, despite its connection to the idea of digging. Furthermore, in Deuteronomy 3:23, "tefillah" denotes supplication or pleading.

In Jewish communities, you might encounter another term that is closely related - tefillin, also known as Phylacteries in English. Tefillin is comprised of two leather boxes that house sacred scrolls, inscribed with scripture, along with leather straps.

Praying with the tefillin, which involves wrapping them around the arm and forehead, is a customary practice among devout Jewish males who are thirteen years of age or older. This tradition finds its roots in Exodus 13:9,16 and

Deuteronomy 11:18, where the Lord commands the Israelites to commemorate the exodus by wearing these symbols as a sign on their hands and a constant reminder on their foreheads.

Undoubtedly, tefillah, the Hebrew term, serves as our heartfelt plea to the Supreme Being. It is through tefillah that we express our affection, elation, aspirations, anxieties, sorrow, despondency, weariness, grievances, and our most profound humiliation.

To those who lack faith, prayer may appear as a form of self-deception. The words of Karl Marx, who famously declared that "religion is the opiate of the masses," come to mind. This analogy likens religion to a potent narcotic that veils the harsh realities of life, offering a comforting escape. It is not uncommon to encounter individuals who fervently pray for a lottery victory, pledging to give a portion of their newfound wealth to the church if their prayers are answered.

The Lord's common wisdom reminds us that relying solely on prayer for material gain is foolish, despite the occasional occurrence of miracles and extraordinary events. Prayer is not a shortcut to wealth, nor is it a deceptive escape from reality.

In fact, tefillah points us to the truth, by inviting us to take account of the truth of ourselves, of our hearts and the world around us. And when we are distraught at the state of

the world, or particular life circumstances, we entreat – tefillah – for the Lord’s favor and precise action.

THE PRINCIPLE OF PRAYER

At its core prayer requires faith in God and His ability to respond to those who are in covenant with Him. So then when we come to God we must have complete confidence in His ability, Hebrews 11:6 says, ‘And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.’ When we pray there are some outcomes that are guaranteed to be produced:

1. **Prayer produces revelation.** When we approach God and our heart is right towards Him and your desire is to please Him, He will bring you knowledge of the things you need to know and the relationships you need to fulfill your purpose in Him. ***‘Ask me and I will tell you remarkable secrets you do not know about things to come.’ Jeremiah 33:3***
2. **Prayer breaks barriers.** Barriers arise in order to prevent you from achieving a God ordained purpose or assignment. Prayer is therefore the solution to address any barrier that is established by the adversary. The Apostle Paul explains 1 Corinthians 16:9, ‘For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.’ But in 2 Corinthians 10:4, ***‘For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.’***

3. **Prayer reverses bareness and curses.** When we pray according to God's word and we believe in His promises. God is faithful to reverse circumstances that are contrary to God's productive plan for your life. In. 1 Samuel 1:9-11, 19, ***'After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the Lord. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the Lord. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord, and wept bitterly. She made this vow: "O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazarite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head. They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the Lord."*** Hannah's prayer reversed a season of bareness in her life.
4. **Prayer releases the blessing of the Lord.** The Bible teaches that God promises to make certain things happen on earth in answer to the prayers of His people. ***'If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.'*** (John 15:7-8)

5. **Prayer produces victory over our enemies.** Prayer is a resource that God has given to defeat our enemies especially those that seek our failure. Samson had been blinded, had his hair cut, and was being ridiculed by his enemies but he called upon the name of the Lord (Judges 16:28–30).

HOW TO PRAY

Here are some ways that we approach God in prayer.

1. **Start with Scripture of meditation:** it is a good habit to start your prayer time with a scriptural meditation. ***“Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”*** (Joshua 1:8)
2. **Adoration and Praise:** Begin your prayer by adoring and praising God. You can express your love and gratitude for who God is and for His blessings in your life. Use words and phrases like "Heavenly Father," "Almighty God," and "I praise and worship you." ~ ***“Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.”*** (Hebrews 13:15)
3. **Confession:** Confess your sins and ask for forgiveness. Acknowledge your shortcomings and seek God's mercy and cleansing. You might say, "Lord, I confess my sins and ask for your forgiveness through the blood of Jesus

Christ." ~ ***"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*** (1 John 1:9)

4. **Thanksgiving:** Give thanks to God for His grace, love, and blessings in your life. Express gratitude for specific things or events. For example, "Thank you, Lord, for my family, my health, and the love you show me daily."
~ ***"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."*** (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
5. **Supplication (Petition):** This is the part of your prayer where you present your requests and concerns to God. Ask for His guidance, help, and intervention in specific situations. Pray for others who may be in need as well. For example, "Lord, I ask for your guidance in [specific situation]. Please heal [name] and provide for [name]."
~ ***"Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,"*** (Ephesians 6:18)
6. **Intercession:** Pray for others, such as family, friends, the community, and the world. You can also include prayers for peace, justice, and the well-being of all people.
~ ***"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,"*** (1 Timothy 2:1)
7. **Use the Word of God :** Include Bible verses and passages into your prayers. You can use them to guide

your thoughts and express your faith. For example, the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) is a model prayer given by Jesus. ~ ***"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,"*** (2 Timothy 3:16)

8. **Listen and Wait:** After presenting your requests, take time to listen to God in silence. Be open to His guidance and speak to your heart. ~ ***"Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"*** (Psalm 46:10)

9. **End in Jesus' Name:** It is common in Christian tradition to close your prayer in the name of Jesus, acknowledging Him as your Savior and Mediator. ~ ***"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,"*** (1 Timothy 2:5)

DAY 1

Carried to Jesus

Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." – Matthew 9:2, NIV

Sharon's life looked perfect on the outside. She was married to a godly man who loved her deeply. She had three beautiful, healthy children. She worked part-time in a job that she found fulfilling.

But still, Sharon couldn't shake the depression that followed her around. She didn't understand why she was depressed. She'd had a great childhood with loving parents. She'd never suffered any significant illnesses or diseases.

Still, she struggled to get out of bed each morning. She felt guilty for being depressed. "You don't have a real reason to be sad," she reminded her reflection in the mirror.

One day, her husband gently suggested Sharon should see a counselor.

"I feel like I should be strong enough to overcome this on my own," Sharon said.

“You don’t have to be,” Her husband responded. “Just like the paralyzed man needed people to carry him to Jesus, sometimes, we need people to carry us. Let me help you. I’ll go with you to see the counselor and support you every step of the way.”

Prayer

God, when I can’t do it on my own, send sweet friends and a loving community to wrap their arms around me. Let me feel their support and care each step of this journey. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

DAY 2

A Firm Place to Stand

“I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.” – Psalm 40:1-2, NIV

“It’s over,” The two words from her husband changed everything for Elizabeth. She tried to save her marriage. She begged her husband to re-consider. She sought advice from older women in her church who were married. She read marriage books by the dozens.

She prayed for her husband, spending hours in her closet. As a child of broken home, the one thing Elizabeth had never wanted was a divorce.

But despite her prayers and her pleading, the divorce went through. It was finalized just four years after she’d gotten married. Elizabeth felt like a failure. She was heartbroken.

Sometimes, you can do everything right. You can read the right books. Attend the best seminars. Pray for miracles and still, watch in agony as a loved one walks away from you.

When you’re grappling with loss, God can lift you out of the mire. It may take time before you feel like you’re back on

solid ground. But rest assured that you are held in His perfect embrace, dear one.

Prayer

God, help me in the middle of loss to look to You. Pull me out of this darkness and set me back on solid ground. Hold onto me in the moments when I feel like everything's falling apart. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 3

Never Alone

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” – Deuteronomy 31:6, NIV

Kevin was seventeen when he heard the word “cancer”. Overnight, his world changed. Before the diagnosis, Kevin had worried about how he’d done on his math test, which college he should attend, and when he’d find a girlfriend.

Now, Kevin was facing very different concerns. Would he survive surgery to remove the tumor? Had the cancer spread? What treatment options would give him the best chance at survival?

Although Kevin had always been active in his church youth group, God suddenly felt far away. He felt like he’d been dropped into another country where he didn’t speak the language. Even though people were talking to him, he couldn’t hear what they were saying.

His boss from the pizza shop stopped to check on him. He said, “Kevin, I don’t know why this is happening to you and your family. I don’t have any words of wisdom to share with

you. I just want you to know that God is still present...even in the middle of your darkness.”

Prayer

God when I'm surprised by bad news, please send me comfort and reassurance. Help me to remember that You're still here and You'll never leave me. IN Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 4

Peace in the Midst of Loss

“Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.” – Luke 24:31, NIV

Aaron was twenty when his best friend was killed in a mugging gone wrong. He was devastated. He'd grown up with his friend and considered him the brother he'd never had.

For a long time, Aaron walked around in a haze. He couldn't understand how his could die so young. The two boys had often talked about all of the adventures they'd have together after college. They planned to go river-rafting, attend the Olympics, and run a charity race.

He kept searching for answers, troubled when all he could come up with were more questions. What if he'd been there that night to protect his friend? What if his friend had taken a different path home instead?

It wasn't until Aaron was reading Luke 24 that he found comfort. The disciples had been grieving for their friend, too. They even spoke with Jesus without recognizing him.

As Aaron continued reading, he realized that Jesus had overcome death and he would see his friend again. Aaron

explains, "I doubt I'll ever understand why, but I know that death doesn't have the final word. My friend is at peace because Jesus overcame the power of the grave."

Prayer

God, when I grieve, help me to remember this is not the end. You are powerful over all things, including the grave. Thank You for sending Jesus so I could know hope. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 5

When the Unexpected Happens

“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” – Matthew 6:7-8, NIV

Becky was in the fourth grade when her father lost his job. He'd tried to stand against corruption in the company and been fired by his boss instead.

Although she was young, Becky was old enough to know her father was having trouble at work. During a family dinner, one of the older kids mentioned that dad had been fired.

Becky dropped her fork to her plate and turned to her father. “What’s going to happen now?”

Her father glanced around the table at his worried children’s faces and quietly said, “What’s going to happen now is what will always happen—we’ll trust God and He will provide for us.”

It can be jarring when the unexpected happens. You lose your job. Your child runs away from home. Your spouse

walks out. Your parent suddenly dies. Now, you're left feeling like Becky, scared and alone.

But just like Becky could trust her father's words, you can trust your Heavenly Father to provide for your needs.

Prayer

God, give me strength when the unexpected happens. When I feel like I'm falling apart, hold me together with Your strength and grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 6

Mourning the Loss of a Pet

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” – Matthew 5:4, NIV

Joanna was diagnosed with Lupus several years ago. She was unable to work and had to apply for disability. Her grown daughters often came over to handle weekly tasks for their mom like cleaning the house and doing laundry. They did grocery shopping for her and coordinated all of her medical appointments.

Still both of her daughters were busy raising families of their own so Joanna often found herself alone. But Joanna had the comfort of her poodle, Spunky. The small dog seemed to have a knack for knowing when Joanna needed comfort and often cuddled with her at just the right moment.

When Spunky passed away, Joanna was devastated. Her beloved pet had been her companion, comforter, and friend for years. He'd been there for her during some of the darkest moments of her life.

Losing a beloved animal can feel just as painful as losing a member of your family. One way to deal with your grief can be to do something to honor your pet's memory. This

could be in the form of a monthly donation to your local animal shelter, creating a special scrapbook for your pet, or planting a tree in memory.

Prayer

God, thank you for the time I had with {pet's name}. Please comfort me in my grief and show me how I can honor the beloved friend You gave me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 7

Dwelling Place

“Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.” – Psalm 90:1, NIV

Harper lived in a small Southern town most of her life. When she graduated high school, her mother was ill. So, Harper decided on a college that she could commute to. In the evenings, she would come home to care for her mother and keep the household running.

Eventually, Harper’s mother recovered. As graduation loomed closer, Harper received several job offers. The most promising one was over two thousand miles away. She prayed over the decision and felt God was leading her to the city.

But a few days after the move, Harper called her mother in tears. Nothing was familiar. She missed her favorite spot under the oak tree and the sound of her siblings racing down the stairs. She couldn’t navigate public transportation as easily as she could her beloved country roads.

“You’re homesick,” her mother explained. “I know it’s scary right now. But God has placed you where you are for a reason. Trust Him in the middle of the unknown.”

Sometimes, God calls us to places that are unfamiliar. These unfamiliar places can be physical like Harper's was or they can be spiritual or mental. When moments of homesickness arrive (and they will), remind yourself that God is your home. He's holding onto you and you're safe in His arms.

Prayer

God, I'm scared. This doesn't look anything like I thought it would. I confess I want to run back to what's familiar. Please help me to stand in this place, to remember that You're my home and I'm not alone. Thank You for holding onto me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 8

Holy Delays

“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners...” – Isaiah 61:1, NIV

Neil had been traveling for a work conference. He'd booked an early morning flight in the hopes that he'd be home with his wife in time for dinner. But due to an unpredictable weather system, his flight was changed.

Then he learned that he'd been bumped from his second flight. No matter what he said or did, Neil couldn't seem to snag a spot. The airline offered to put him up in a hotel for the evening but Neil declined. He really wanted to be with his family, so he waited.

Finally, around ten o'clock that evening, Neil boarded the plane. He breathed a sigh of relief when he felt the plane lift off. He was counting down the hours until he could be with his wife.

When Neil glanced at the woman in the seat next to him, he realized she was reading one of his favorite books. They struck up a conversation about what books were on their

summer reading list. Finally Neil asked, "Why are you traveling so late? Did your flight get bumped too?"

"Oh no," the woman gave him an embarrassed smile, "I just helped my daughter into a rehab center."

Neil shared the story of his own son's addiction. "Don't give up. God set Jonathan free after years of addiction. He can do the same for your daughter, too."

Encountering delays can be frustrating. But sometimes, God orchestrates a delay so you can reach out to someone who's struggling in darkness and desperately needs hope.

Prayer

God, thank You for delays and setbacks! Everything serves Your purposes. The next time I'm delayed, let me remember this story and look for someone I can minister to. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 9

When You Face Discouragement...

“Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” – 2 Kings 6:16, NIV

The King of Aram was determined to capture the nation of Israel. He set an ambush and waited for the king’s men. Israel’s troops showed up...but they weren’t surprised by the attack. They’d been prepared for it and they fought valiantly.

This happened again and again. Finally the King of Aram demanded to know which one of his troops was a spy for Israel. One troop came forward to explain that the prophet, Elisha, was warning Israel about these planned ambushes.

So, the King of Aram decides that he needs to kill Elisha and then his plans to ambush Israel will be successful. When he learns where Elisha is, he gathers his troops and surrounds the area.

The next morning, Elisha’s servant looks out the window. He’s shocked to see so many troops and more than a little afraid. Elisha sees his servant’s discouragement and utters a bold prayer.

And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:17, NIV)

When you’re facing discouragement, it can be easy to focus on what you see—the hard heart of your spouse, the deaf ears of your child, the cruelty of your parent. But just as there was a Holy army around Elisha, there is one around you, too. You are not walking into the battle alone. You are backed by the “Lord of Heaven’s armies”.

Prayer

God, sometimes, all I can see are obstacles and hardship. Open my eyes. Remind me again that You’re fighting this battle with me. You are present with me even now! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

DAY 10

Difficult Family Relationships

“He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.” – Isaiah 40:11, NIV

There was a recent news story about a politician. While campaigning to be re-elected, his siblings filmed a commercial endorsing his opponent. Needless to say, Thanksgiving with his family will probably be awkward this year.

But the politician isn't the only one with difficult family relationships. The Bible is filled with stories of families who didn't get along. Cain killed his brother Abel in a fit of jealousy. Joseph's older brothers sold him into slavery. Sarah and Hagar had a bitter rivalry that lasted for years.

It can be easy to let the chaos and pain from your family define you. Maybe you're the child of alcoholic parents. Perhaps your mother abandoned you or your father neglected you. Maybe your siblings rejected and bullied you.

Regardless of what your family dynamics are like, God is for you! He loves you passionately and you're precious to Him.

Sometimes, families don't give you the love you crave but God is always pouring out His love on you.

Prayer

God, families can be messy and difficult. Mine is no exception. Help me to bask in Your love, to accept it and let it fill me up. Show me how to love my family and open the doors to healing my relationships. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 11

Friendly Influences

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.” – Colossians 3:5, NIV

Ron was a senior in high school. He had a small group of friends that he enjoyed hanging out with. He didn't have a male role model in his life so he often looked to his friends to figure out how a man was supposed to behave.

For the most part, Ron's friends were a good influence. But sometimes, one of the boys would start talking about the girls he was involved with sexually. Then the others would chime in with their experiences.

The conversation always made Ron uncomfortable. He'd been raised with the idea that sex was a special gift from God, to be shared only between a husband and wife.

Still, Ron reasoned that his friends were just telling stories... until one of his friends lied about an encounter with the girl. Ron watched as overnight the girl became the center of cruel jokes and cyber bullying.

Suddenly, Ron understood his friends weren't just talking or blowing smoke. The words they said had a greater impact

than they knew. From that day forward, Ron made a commitment to only speak about girls in ways that respected and affirmed them.

Prayer

God, help me to remember that all of my friends are influencing me for better or worse, Show me how to set boundaries with the friends that pull me away from You. Let me grow closer to the friends in my life that are earnestly seeking You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 12

Exposing the Darkness

“Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.” – Ephesians 5:11-13, NIV

“Wait! You forgot your phone,” Tory said as she reached for the deacon’s phone. As she did, a lewd image of a child flickered across the screen.

With shaky hands, she returned the device. She watched as the man gathered his wife and kids in the car to leave from the Sunday morning service. She’d always thought of the deacon as a kind-hearted man, one who served Jesus sincerely.

She waited until the church had emptied out except for the pastor and his wife. “If I know a crime is being committed, should I expose the person, even if it causes trouble for our church?”

The pastor’s eyebrows went up. “We’re called to not only walk in the light but also expose the deeds of darkness. If we don’t do that, then we’re helping to cover up sin and Jesus won’t heal what we’re hiding.”

It can be tempting to hide the sins of other people. Maybe like Tory, you worry your church will look bad or you don't want to stir up trouble. But as children of the Light, we are called to shine a light on the darkness.

If you know a child is being abused, you have a moral responsibility to disclose this information to your local law enforcement agency and/or social services. Honor God by standing up for the most vulnerable people in the church—our children.

Prayer

God, give me the strength and courage to expose wrongdoing. When sin is hidden, it festers and leads to an infection that can threaten the health of individuals, families, and churches. Show me how to speak up and speak out on behalf of those who have no defender. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 13

Grace in the Middle

“Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me.” – Psalm 27:10, NIV

Dan was in a meeting when he got the message that his elderly father had fallen and was injured. He dropped everything and immediately booked a flight back to his hometown.

When he arrived at his childhood home, it was clear his dad was having difficulty caring for himself. The yard was overgrown. There was a stack of unpaid bills on the table. The insurance policy on the house and car had both lapsed.

Dan had known his normally responsible father was becoming forgetful but now he suspected it might be more serious. A doctor at the hospital where his elderly father was receiving care confirmed the news—dementia.

All his life, Dan had relied on his father. The quiet man had always been a tower of strength for his family, carrying them through seasons of hardship with a gentle grace.

During the next few years, Dan tenderly cared for his father. He moved him into his home and helped him with everyday tasks. Still, Dan struggled with watching his father slip away.

One day, a friend sent him a text about Psalm 27:10. The words comforted Dan and reminded him that God loved him.

Few things are more difficult in life than watching a parent age and grow frail. Many adult children grieve for their parents and their changing relationships. But no matter what happens, know that God sees. He remembers your name. He understands your pain. He's holding onto you and your parent.

Prayer

God, help me! Some days, I feel a million miles from my parent. Their suffering is breaking my heart and I can't heal them. Give me peace in the midst of this season. Show me how to support my parent and love on them during this time. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 14

The Sting of Betrayal

“If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were rising against me, I could hide. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship at the house of God...” – Psalm 55:12-14, NIV

Harry was just a toddler when his father died. His mother never remarried or even dated again. Growing up, Harry struggled without a role model. He needed someone to look up to, someone who could show him how to be a man.

After high school, Harry started working for a media company as an intern. While he was there, he made fast friends with Luke. The older man took him under his wing, treating him like a son.

Harry soaked up the positive attention and the two bonded over their shared love for fishing and fixing old cars. When a scholarship at the company was announced, Luke recommended Harry for the spot.

Not long after Harry returned from college, he was quickly promoted into a management position. But he also noticed a change in Luke. His attitude had cooled toward him and

Harry was lost. He didn't know what he'd done or said. He asked but Luke dodged the question.

A few weeks later, Harry learned that Luke was undermining him. The older man had been passed over for a promotion and instead the position was given to Harry.

When a friend betrays you, it can be painful. But you're not alone. Jesus knows how you're feeling and what you're going through. On the Cross, Jesus felt alone in His anguish. He' been betrayed by everyone but He chose to focus on forgiveness.

Prayer

Jesus, I've been betrayed. This cuts deep and I want to lash out. Give me the strength and grace to forgive. I want to model Your love and compassion. Show me how to do this... in Your name, Amen.

DAY 15

He Cares for You

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” – 1 Peter 5:7, NIV

Francine was a freelancer working from home. She loved that her job allowed her to be with her children. Since Fran didn't enjoy bookkeeping, she outsourced the task to an accountant.

Unfortunately, Fran's accountant was dishonest. He falsified documents and didn't handle her tax returns correctly. As a result, Fran was audited by the IRS. She had to pay several years of back taxes quickly.

Fran felt overwhelmed by her financial situation. A few months ago, she'd had some unexpected medical bills that had drained her emergency fund. Now, she was desperate and didn't know what to do.

Financial stress can happen to anyone. Sometimes, it's the result of poor financial choices. Sometimes (like in Fran's case), someone else makes a sinful choice that impacts your money.

In times like these, it can be hard to know what to do. You might be tempted to panic or make rash decisions. Before

you take action, it can be smart to spend time in prayer. Tell God about your anxiety, frustration, or worry over these financial matters.

Then ask His Spirit to guide you with wisdom and discernment. Trust God to show you what your next step should be!

Prayer

God, I confess: I'm overwhelmed with worry. My financial situation is pretty bleak and I don't know what to do. Please give me peace. Guide me with wisdom and discernment. Show what the next step is so I can honor You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 16

Getting Real: Confession Time

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” – James 5:16, NIV

Sheila started drinking shortly after her first miscarriage. At first, it was just a way to ease the pain. She told herself it was no big deal. After all, she wasn't falling down drunk. She just used enough alcohol to get by.

But as time passed, she needed more and more. She looked forward to the end of each day, knowing she could go home and have a few glasses over her favorite red wine.

Sheila thought she was in control of her drinking habits until the next she hit a tree while backing out of her driveway. Fortunately, she wasn't injured and no one else saw what had happened.

That night at a local ministry event, the topic of James 5:16 came up in the lesson. As the women in the group joined hands and began praying, Sheila opened her mouth and confessed her drinking.

When you choose to conceal your pain, you have to look for a Band-Aid solution. For Sheila, that solution was alcohol. But for other people, it might be pornography, drugs, or retail therapy.

God designed us to heal in community which is why confessing our faults is so powerful. When we do this in a supportive environment free from judgement, we experience the love and hope that God longs to lavish on us.

Prayer

God, sometimes, I'm tempted to keep my sins to myself. Help me to remember Sheila and experience the freedom that comes from a heartfelt confession. Send community to pour out hope and love over me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 17

When You Face Injustice

“But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.” – Genesis 39:20-21, NIV

Joseph’s story is one of repeated injustice. First, his brothers throw him down into a dark pit. Can you imagine his thoughts as he heard his family casually deciding how to kill him? Panic and fear probably ran through him.

When he’s pulled out of the pit, he’s taken to a foreign land and forced into slavery. But Jacob works hard in Egypt. His work ethic catches his master’s eye and it isn’t long before he’s second in command.

But unfortunately, his job comes with a complication. His master’s wife now wants him. She purposely arranges time alone together and sexually harasses Joseph. It’s not so much what she says as the way she acts, carefully draping herself over the desk to reveal a hint of cleavage. A pouting look sent his way as he leaves the office.

When Joseph rejects her, he’s the one accused of wrongdoing! Now he’s in prison, serving time for a crime that he never committed. At this point, no one would fault

Joseph if he decided to become bitter. He's already endured so much injustice.

But through it all, Joseph trusts that God is working a plan. Years later when he meets with his brothers again, he explains:

"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." (Genesis 50:20, NIV)

It's difficult when we're faced with injustices. Perhaps a co-worker lied about you. Maybe your spouse is verbally abusive when you're alone but charming to everyone else. Perhaps you were assaulted and your rapist was allowed to go free.

Whatever your injustice, you can trust that God is still in control. He is not the author of evil but He does promise to redeem these terrible moments and use them for your good and His glory.

Prayer

God, I struggle. I want to be bitter and angry. This injustice isn't fair. It's like sandpaper against my heart and I can't take anymore. Don't let this consume me. Redeem the evil in my life and set me free from this pain. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 18

Showing Up to Serve

“Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.” – Matthew 14:22-23, NIV

Renee was passionate about helping others. She had received the spiritual gift of mercy and she found herself strongly identifying with those in pain. Because of her gift, she felt drawn to the medical field.

She became a nurse and began working in the pediatric unit of a big hospital. Her job allowed her to quietly share her faith with hurting families. Sometimes, a parent would ask her to pray with them. Sometimes, she'd walk the halls whispering prayers over each family in the rooms.

But after several years on the job, Renee began feeling burned out. She had seen many children go on to make full recoveries and lead beautiful lives. But some of the children didn't. Some of them grew worse and eventually passed away.

Renee struggled with these feelings. She'd felt called to serve families in this way so she didn't understand what was

happening. She asked the pastor of a local church why she was struggling.

“There’s a condition called compassion fatigue. It’s common for people who are gifted with mercy or are highly empathetic.” The pastor continued, “I tell my staff and others in caring professions to schedule time away. This is what Jesus often did in the New Testament. After feeding five thousand, he withdrew to the mountains. If Jesus needed space to process and decompress, so do we.”

Prayer

God, I love serving others. I love pouring into them. But I also need the space and grace to deal with my own feelings. Help me to set aside time to retreat and pray. Show me when I need to set firm boundaries to guard my own heart. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

DAY 19

With You Always

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” – Isaiah 41:10, NIV

Autumn was the oldest of five children. Her family had been homeless when she was young. To make sure her siblings got enough to eat, she often went without food. Sometimes, the only food she would eat was what her friend at school shared with her.

Eventually her mother was able to secure a good job. They moved into a tiny apartment complex and began rebuilding their lives. The financial struggle was still present but now, there was enough food.

The problem was that Autumn had associated food with being selfish. When she ate, she often felt so guilty that she'd go into the bathroom and purge. As soon as the food left her stomach, her anxiety would ease.

When Autumn was in college, her roommate suggested that Autumn see a counselor to deal with her food issues. The thought of going made Autumn feel like panicking so her roommate volunteered to go with her.

It took years of therapy but Autumn no longer purges. She still struggles with the desire to but she has a support system in place that loves on her.

Eating disorders can be a form of darkness. They can stem from a difficult childhood (like Autumn's), from past abuse, low self-esteem, and other issues.

Getting help for an eating disorder may feel hard. But God is with you and He can send a friend or loved one to walk with you through this season of healing.

Prayer

God, I'm scared. I want help but I don't know where to begin. Please heal my heart and my head from the lies I've heard. Help me to see myself through Your eyes of Love. Send a compassionate friend to walk with me so I can feel Your presence. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 20

Healing the Broken

***“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”
– Psalm 147:3, NIV***

Justin always had “gaps” in the memories of his childhood. He didn’t think it was unusual until his son turned four years old. Suddenly, he began having flashbacks to being abused as a child.

He was terrified of these memories that would surface at random moments during the day. One evening, he was waiting to board the subway when a flashback began playing in his mind. He stood rooted to the spot in terror.

After that, Justin was afraid to leave the house. He worried that if he did, the memories would start again. Fortunately, Justin’s wife recognized that her husband needed professional help. She called a local counselor who specialized in dealing with agoraphobia (fear of environments that are believed to be “unsafe”).

Agoraphobia is usually triggered by a panic attack. When someone has a panic attack, they fear it will happen again. For some people, that means they avoid the place where they had the first attack. For others, they fear that just leaving their home might trigger a secondary attack.

Often (but not always), panic disorders are the result of trauma. This might be trauma that occurred years ago (like in Justin's case) or it might involve a recent trauma (like surviving a serious car accident).

God can use mental health counselors and other professionals to heal you or your loved one from trauma. But it can take a few months to see results and some people may need daily medication to manage their panic disorder.

Prayer

God, I need help. I feel like there's a weight on my chest and I can't breathe. This pain feels all-encompassing. Please give me peace, let me experience the comfort of Your presence. Send others to walk with me through this difficult season in my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 21

The Desperate Father

A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech.” – Mark 9:17, NIV

In Mark 9, there’s a story about a desperate father who brings his child to the disciples. They try to heal the boy but they’re unable to do anything.

Then Jesus shows up on the scene and wants to know what’s happening. When the man explains that he’s come for healing, Jesus asks how long the child has been suffering.

The father shares that the spirit of suffering often injures the boy, pulling him into water or fire and in an attempt to kill him. At the end of his story, he quietly adds, “If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” (Mark 9:22, NIV)

It’s hard to fault the father for his words. There are few things in life that leave us feeling more helpless than watching a loved one suffer. At first, you probably spent hours trying to help. Maybe you Googled the symptoms, made doctor’s appointments, and picked up medications.

But as the days turned into weeks and the months turned into years, you were left with little more than desperation. If that's you today, then you're in good company.

Despite his doubts, the desperate father's child was still healed. Often, we think that God's healing is linked to our faith. If we just dig deep enough, try hard enough, or pray enough, we'll get the results we crave.

But Jesus illustrates a powerful truth—that He can (and does) heal even when we are sometimes plagued with doubts.

Prayer

God, help my unbelief! Sometimes, I'm tempted to give up. The doubts are so loud but You are the God of the impossible. You have all power over Heaven and Earth so I ask for Your healing touch in the life of (loved one's name). Set them free from their pain and suffering. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 22

Detours in the Journey

“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

Connie was so excited about graduation that she could nearly smell the ink on her certificate. After spending years planning for college, she was so excited to be accepted into her first-choice school.

But three days before graduation, Connie was hit by a drunk driver. They both lived through it but Connie’s injuries were extensive. She needed several surgeries and she’d have to spend a year re-learning how to walk.

Connie was crushed. She couldn’t understand how God could allow this to happen. She’d been certain she was headed to the right school. She wrestled with her feelings while she forced herself to go through the rehabilitation program.

When Connie finally made it to college, she was delighted. The milestone was that much sweeter than it would have been before.

While she was in her freshman year, Connie met Lee, another student who she fell in love with. But Lee was in the military and he was transferred not long after freshman year. They continued to date long-distance and Lee eventually proposed to her.

Connie's thankful for that year of delays now. If it hadn't been for the accident, she wouldn't have met Lee or had the chance to start a family with him.

Sometimes, God allows detours into our lives. He does this because He's working on a special plan for your life.

Prayer

God, thank you for the detours in my journey. I don't always understand them but I know You. You're a good Father and I can trust You every step of the way. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 23

An Undivided Heart

“Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.” – Psalm 86:11, NIV

In 1886, Robert Louis Stevenson published a book titled *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The book was about a lawyer who investigated his friend, Dr. Jekyll. The more he looked into his friend, the more his friend resembled Mr. Hyde. It soon became clear that the doctor also had a dark side.

Some Christians live very much like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. When they're at church or around other Christians, they behave like Dr. Jekyll, an upstanding man in the community. But when they're alone or away from the church, they begin to resemble Mr. Hyde. They live for themselves. They lie, cheat, and steal.

In Matthew 7:15 (NIV), Jesus warns about these people. “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”

This is especially helpful to remember if you're in charge of hiring people or gathering volunteers for a project. While we can't always predict who the wolf will be, we can ask

God for wisdom and discernment on who we allow into our lives.

Prayer

God, I confess: I don't always recognize the wolf in sheep's clothing. Please give me discernment and wisdom when it comes to working with others. Show me who I should grow closer to and who I should pull away from. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 24

The Older Brother

“Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing.” – Luke 15:25, NIV

Day after day, Mark watched his brother, Greg, frittered his time away at the company. He was always chasing random projects and not contributing to the overall business.

Finally, Greg came to their father, wanting his share of the company. When his father granted it to him, he promptly sold the stock options and went off on another one of his many adventures.

Envy ate at Mark in the months that passed. Here he was doing the right thing, standing by their father, and as usual, Greg was nowhere to be seen.

Then one day, Greg returned. He sobbed into their father’s shoulder, recounting his misdeeds and begging for forgiveness.

Mark watched. He waited months for this moment—the one when his father would tell his lazy, no-good brother that he’d gone too far. Maybe he’d tell him he wasn’t welcome at the family dinners. Heck, maybe he’d disown him entirely.

But amazingly, his father ignored Greg's sobs. Instead, he demanded the portion of the company be restored to Greg.

Mark saw red. "What's about me?" He exploded, "I've been here faithful the entire time. Why are you lavishing grace on him? He doesn't deserve it!"

Mark's reaction might seem extreme but it's a common one among some Christians. They're so careful to measure out their good deeds, that they miss God's desire to lavishly pour out His love!

Prayer

God, help me when I'm tempted to judge others. Remind me that we're all here by grace. Show me how to embrace the prodigals in my life and church. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 25

Broken Vessels

“The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” – 1 Samuel 16:7, NIV

After coming back from two tours of duty overseas, Grant struggled with a traumatic brain injury. He found it difficult to remember short term information. He never slept more than a few hours at a time. He sometimes panicked when confronted with a new situation.

Before the injury, Grant had been confident and happy. He had planned on returning to his hometown and becoming a pastor. Now though, he struggled to just make it through the day. He managed to connect with a few other veterans and formed a regular meeting. Each week, they got together to share what they were dealing with.

When he was with his father, Grant said, “I know I was meant to be in ministry. I want to serve God—I just feel so shattered now.”

His father shared, “Just because you’re broken doesn’t mean you can’t serve God. Some of the most profound lessons I’ve learned have come from broken vessels.”

It's easy to think something disqualifies you from serving God. Maybe you think you can't because you have a painful past, a disability, or a difficult home life. But what you may see as obstacles could be the area of ministry that God is calling you to.

Prayer

God, I'm broken and I'm fragile but I'm Yours. Use this broken vessel to bring honor and glory to Your name. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 26

Wrestling with God

“That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.” – Genesis 32:22, NIV

Jacob is on a journey to his home country. He’s bringing his wives, children, and all the livestock in his household. But as he’s a way off, the bad news comes: Esau is marching out to meet him with an army.

For those who aren’t familiar with the story, Esau is Jacob’s older brother. The two shared a fierce rivalry throughout their childhood. Jacob deceived their father and stole his brother’s blessing.

So when Jacob learns Esau is coming, he immediately begins making preparations. He sends gifts ahead to greet his brother. He organizes his family into groups, hoping that if Esau attacks one half, hopefully the remaining half will survive.

It’s late by the time Jacob is done. He goes away into the wilderness to rest and there, he wrestles a man which many believe is an angel of the Lord.

Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.”

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." (Genesis 32:26, NIV)

Jacob wrestled all night with the angel and would not let him leave until he'd received a blessing. In many ways, this story is a picture of what Christians should do.

God doesn't always give us our request in the moment we ask. Sometimes, He wants us to wrestle for it—to seek Him more, to lean deeper into our prayer lives, and discover more of His rich mercy. The point of doing this is not to weaken our belief but to strengthen our faith.

Prayer

God, give me strength to persevere in difficult seasons. Like Jacob, I want to cling to You and receive a blessing. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 27

Out of Darkness

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” – John 3:16, NIV

Maria grew up in a country where there was no religious freedom. She was certain there had to be more out there. The Universe seemed so vast and she couldn't help but think that the world around her was too detailed, too orderly to be random.

When she moved to Italy, she began attending a local church. She desperately wanted to know God and understand Him more.

She thought that the way to do that was to embrace man-made traditions. She placed stone statues of famous saints in her house. She carefully meditated each morning, crying out for wisdom. She went to confession regularly.

But she never felt like she knew God. Then one day an exchange student from the US came to Italy. The two women struck up a friendship and Maria invited her into her home. She was eager to hear about the woman's God.

“I’ve been searching for God!” She gestured around her home. “I try to honor him. But I do not know him.”

Maria’s new friend opened a Bible from her bag and began to take Maria through the Scriptures, explaining the plan of salvation. At the end of their conversation, Maria accepted Jesus into her heart.

Prayer

God, I pray for those in darkness, the ones who are eagerly searching for You. Send Christians to light their paths, to show them the way of Your salvation. Let me boldly share my faith with someone else this week. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

DAY 28

Be the Lighthouse

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.” – Matthew 5:14, NIV

John was eager to share the love of Jesus with others. He talked frequently with his co-workers, friends, and family about how becoming a Christian had changed his life. He was enthusiastic and prayed for more opportunities to show God’s love.

But John didn’t just talk about the love of God. He tried to live out his faith, too. He brought a get well gift for his co-worker’s son who was ill. He cut the lawn for his elderly neighbors and refused to accept payment for it. He helped out at his local soup kitchen.

Christians are called to be lighthouse in the world—to boldly shine the light of God to those who are in darkness. How you shine that light will depend on how God has gifted you and where He’s called you.

One young woman with a chronic illness can’t attend church physically but she writes letters to church members that are going through difficult times. Another woman runs a special nursery program for single moms, watching their kids so they can take much needed breaks.

If you're not sure how God has called you to serve, ask Him. Pray for opportunities to appear. When they do, show up and shine Jesus. This might mean being there for a friend who's just been diagnosed with cancer, becoming a foster parent, or taking time to visit with the elderly in a nursing home.

Prayer

God, show me how I can shine Your light today! I want the world around me to know You and how amazing Your love is. I'm Yours...use me as You will. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 29

One Match

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” – John 1:5, NIV

Holly was on an adventure trip with her mother. Her mother had a love for travel and discovering new things. As a birthday gift to her, Holly had booked an adventure that allowed the two of them to explore old caves.

The tour guide led their group of twenty people into the caves. Then he invited everyone to sit down and shut off the lights. Although Holly could hear the people around her, she couldn't see anything. She was surprised by how dark and bleak the world seemed inside the cave.

Then the tour guide pulled a match out of his pocket. He flicked it against a nearby rock and the entire cave seemed to light up, too.

Many people live in darkness and it's tempting to believe there's nothing you can do to help them. But don't give into despair or just accept the darkness. The tour guide proved that just one match can illuminate a whole cave. The hope you have in Christ Jesus can brighten the path for those in need of light and help them find their way to the Cross.

Prayer

God, when I see others that are stumbling and in need of guidance, help me to shine bright. Let me be a light that leads others to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 30

In the Darkness

“The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?” – Psalm 27:1, NIV

Ben was sorting through his bills, trying to fight the mounting frustration. No matter what he did, it seemed there were always more bills than money. The premature birth of his daughter had drained the family finances and now every month was a struggle. Still, Ben was thankful for the little girl.

When Ben heard his young son call out, he went into his room. The little boy had a nightmare and wanted comfort. Ben got him a glass of water and rubbed his back soothingly.

As Ben cut off the light, his son cried out again. Ben explained, “Hey, buddy, I’m still here in the darkness. I haven’t left you alone in this.”

The words made Ben pause. He’d spent so much time fearing the future that he hadn’t realized God was with him. Even in the middle of the uncertainty of his daughter’s health and the medical bills, God hadn’t left him alone.

Ben smiled as he sang his son back to sleep, imagining that God was singing over him, too.

“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.”
(Zephaniah 3:17, NIV)

Prayer

God, thank You for never abandoning me! Even when there's darkness all around me, You're still here. Let me carry an awareness of Your presence with me everywhere I go today. In Jesus' name.

DAY 31

God: The Righteous Judge

“The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord.” – Genesis 18:22, NIV

God had visited Abraham and shared a meal with him as friends do. Then He sent His angels on ahead to the city of Sodom. He was going to pronounce judgement and punish it for the great sins the residents had committed.

But as God sent the angels away, He stayed with Abraham and revealed His plan. God’s actions were just. In His righteousness, He could not overlook or excuse the sin in the city. He was not willing to let it continue in wickedness any longer.

When Abraham knows this, he begins to plead with God, begging for the city to be spared. He negotiates with God, asking if He would spare the city for fifty righteous people living inside of it.

What’s interesting is that Abraham intercedes by discussing the character of God. He says, “Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25, NIV)

Sometimes when we intercede for others, we're tempted to downplay their sin. But every sin is an affront to the Holy God. Rather than excuse unrighteousness, follow Abraham's example and focus on the character of God.

Prayer

God, I know (name) has sinned against you. But I also know that You are merciful and compassionate. Please forgive them for their sin. Restore them to fellowship with You so they can walk in righteous ways. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 32

The Golden Calf

But Moses sought the favor of the Lord his God. “Lord,” he said, “why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?” – Exodus 32:11, NIV

The Israelites had been freed from four hundred years of slavery in a foreign nation. God had rescued His people, leading them into the desert with the understanding that He would take them to the Promised Land.

But then Moses, who was the leader of the nation, was called up into the mountain to talk with God. He stayed there for a considerable amount of time, no doubt in worship and fellowship.

While Moses is gone, an interesting thing happens. The people begin to grumble. They doubt that God is with them anymore.

Aaron, the brother of Moses, commands the people to give him their jewelry. He melts down the gold and creates an image in the shape of a calf. Impressed with his work, he proclaims this idol is the one that rescued Israel from Egypt.

It's tempting to shake your head at the Israelites in this moment. To ask, "How could you do such a thing after God displayed His power so clearly?"

And yet, we're often quick to do the same thing. After years of prayer, God sends you the spouse you've longed for or allows that adoption to go through so you can hold a beautiful baby. He arranges for you to own that house that you wanted for so many years.

In these moments when our deepest desires have been fulfilled, it's easy to look to them as the source of all our joy. We, in essence do the same thing Israel did—we trade the Almighty for an idol.

But just like Moses stood in the breach for the people, Jesus stands in the breach for us. He asks God to be merciful and faithful, despite our failings.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for interceding on my behalf! When I am given something I've longed for, help me not to turn it into an idol. Instead, let me look upon God as the source of all my joy. In Your Name, Amen.

DAY 33

Encounters

Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!" – 1 Kings 18:38-39, NIV

The nation of Israel was at a crossroads. Some of the people worshipped Baal and other false gods. But a few like Elijah still followed the Lord's commands.

Elijah knew it was time for the people to choose who they would serve. So he called the king and all of the prophets of Baal together. He proposed a plan: the wicked prophets would build an altar and offer a sacrifice, calling out for their god to send down fire.

They did this early in the morning and they continued all day without results. That's when Elijah built an altar and doused everything in water. Then he called out and fire fell from Heaven, proving that the Lord is God.

Sometimes the people around us need to see God's hand moving and know that He's real and He intervenes in real life situations. When you come across these people, remember Elijah and pray that God would send them a sign.

Prayer

God, thank You for being the God who listens! I pray for (name) who needs a reminder of Your Presence and Majesty. Send them a sign that they would understand how powerful and merciful You are! In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 34

Carry On, Prayer Warrior

Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them." – Daniel 10:12, NIV

Daniel was a prayer warrior. He prayed daily, seeking God constantly. That fact alone is remarkable. But when you consider the time he lived in, it's downright amazing. He was a captive from Israel who had been taken to Babylon.

He was known to the king, who seeing Daniel's wisdom, promoted the young man. As a result, Daniel developed powerful enemies who tried to destroy him.

Once after Daniel had been praying over a coming war, an angel appeared. The angel told David that from the first moment of prayer, God had heard his requests. These prayers were immediately answered.

But Daniel did not see those answers for many days. Then one day, an angel arrives to explain that he had been traveling to give a reply from the Lord but was unable to come due to events happening in the spiritual realm.

Daniel's story illustrates that we may not always see immediate answers to our prayers. But that doesn't mean that God's not listening. Not only does God hear your prayers, He will also be faithful to answer them!

Prayer

God, when I'm praying for others and I get discouraged, help me to remember the story of Daniel. I want to stand strong in my faith, even when it feels like nothing's happening. Thank You for always listening! In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 35

Sifted

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat.” – Luke 22:31, NIV

The Crucifixion is drawing near and Jesus has retreated with His disciples. He begins to tell them of the terrible things He will endure. Peter stops to interrupt Him, promising that he would follow Jesus anywhere...even if that path lead to death.

They're bold words, a heartfelt promise...and ultimately, a lie. Jesus foretells Peter's coming betrayal. But He does so in an interesting way, explaining that Satan has asked to "sift" Peter as wheat.

For modern day readers that's just an expression. To understand what Jesus said, you need to know how wheat is sifted. It's grabbed by the stalk and shaken violently. Doing this will separate wheat kernels, all else falls away.

So Satan's true intent is that Peter would fall away from Jesus and never return. He has that intent for every believer. But listen to what Jesus says about Peter's coming failure:

“But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” (Luke 22:32, NIV)

If someone you love is enduring temptation, pray for them. Pray that if they fail to resist temptation, that they would be redeemed. Ask that God fills them with the strength to start again.

Prayer

God, I pray for (name). I know they're enduring a lot of temptation right now and You see that. Just as You saw Peter all those years ago. Now I ask, strengthen this person in Your name. Give them the wisdom to flee temptation and if they fall prey to it, show them how to repent and turn back to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 36

In the Wilderness

***“After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.”
– Matthew 4:2, NIV***

Kayla’s plane had just touched down at the airport when she got the call. Her oldest daughter was in the hospital and the doctors didn’t know why she was sick or how to help her.

Without stopping at home to change, she went to be with her daughter. She’d just returned from a missions trip, building homes in an area that had been devastated by tsunami. She’d felt God’s presence so strongly during her time on the island but when her daughter was sick, she didn’t have that comfort.

When a friend stopped by, she shared her fear that God had left her. “I felt such peace while I was there and now I’m just numb.”

Her friend reassured her that her feelings were normal. “Satan waited to go after Jesus until after He’d spent forty days praying and fasting. He waited until he knew Jesus was exhausted. Any time you experience spiritual breakthrough, expect to be tested.”

Kayla's daughter went on to make a full recovery and the experience caused Kayla to see Jesus in a different way. "I've always relied on feeling close to God. With my daughter's illness, I had to lean into faith and trust that God was there, even when it felt my prayers for her went unanswered."

Prayer

God, give me strength when I'm being tested. Help me to remember that Jesus was tempted, too. Provide a way out for me so I wouldn't stumble into sin. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 37

High Priest

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet he did not sin.” – Hebrews 4:15, NIV

Josh struggled with sexual sin. He got hooked on porn several years ago. He noticed he needed to view it more often in order to get the same good feelings. He was ashamed and disgusted by what he viewed but he also felt compelled to watch it.

When the discussion of porn came up with a good friend, Josh confessed his secret addiction. “I don’t know what to do. I know some people pray when they’re tempted. But I can’t bring this to God. I feel so filthy.”

Josh’s not alone with his struggle and his friend shared Hebrews 4:15 with him.

Centuries ago, the Israelites would bring a sacrifice to God when they sinned against Him. The high priest would kill the animal and that was a messy job. Then he’d take it to God so that God would forgive the person’s sins.

Since Jesus died on the Cross, He is now the High Priest. But that doesn't mean he's never been tempted to sin. In fact, Jesus was tempted to sin "in every way". Sure he didn't have an iPhone but sexual sin isn't a new temptation. It's always been there.

When you're tempted to walk in sin, you can go to Jesus. You can be open and honest about your struggles. You don't have to go through this alone.

Prayer

Jesus, when I'm tempted to sin, remind me to turn to You. Please set me free! I want to live in a way that honors You all the time. In Your name, Amen.

DAY 38

When Friends Betray You...

“So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has.” – Job 42:8, NIV

Job’s whole world was shattered. He lost all of his children. He lost his flocks and his herds, which in today’s society would be the equivalent of losing your job along with any additional source of income.

If that was not enough, Job was afflicted with a horrible disease. He lived in constant pain and even his nagging wife would not comfort him. Three of his friends came to sit with him but after a time of silence, they began to reflect on what happened to Job.

They leveled some ugly accusations, insulting both Job and God. They insisted Job had committed some great sin and that the hardships he faced were proof of this.

When God restores Job, He sends his friends to apologize and beg his forgiveness. He says that Job should offer a

sacrifice on behalf of his friends so that their offering would be accepted.

Interestingly, Job's response is never noted. He does offer the sacrifice but there's no record of the conversation with his friends. How easy it would be to proclaim his righteousness in that moment. It would be hard not to gloat about how right he was.

When someone else has sinned, it can be tempting to rejoice in their fall. But Job is an example of how we should treat friends who have failed to honor God. We're not to delight in their sin but humbly ask God to forgive them.

Prayer

God, I confess my own pride when I see someone else do wrong. I'm tempted to believe that I'm better than them but I'm not. So I humbly pray for (name). Please forgive their sins. Show them how to walk in Your ways. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 39

Hearts Revealed

“Then Samuel called on the Lord, and that same day the Lord sent thunder and rain. So all the people stood in awe of the Lord and of Samuel.” – 1 Samuel 12:18 NIV

When Sarah was thirteen she tried to shoplift a tube of lipstick from the local drugstore. She was caught by a watchful security guard who called her parents.

Three years later, she accidentally hit several mailboxes on a residential street. She fled the scene, terrified of the consequences of her accident. But two hours later, the cops showed up because a witness had gotten her tag number.

“How is it that my sin always seems to find me out?” She asked her parents one evening after her community service.

Her mom replied, “I’ve prayed that your sins would be seen and exposed, not so that you would be shamed. But so you would always walk in God’s path.”

This is similar to Samuel’s prayer for the nation of Israel. They had sinned by asking God for a king. To prove their sin, Samuel prophesied there would be a severe storm in the land and he prayed for it.

When the storm arrived, the people quickly realized their sin and asked Samuel to intercede with them before God.

If you have a friend or loved one struggling with sin, pray that God would open their eyes to their actions. Confronting sin is difficult but it's only when sin is dealt with that people can truly be at peace.

Prayer

God, I pray for (name). I suspect they're hiding a sin in their heart and I pray that You would reveal it. Show them what they're doing wrong so that they would seek You again. Let them experience forgiveness and restoration through Jesus. In His name, Amen.

DAY 40

Asking for Wisdom

Then he prayed, "Lord, God of my master Abraham, make me successful today, and show kindness to my master Abraham." – Genesis 24:12, NIV

As Abraham was aging, he watched his son, Isaac, walk alone. He knew he would soon pass on and he didn't want his child to be without companionship, so he called his servant to him. For this task, he chose his most trusted servant, a man that would carry out the important task with wisdom and discretion.

So, the servant leaves and travels a good distance. As he enters one city, he prays for God's blessing over his master and for a sign that the woman he talks to would be the right one for Isaac.

When he spots Rebekah, the servant humbly asks for water. Without knowing this weary traveler, Rebekah is instantly helpful. She gives not only the man water but is willing to water his camels as well. This is the sign that the servant asked for and seeing it, he worships God for showing him favor.

Sometimes, we're called to do things that feel overwhelming. But just like Abraham's servant, take the time

to stop and pray. Ask God for direction and wait to see how He moves.

Prayer

God, thank You for being faithful to answer my prayers! Right now, I'm dealing with (situation or event) and it feels overwhelming. Please show me what to do and grant me wisdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 41

The Blessing of Supportive Friends

“As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning.” – Exodus 17:11, NIV

When Luke’s wife left him for another man, he was devastated. He had two little girls to raise and he felt unprepared for the task. He didn’t know what to do so he reached out to a well-known men’s leader in his community.

The men’s leader connected Luke to a weekly men’s meeting. The men prayed for each other every week, often sharing concerns about their work, their families, and their spiritual lives.

Luke’s wife eventually came back to him, asking for a chance to repair their marriage. Although Luke wasn’t sure if the relationship could be saved, he was willing to try for the sake of his daughters.

He shared the situation with his men’s group and everyone prayed over him. The next two years were some of the most intense of Luke’s life but with God’s help, he rebuilt his marriage. He credits God and the faithful men in his prayer group as being the reason his family is still together.

The Israelites were in the middle of a fierce battle. Every time Moses held up his hands, they prevailed. But if Moses lowered his arms—even for a moment—they began to lose ground. Eventually, Moses became exhausted. That's when Aaron and Hur stepped in. Sensing Moses' need, they sat by him and held up his arms so the battle could be won.

Walking through a crisis or trial on our own can be wearying. We all need Aarons who can grieve and weep with us, who know how to intercede and pour grace over our aching hearts.

Prayer

God, please send me an Aaron. I feel alone in this battle and I'm a mile past exhaustion. Show me kindness by sending friends who can help me bear these burdens. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 42

Pray for Your Leaders

“I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.” – 1 Timothy 2:1-2, NIV

Jim was having an animated discussion with his wife in the living room. They were playfully arguing over the rules for their nightly chess game.

When Jim looked over, he realized his teenage son was scowling at the TV. The headlines were proclaiming yet another politician who had been accused of a crime. “There’s so much evil in the world.” His son exclaimed. “How can I make any difference at all?”

Jim thought for a moment then 1 Timothy 2:1-2 came to mind. “You can pray for your leaders...for your mayor, our governor, the Congressmen and women. Even our president.”

“But how do I pray for them?” His son asked. “I don’t know where to start.”

“You could pray for their physical safety,” Jim’s wife offered. “That any evil planned against them would be thwarted.”

“That they would stand firm in the face of temptation,” Jim added.

“And that God would provide them with wisdom so they would lead gently, not oppressing the people they serve.” His wife said.

Praying for those in authority can be a wonderful way to show more grace, love, and mercy. When you regularly intercede for leaders, you become less concerned with which side is right and more focused on living a godly life.

Prayer

God, I confess—sometimes the corruption and lies and viewpoints discourage me. But help me to remember that I can do something—I can pray for my country and its leaders. Teach me how to intercede for those in authority. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

DAY 43

Praying for Prisoners

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.” – Ephesians 6:18, NIV

Sasha had never been in trouble with the law. She hadn’t gotten so much as a parking ticket in her life but when she heard the metal door of the local women’s prison slam shut behind her, she still gulped.

She followed her friend to the visitor’s area. She was overwhelmed to see the incarcerated women with their families. She couldn’t imagine being separated for months or years from her children the way these women were.

When the visit was over, Sasha left with her friend. On the way home, she cried for the inmates of the prison. She’d sensed the hopelessness and despair many of them carried and she felt called to do something.

She got permission from the prison warden and she started a Wednesday Bible study. After each meeting, she stayed behind to offer prayer to any of them the women who asked for it. Over time, she became friends with many of the

prisoners. She prayed for them, their spouses, and their children.

When praying for others, don't forget those who are imprisoned. Although they may rightly be there, God still has deep compassion and mercy for inmates. You can consider praying for their healing, for their families, and for new opportunities to appear once they're released.

Prayer

God, I pray for the men and women in my local prison. I ask that You would show up in their lives. Heal those who need healing. Redeem those who think they've gone too far. Let them see that You are a God of mercy and compassion. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 44

Ruler of Hearts

“For seven days they celebrated with joy the Festival of Unleavened Bread, because the LORD had filled them with joy by changing the attitude of the king of Assyria so that he assisted them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel.” – Ezra 6:22, NIV

Elena was certain she was going to lose her job. Her boss didn't like her despite her efforts to turn in her work on time and help her team. He warned her that when budget cuts came, she would be the first one he would fire.

So when it was time for the annual budget review, Elena was a nervous wreck. She had trouble sleeping and eating. She was a single mom and she worried about how she would provide for her three children without a job.

When she shared her concerns with her mentor, the older woman told her she would pray for her. “Look what happened in Ezra. God changed the heart of king of Assyria so the Israelites could restore the temple of God.”

Elena listened to her friend's advice and waited patiently. At the end of the week, she was called into the office of the man who was over her boss. He explained that her boss had been fired and she was moving to another division. Not only

had God spared Elena's job but the new position came with a raise, too.

Prayer

God, thank You for looking out for widows like Elena. Every heart is truly in Your hand. Please turn the hearts of those would harm me to view me favorably. Not for my glory or my boasting. But so that You could be seen in my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 45

Friends Who Pray

“Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” – Romans 8:34, NIV

Dwayne was in a motorcycle accident. Because he wasn't wearing a helmet, he suffered head trauma and had swelling of the brain. His doctors opted to put him in a medically induced coma to save his life.

After his injuries stabilized, they stopped giving him the medications and waited for him to wake up. But he remained in the coma for several days afterwards. Initially, the doctors had been optimistic he would wake up.

Now, they doubted it would ever happen. They advised his friends and family to give up hope. But one of Dwayne's close friends, Lucas, came back day after day. He read the sports page to him, recited Psalms, and prayed over his friend.

Then after four weeks, Dwayne woke up. Despite the head injuries, he was fully alert and able to communicate to the staff. The first thing Dwayne remembers about coming back is hearing his friend's prayers.

It can be hard when it feels like everyone else has given up on you. But just like Lucas continued to pray for and help Dwayne, Jesus prays for and comforts you. He is the friend who never gives up on you.

Prayer

God, thank You for the gift of Jesus and His friendship! I would be lost without it. Help me when I'm feeling alone and need comfort to remember that Jesus is with me. In His name, Amen.

DAY 46

The Persistent Widow

“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.” – Luke 18:1, NIV

When Jesus was with his disciples, he told them a story of a persistent widow. This one had been wrongfully treated and she sought justice from a local judge.

The judge in the case was a despicable man who didn't care about anyone but himself. He refused to grant her justice and ignored her cause for a considerable amount of time.

This widow had no one else to take up her cause. She had no lawyer. She had no husband or son to fight for her. Yet she faithfully brought her petition to the judge, each time asking for justice.

Finally, the judge granted her request. He did so not because he cared about what was right or because he had a sudden revelation. He simply wanted the woman gone.

Jesus concluded his story with a powerful question: “And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?” (Luke 18:7)

Sometimes, you may pray for someone else—for them to receive justice in a situation—and it feels like nothing is happening. But God is always working situations out for His glory (Jeremiah 29:11) and our good (Romans 8:28).

Prayer

God, please grant my friend (name) justice. You see their cause and You know they're seeking to do the right thing. Preserve them with Your care and be their Defender. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 47

When There Are No Words...

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.” – Romans 8:26, NIV

Cheryl was about to head into her next college class when she got a text message from her mom asking her to call. Stepping out side the door, Cheryl quickly dialed her mom’s number and waited.

Her mom answered and she told Cheryl that her little sister had just been diagnosed with leukemia. Her sister had been a surprise baby, born late to Cheryl’s parents. Cheryl was sixteen and often cared for her little sister like she was her own.

The two had formed a strong bond that hadn’t faded when she’d gone away to college. She still regularly Skyped with her little sister and sent her notes home.

When Cheryl heard the news, her stomach did a funny flip and she felt like she couldn’t think. She was overwhelmed with pain and didn’t know how to process her mom’s words.

Sometimes, there are moments in our life when the pain we feel is so deep that there are no words. Maybe your family member was seriously injured in a car collision or a dear friend lost her husband in a work accident.

In these moments, know the Spirit is praying for you and your loved ones. The Holy Spirit intercedes on your behalf constantly, so you're always in God's presence.

Prayer

God, help! The pain is so big and so deep, it's threatening to consume me. I can't see anything and I'm scared. Please be with me. Let me feel Your presence today! In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 48

Your Prayers Matter

“So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.” – Acts 12:5, NIV

Peter was imprisoned by King Herod. The evil king had already killed James and now he planned to execute Peter. But while the king was plotting, the followers of Jesus were praying.

The night before Peter was to go to trial, an angel appeared in the cell with him. Peter followed the angel out, supposing that this was a vision or dream. But what happened was real. Peter must have laughed as he hurried down the dark streets, looking for his friend's house.

When he arrived, he told the servant that he was Peter. The servant reported this to those in the house and they laughed at her. But she was insistent and eventually others went to investigate and found Peter waiting on the porch.

Sometimes, we feel powerless to help hurting friends or family members. We think we can't do anything but that's not true. We can pray for our loved ones that God would intervene in their situations.

As you wait for God's answers, continue to seek Him and strive to honor Him with your choices. The Christians in Peter's story continued to meet together and pray, despite how grim the circumstances must have looked.

Prayer

God, when I'm tempted to focus on how powerless I feel, remind me again that prayer is powerful. Help me to stand strong in moments of temptation and continue to worship You no matter what's going on around me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 49

Speak Boldly

“Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel...” – Ephesians 6:19, NIV

August’s mother was a prayer warrior. She had prayed for her son faithfully since the moment she discovered she was pregnant. Though he was born two months premature and doctors gave him no hope, August’s mother continued to pray for him.

He went home three months after he was born and this only deepened her belief that prayer mattered. But when August started attending a public high school, she worried about him.

Her son’s science teacher was about to start a unit on evolution. She wondered how she could pray for her son during this time. That’s when she stumbled across Ephesians 6:19.

While Paul was imprisoned, he asked the Christians in Ephesus to pray for him, particularly that he would boldly speak about the Gospel. Regardless of the year, location, or country you live in, it’s hard to stand up for what you believe in!

But don't let the fear of what someone else might say or do prevent you from sharing the truth. You can offer Biblical viewpoints from a place of love and grace.

Prayer

God, give me the courage to speak up when I should. Guide my words so that love, grace, and mercy flow from them. Let me be kind and respectful towards everyone...even if they don't share my views. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 50

God's Provision

“When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.” – Nehemiah 1:4, NIV

Nehemiah was an Israelite living in Persia. When his brothers came to visit him, they reported about that the remaining Israelites were deep distress. Not only were they weary and discouraged, the wall surrounding Jerusalem had been broken down. The once magnificent wall had protected the city for years and stood as a testament to the faithfulness of God.

So when Nehemiah learned it had fallen into disrepair, he was deeply troubled. He wept over the destruction, confessing the sin of his nation.

Shortly after that, Nehemiah was serving the king of Persia. When the king noticed Nehemiah's distress, he asked what was bothering him.

Nehemiah prayed in the moment and explained the situation. The king granted him permission to leave and repair the city's walls.

God caused the heart of the king to be responsive and kind to Nehemiah's request. He was not only given permission to go, he was also granted protection and provision, too.

"And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests." (Nehemiah 1:8)

Is there a situation where you or a friend needs God's protection and provision? Take heart in the story of Nehemiah. God can and does provide for His children when they're walking in His will.

Prayer

God, thank You for dealing so graciously with me! I have need of (request) and I'm coming to You because I know You are the good Father. You always provide for Your children and bless us. So thank You for what You're about to do! In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 51

Stephen: The Forgiving Saint

Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. – Acts 7:60, NIV

Stephen was an enthusiastic preacher, sharing the Word of God with others boldly. Others tried to trip him up but he was able to refute dissension and false truths because God gave him amazing wisdom (Acts 6:10).

But he had angered some of the religious leaders of the day. So they captured him and put him on trial, making up lies and false witnesses against him. When Stephen began to refute their words, he was dragged outside and brutally killed. As Stephen was being pelted with large stones, he began praying for those who were harming him.

We find it difficult to forgive someone for a cross word or a negative performance review. Stephen could have been angry. He could have lashed out. He could have called down God to deliver him.

But he didn't...he leaned into God's will. What if you interceded for those who wronged you? The driver who cut you off in traffic, the spouse that doesn't support your

dream, or the cop who wrote you a ticket you didn't deserve?

Prayer

God, I don't like what (name) has done to me. In the flesh, I'm tempted to lash out. I want to call down and vengeance and take up a righteous cause. But by the power of Your Spirit, I choose forgiveness. I lay down my life just as Stephen did. Please forgive (name) for hurting me. Show them great mercy and kindness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 52

Spiritual Battles

"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." – 2 Kings 6:16, NIV

Elisha was a prophet living in Israel. When another king tried to attack Israel, Elisha knew it. He warned the king of Israel and the nation was spared many ambushes and attacks.

Finally, the king of Aram grew frustrated. He called his officers in, insisting that someone must be telling the king of Israel about his plans. He demanded to know who the spy in the room was.

One man pointed him toward Elisha, saying that he “tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom” (2 Kings 6:12).

Then the king of Aram decided to capture Elisha and end the problem. He rode into the city under the cover of night and surrounded it so Elisha would have no hope of escape.

When Elisha’s servant glanced out over the city the next morning, his knees started quaking. He quickly told the prophet what he could see. While his servant was focused on the physical army, Elisha focused on the unseen army

around them. The battle wasn't physical at all...it was a Spiritual battle between good and evil.

Like Elisha's servant, we don't always see what's happening in the spiritual realm. Maybe you pray for a friend to get a job but they keep getting rejections. Perhaps you pray for an aging parent to be cured but they still suffer.

It's easy to become discouraged in these moments and think our prayers aren't working. But just as there was a Holy army around Elisha, there is a Holy army surrounding you, too. God is fighting your battle for you!

Prayer

God, open my eyes to the Spiritual realm. Help me to remember that I am backed by the most powerful Warrior. I'd rather have You on my side than ten thousand soldiers. Please fight this battle for my friend or loved one. Let them experience peace and comfort during this time. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 53

Standing in the Gap

***"I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one."
– Ezekiel 22:30, NIV***

Mark's father died when he was an infant. His uncle stepped in to help raise him, teaching him all the things that a father teaches his son.

When Mark went off to college, he thought he was going to be a professional athlete. But during a game in his sophomore year, he was injured in a career-ending way. Now, Mark had to rethink what he wanted to do with his life.

He thought of his uncle and how he'd been there for him. He decided that as a coach he could influence dozens of young boys and show them the love of a father.

After he graduated, he took a job in a poor area where many of the children were being raised by single moms. He started each day at 5 am with prayer over the players that he was coaching.

In Ezekiel, the walls of Israel were broken down and God sought someone to repair them. Likewise, we are

surrounded by “broken walls” like fatherless children and widows in need of financial and emotional help. We can begin to rebuild those walls through earnest prayer.

Prayer

God, I pray for the widows and the orphans today. Show me how to bless them and tenderly care for them. I’m willing to stand in the gap...teach me how to do that. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

DAY 54

Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” – 2 Chronicles 7:14, NIV

Jim Cymbala is the pastor of Brooklyn Tabernacle Church in New York. The church has over 16,000 members and 6,000 people regularly flock to the services. There are so many people that the church now has 4 services to accommodate the growing spiritual family.

The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir is internationally known. They’ve won four Grammy Awards and launched the careers of dozens of singers.

But if you looked back at the church decades ago, you wouldn’t see some dazzling success. Instead, you’d find a humble man by the name of Jim Cymbala. He wasn’t a pastor and he didn’t go to seminary school.

The church services weren’t filled with people. In fact, the church had a membership of less than 20 people. The congregation couldn’t even afford the mortgage for the building they had purchased.

So what's the secret of their success? According to Jim, it's simple: prayer. In his book ***Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*** he talks about the church's prayer program and how they pray for people around the world. They pray around the clock for the needs of others and for their own needs, never ceasing to seek God.

Prayer

God, fill me with a desire for You! Turn me into a prayer warrior and show me how to intercede for others. Let me take every need and want to Your Throne. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 55

Confession Time

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” – James 5:16, NIV

Delaney had started viewing porn when she was a teenager. She was over at her uncle’s house and he didn’t have the adult channels blocked on TV. She was channel-flipping one night when she came across it.

As she got older and had computer access, she started regularly viewing it. She felt deep shame over the habit but she didn’t know who to talk to. She’d never heard of women dealing with sexual addictions.

When she was in her twenties, she started attending a women’s group at her church. After one service, she struck up a conversation with the lady next to her. The other woman revealed a struggle with porn and asked if Delaney would be willing to be her accountability partner.

According to ***Fight the New Drug***, 1 out of every 3 women watches pornography once a week. Although once viewed as only a male problem, porn is becoming increasingly among women of all ages.

Some magazines and media channels promote porn as a good thing claiming that it “empowers” women. But that’s simply not true. Porn distorts relationships and destroys marriages.

If you’re struggling with porn, find an accountability partner to talk with. You can also download apps like **Fortify** that can encourage you to avoid porn.

Prayer

God, help me to stop hiding my sin. Instead, send me a loving friend that I can share my struggles with. Forgive me for my sins and set me free! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

DAY 56

Praying for Your Country

“The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him...” – Daniel 9:9, NIV

When Daniel learned that the Israelite nation would be in captivity for 70 years, he grieved deeply. He mourned for his country and what it had become. But he didn't stop there—he entered into a time of deep prayer.

Like Daniel, we can look around at our own country and become discouraged. It may feel like no one is seeking God or doing what's right. Evil seems to be praised throughout the land.

You may be tempted to believe that there is nothing you can do. But one of the Christian's greatest weapons is prayer. You may not have any political influence or even be old enough to vote, but you can still impact your country in a profound way by praying over it.

In your prayer time, ask God that justice would be given to the oppressed, that leaders would make Biblical decisions, and the needs of the poor would be met. Pray over first responders like police officers and firefighters that they would be protected from evil as they go about their work.

Ask God to let there be a spirit of peace between the people in your country that Satan would not sow division.

Prayer

God, please show me how to honor You and build up my country. I want to be a light pointing others toward You. Wrap me in Your grace and love and let me share that with the world around me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 57

Peace in the Middle

***“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord himself, is the Rock eternal.”
– Isaiah 26:3-4, NIV***

Katie had a normal pregnancy. When she went into labor, she called her husband who met her at the hospital. They had prayed over and anticipated the arrival of their first son for months.

But as soon as he was born, doctors ushered the newborn away from his parents. That’s when Katie knew something was wrong. The doctor returned a few minutes later to explain that their child was born with deformities and would need a series of surgeries as he grew.

It was months before Katie was able to take her son home. Even then, he had many medical needs and was a sickly child. On the evening before one of his surgeries, she was terrified something would go wrong.

She managed to sleep for a few hours and when she woke the morning of the surgery, she felt deep peace in her soul. She knew whatever happened that her son was safe in God’s hands.

It wasn't until after she checked her voicemail messages later that day she understood why. Her friends had organized a prayer vigil and spent the entire night in prayer over her son.

If someone you know is going through a difficult time, you can pray that they would be held in perfect peace. Peace is not the absence of pain but the assurance of God's presence in the middle of it all.

Prayer

God, I pray for (name) that they would feel Your presence today. Grant them peace. Send worry, doubt, and pain far from them. Guard their heart so they would know that You are watching over them. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 58

Praying for Those who Doubt

“Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.” – John 20:24, NIV

Henry had been a pastor for over twenty years. He loved the little church he ministered over and delighted in serving them. He watched children grow up to become adults who brought their littles on to the Sunday services.

But when his own daughter returned from college questioning her faith, Henry felt like a failure. He searched and searched, trying to understand what he'd done wrong. He was terrified to share his daughter's questions with the congregation.

He finally reached out to a mentor. The older man listened to him as Henry poured out his heart, uncertain of how he should respond to his daughter. Finally his mentor said, “Do you know what Jesus did with Doubting Thomas? He let him to touch his scars. Jesus doesn't shoo away doubters, rather he invites them closer.”

When loved ones doubt their faith or question God, it can be upsetting. We worry that we've failed and we wonder how to show them love in the middle of their doubts. Follow

Jesus as your example—invite them to bring out their doubts. Let them wrestle through this season. You never know what Jesus will reveal to them.

Prayer

Jesus, I pray for (name). I think they're doubting their faith and that scares me. Oh show up in my loved one's life! Reveal Your gentle touch...show them Your scars and let them know they can trust you. In Your name, Amen.

DAY 59

The Advocate

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever...” – John 14:16, NIV

Connie was born deaf in the fifties when few resources existed for those with disabilities. But Connie’s older sister, Sandra, didn’t let that hold her back. She learned sign language so the two of them could always communicate.

Sandra let Connie follow her everywhere. They went to the same school and eventually to the same college. They lived together in the dorms and had the same circle of friends.

When Connie had a medical emergency, she had to be taken by ambulance to the hospital. A nurse was unkind to Connie and her behavior was abusive. Fortunately, Sandra arrived at the right moment. She quickly called for help and defended her sister.

Throughout her life, Sandra was Connie’s defender. She learned her sister’s language and spoke on her behalf, making sure her voice was always heard.

Just as Connie had an advocate, you do, too. You may not always know what to say or how to say it, but the Holy Spirit

that lives in you is your Advocate and Comforter. He defends and protects you as you go through your day.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for Your gift of the Holy Spirit. Help me to remember that I'm never alone because my Advocate is with me always. In Your name, Amen.

DAY 60

Prayers for Healing

"Go back and tell Hezekiah, the ruler of my people, 'This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the LORD.'" – 2 Kings 20:5, NIV

King Hezekiah was suffering from a terrible illness. He was close to death when the prophet Isaiah visited him. Isaiah told the king that he would die soon and warned him to prepare his household.

When King Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed and wept.

As Isaiah was still leaving the palace, God sent him back to the king. He proclaimed that Hezekiah would live for fifteen more years and the city would be saved from capture.

God healed Hezekiah when he called out to him. When we pray for others, we can pray for healing for them in several areas: healing from physical diseases and ailments; healing from addictions and spiritual darkness; and healing from emotional trauma and suffering.

Your prayers don't have to be long or eloquent. Hezekiah simply said: "Remember, Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes." (2 Kings 20:3)

Prayer

God, I pray for (name). I ask for healing in every area of their life. Heal them from sickness and pain. Forgive their sins and set them free from any addiction. Grant them peace and healing from emotional trauma. You are the great Physician and only You can provide healing. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 61

Red Sea Faith

“As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord.” – Exodus 14:10, NIV

The Israelites had been freed from Egyptian captivity after four hundred years. God had done a series of miracles to set them free. Now, they were journeying away from everything they'd known.

For the first few miles, the journey must have felt exciting. But as the hours passed, doubts crept in. Where would they go? How were they going to survive the harsh desert climate? Where would they find food and water? What was God doing in the middle of all this?

Then the news comes—the Egyptians have decided to pursue them. They're hemmed in by the Red Sea on one side and the cruel army on the other. They panic, demanding to know from Moses if God has led them this far only to let them die.

Have you ever stood in the same place? God led you out of one place but now you're dealing with new terrors.

Maybe God delivered you from an abusive marriage but now you're worried about how you're going to raise your children as a single parent. Maybe God delivered you from an addiction but now you're overwhelmed at the thought of sobriety.

What looked like a promising new beginning seems to be another ending...or is it? God used the Red Sea to show His power and strength. Just as He made a way for the Israelites, He can make a way for you. Lean into Him in the middle of your wilderness journey.

Prayer

God, I thought this was a new beginning but now it feels like an ending. Please give me faith to trust You during this time. Remind me again that You always come through during the Red Sea moments. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 62

A New Heart

“I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.” – Ezekiel 11:19, NIV

Jill was coming home from work when she noticed a letter from her car dealership. She opened it to discover there was a recall on the make and model of her vehicle. The brakes had failed in several minivans like hers resulting in injuries and deaths.

Bright and early the next morning, Jill arranged to take her van to the dealership. She was relieved that though she'd been at risk, no harm had come to her family.

When the job was done, Jill picked up her vehicle. Her faulty brake system had been replaced and she could breathe easier now.

Just like vehicle parts need to be replaced when they're faulty, so does the human heart. God specializes in heart transplants for those who have a "heart of stone". Using the gift of repentance, He calls His wayward child home offering a "heart of flesh" that's yielded to the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

God, when my heart is stony, please replace it. Don't let me become bitter and hard. Break me down in repentance and give me a supernatural heart transplant. You're the only One who can do this. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 63

Set Free

“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.” – Romans 6:6-7, NIV

Aiden was twelve years old, a foster kid living in a rundown neighborhood. He joined a gang and spent the next few years dealing drugs and engaging in other illegal activities.

Shortly after he turned twenty, Aiden was arrested. He was sentenced to several years in prison for his part in a home robbery. He had taken priceless family heirlooms an elderly woman and sold them for money.

When the woman requested to meet with him, Aiden was nervous. He expected to see hate in her eyes and hear condemnation fall from her lips. But he received neither.

Instead, a frail woman with a head full of white hair showed up and gave him the biggest hug. She explained that she'd come not to scold but to forgive. "I want you to know that new beginnings are possible at any moment." She said. "No matter what you've done or how far you've gone."

Like Aiden, you may have done things you're not proud of. But Your Heavenly Father is willing to offer you a new beginning. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9, NIV)

Prayer

God, I confess I've sinned. I want to be set free, to walk in a new beginning. Show me the right path and help me to walk it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 64

Stand Firm

“They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.” – Nehemiah 4:8-9, NIV

Nehemiah was a cupbearer in Biblical times. When he heard of the tragedies that had befallen Jerusalem, he was deeply troubled. The city’s walls had crumbled and many there lived in deep poverty.

King Artaxerxes noticed Nehemiah’s sadness and asked him what was troubling him. Nehemiah explained the situation, asking the king for permission to return to Jerusalem and restore the protective wall.

Nehemiah’s request was granted and the task was done in fifty-two days (Nehemiah 6:15). But the project wasn’t all smooth sailing and spiritual celebration.

The work was hard and grueling. If that weren’t enough, Nehemiah was continually taunted by the nations around him. His enemies even plotted together to overtake Jerusalem. But God was faithful and allowed the project to be completed.

When you think of new beginnings, you might think of fun and exciting opportunities. But new beginnings can bring spiritual opposition, too. Perhaps it's a parent that's not supportive of your faith or a co-worker that openly mocks you for your beliefs.

As you study Nehemiah, keep in mind that he did three vital things when he was under spiritual attack: First, he prayed to God, pouring out his troubles. Then he went on guard. Lastly, he continued the work.

Don't give up in the middle of your new beginning. You might be encountering trouble on every side just like Nehemiah. But stand firm in the place that God has called you, too. He has a purpose for this season you're walking through.

Prayer

God, this is hard. You called me to a new beginning and I was excited. But now I'm worried. Everything and everyone seems against me. Please give me the strength and the courage to stand firm and continue the work You've set before me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 65

Small Sprouts

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” – Ephesians 4:2, NIV

Jerry was visiting a state park with his grandson. He was delighted to show the boy the beautiful land that he'd spent years hiking. He pointed to a tree where he'd carved his initials when he was young. He walked his familiar prayer path, explaining that he often walked the trail when he was praying for various family members.

When the pair came to a familiar creek, they decided to rest for a bit. His grandson pointed out an area of the woods that was blackened by soot and ash. “What happened there, Grandpa?”

“That’s the forest fire,” Jerry said.

“Is it all dead?” The young boy asked.

Jerry pointed to a few green buds in the ground. “See these small sprouts? New beginnings are growing right now.”

Sometimes, it’s tempting to judge new or inexperienced Christians. You might be tempted to judge someone else for

their past. Maybe they went to prison, lived a party lifestyle, or made a string of bad choices.

But don't trample the tender green shoots just rising from the ground. Instead, focus on how you can mentor this Christian. Invite them into your growth journey and let your roots grow deeper together.

Prayer

God, send me a Christian brother or sister who needs a mentor in their life. Give me the boldness to share what You're working on in my life and the desire to love them right where they are. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 66

New Places

The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.” – Genesis 12:1, NIV

Shawna knew that God had called her to move to New York City. But she had no job there, no contacts, and no knowledge of the city. She prayed over her desire to go, hoping that God would provide a way.

Two years passed and Shawna went to community college. She took odd jobs here and there, eventually getting hired by a couple from New York. They needed a nanny for their children and Shawna instantly bonded with the two young boys.

Six months after the job opened up, the couple came to Shawna with a proposal. They wanted to move back to New York but they asked her to relocate with them. They would handle her moving fees and allow her to stay with them while she searched for an apartment.

Sometimes, God gives us a dream and doesn't fulfill it immediately. He uses these in-between seasons of waiting to strengthen our prayer lives, grow our faith, and teach us

more about His character. God can make a path in the wilderness.

Prayer

God, thank You for calling me to new adventures! I confess that sometimes new things scare me. But I trust Your hand. Please provide for me. Go before and behind me. I want Your will to be done in this place. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 67

Beautiful Birthdays

“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.” – Luke 6:35, NIV

Every year on June 12th, Walter throws a birthday party. He invites everyone he’s ever known and gives each guest a small gift. He provides a cake, live music, and all-you-can-eat BBQ dinner.

At the end of the party, Walter steps up to the podium. Then he reveals a perplexing fact—his birthday isn’t until December. But he considers June 12, 1989 his true “birthday” because that’s the day he met Jesus.

Before Walter accepted Jesus as his Savior, he was a member of a white supremacist group. He was in prison for just about every crime and his heart was filled with deep hate for anyone that was different.

But it was the persistence of a local pastor who ministered to the prison that got through to him. Jim was African-American and he never responded to any of Walter’s racist remarks or his cruel comments. Instead, he spoke kindly to

Walter and prayed for him. When Walter needed medical care, Jim became his advocate, making sure the other man was cared for.

Sometimes, God calls us to love people who aren't likeable. Sometimes, God asks us to stand in love and pray for them. But this isn't something you have to do in your own strength. Ask God to let His Divine love for this person to flow into your heart and spill into every area of your life.

Prayer

God, when others mock me, when they are unkind, when they hurt me, give me the grace to love them anyway. I can't do this on my own. I need You. Fill me up with kindness and grace. Show me how to love my enemies. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 68

Old Branches

“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”
– Romans 6:4, NIV

Luke was home during a thunderstorm when lightning struck the tree in his front yard. He loved the tree and didn't want to risk killing it. So he left it alone, hoping that the tree would eventually revive.

But a neighbor cautioned Luke against his approach. “If you don't remove the dead branches, the decaying wood will attract insects and infect the healthy parts of the tree. To save it, you need to do some pruning.”

Sometimes, God allows lightning to strike our lives—it might be the unexpected diagnosis, the sudden accident, or the loss of a job. These events are painful but they often lead to pruning our lives.

Maybe that diagnosis was a wakeup call that you need to work on your marriage or that sudden accident prompted you to restore a relationship with an aging parent. Perhaps the job loss brought a renewed commitment to handling your resources like a wise steward.

When you're facing a big change or new beginning in your life, ask God what He wants to teach you. Be open to the Holy Spirit's movement and act on what He reveals to you.

Prayer

God, show me what branches I need to prune in my life. Give me the courage to be brave and follow You in obedience. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 69

Through the Fire

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.” – Isaiah 43:2, NIV

Michael had lived on the same mountain with his father for years. His father had Parkinson’s disease so Michael had moved in to become his father’s caretaker. He loved the mountain and he valued the days he had with his father.

Then one day, a fire broke out on the mountain. A campfire had gotten out of control and become a forest fire. The mountain was becoming more engulfed by the hour so Michael loaded up his father and what would fit into their vehicle.

As they started down the mountain, Michael could see areas of the asphalt had caught on fire. He was terrified of the flames and said, “Dad, I’m not sure if we can get through this.”

“I’m right here,” his father calmly reminded him. “You’re going to be OK. Everything is under control.”

Sometimes, God calls us to leave everything familiar behind us and travel through a fiery path. This could be a loved one's illness, the loss of a job, or a difficult relocation. But whatever the trial, God is with you. This new beginning might be painful but it will not be victorious over you.

Prayer

God, help me. I see fire or floods rage around me and it terrifies me. Help me to remember that just as Michael's dad was beside him, You're beside me. Let me feel Your presence in the middle of this new beginning. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 70

Finding Forgiveness

“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” – Proverbs 28:13, NIV

Leslie kept getting a message that her computer’s hard drive was full. When she showed it to her son, he explained that she needed to get rid of some computer files. He advised her to start with old videos she’d downloaded and no longer needed.

As Leslie watched the files delete, she thought about her life. There were many things she wished she could delete—the painful divorce she’d walked through, the harsh words she’d spoken to her daughter that morning, the selfish choices she’d made a few months ago.

That’s when the words of Proverbs 28:13 came to mind. She realized that forgiveness was God’s way of allowing for new beginnings.

Because of Jesus’s sacrifice on the Cross, everything you’ve done wrong is covered in rivers of grace and mercy. In Isaiah 43:25, God says, “I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”

Prayer

God, thank You for Your forgiveness! Thank You for new mercies each moment. I've hurt others and myself by the choices I've made. Show me to repair these relationships and walk in righteousness. I want to honor You in everything I say and do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 71

The God of Second Chances

Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.” – Luke 23:43, NIV

When Whitney’s father died, she grieved him deeply. She had become a Christian late in life and had prayed for her father’s salvation faithfully every day. But now with him gone, she felt hopeless.

“My one desire has always been to see my father again in Heaven,” she explained to a friend. “Now, I’ll never get that chance. He never showed any sign of repentance even in his final days.”

Whitney’s friend gently reminded her of the thief on the Cross with Jesus. “That man lived stubbornly in his sin until the last moments of his life. Yet Jesus still welcomed him into Heaven when he recognized his need for a Savior.”

Sometimes, loved ones start their new beginning in the afterlife and they leave us with questions. We wonder if they believed in Jesus. We wonder if they’ll be there to greet us when we cross over.

God is the God of second chances and new beginnings. He doesn’t reject anyone that comes to Him—even if they seek

Him only in the last moments of their life. Your loved one may have turned to God and with their last breath echoed the cry of the thief on the Cross, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." (Luke 23:42)

Prayer

God, thank You for second chances and abundant grace. I pray for those I love who may not have a relationship with You. Open their eyes to their need. Woo them into a relationship with You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 72

Family Ties

“God sets the lonely in families...” – Psalm 68:6, NIV

Katie was a pharmacy store living in Oregon. She had several regular customers including a teenager named Jenna who came in to pick up her father’s medications.

As the weeks passed, the two formed an easy friendship. They often discussed books they enjoyed and traded recommendations with each other.

One day, Katie noticed that Jenna had skipped several of her regular trips. When she finally showed up, she bought several pregnancy tests and disappeared into the bathroom.

Katie talked to the scared teenager and reminded her that she would be OK. Throughout the pregnancy, she mentored the younger woman, walking with her through all of the doctor’s appointments.

When Jenna finally gave birth, she asked Katie to adopt and raise the child. Katie was shocked since she’d been infertile for decades. Raising a child was a dream that she and her husband had given up on years ago.

But they prayed over the decision and decided to adopt the new baby. Katie's still in contact with Jenna and she frequently Skypes her with the baby to show her how well she's doing.

Sometimes, God gives us a new beginning after we've given up all hope of having a dream fulfilled. But just because you've given up hope, it doesn't mean that God has stopped working for your good.

Prayer

God, I confess I've let some dreams die. I thought maybe they weren't part of Your will. But if You want me to walk the road of new beginnings, I will. Show me what to do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 73

When You Hope for Healing...

When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” – John 5:6, NIV

In Jerusalem, there was a pool where the waters were sometimes stirred by an angel. The first person to get into the pool was instantly healed of whatever disability or disease they suffered from.

Because of this, many people who were disabled, ill, or suffering would lie close to the pool. They hoped by camping nearby, they could enter the water.

One man had stayed by the poolside for thirty-eight years. Yet despite his faithfulness, despite his hopes, despite his dreams, he never manages to get to the pool.

When Jesus shows up, the man sounds like he’s given up all hope.

“Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.” (John 5:7, NIV)

Seeing the compassion in the eyes of Jesus, maybe the man felt a stirring of hope for the first time in years. He may have expected Jesus to take him to the water. But Jesus issues a simple command instead, “Pick up your mat and walk.”

When you’ve been praying for healing for months or years, it can begin to feel like time is working against you. You might think, “It’s been two decades—my marriage isn’t going to be healed. My daughter’s struggled with a drug addiction for sixteen years—she isn’t going to be healed.”

But time is no obstacle for Jesus. Whether it’s been three months or three decades, God can still breathe healing into your life and give you a beautiful new beginning.

Prayer

God, I see the months and years passing and I’m tempted to believe You’ve abandoned me. I’m tempted to lose faith that You will heal me. Oh, Jesus, intervene in my situation! Just like You had compassion over the invalid man, have compassion over me. Heal all of my broken, achy places. In Your name I ask this, Amen.

DAY 74

Sheltered

“For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.” – Psalm 27:5, NIV

Anna’s family had moved recently and she had to attend a new high school. She returned from school one day, troubled over mean girls who had bullied her publicly. She was aching from the sting of their words and the humiliation still made her face burn.

At home, she yelled at a younger sibling, acted flippantly with her father, and finally stormed out of the house. As she walked, a thunderstorm rolled in, splashing big rain drops on Anna.

She continued her walk, her tears mixing with the rain. After a few minutes, she heard the sound of boots on the pavement behind her. She turned to see her father, coming behind her.

He took an umbrella and held it over her as the two of them walked in the rain. He didn’t admonish Anna for her outburst or chide her for letting her emotions get in the way. Instead, he simply chose to be there, sheltering her in the rain.

New beginnings can be exciting and fun. Yet sometimes, they're painful and hard. But like Anna, you're not walking alone in the rain. Your Heavenly Father is holding onto and sheltering you during this season.

Prayer

God, help! This new beginning hurts...please be my Shelter, be my Comforter. Remind me again that I'm not alone, that You're walking with me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 75

What You Leave Behind

But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" – Matthew 14:30, NIV

Megan worked as a youth director in her local church. She loved working with teenagers and watching as God transformed their lives. She loved the city where she lived and strong ties to her local community.

But the offer came from a church a thousand miles away. They wanted Megan to be the director of the women's ministry. The idea excited and scared Megan. But she prayed over it and felt like God was leading her to it.

After several weeks in the new position, a beloved mentor of Megan's visited her. The older woman wanted to know how the job was going and if Megan was enjoying her work.

With a sigh, Megan confessed her discouragement. Some of the members of the church were older and didn't want to listen to her ideas. She was still struggling to find an apartment she could rent. Her car needed hundreds of dollars in repairs.

“It feels like everything suddenly went wrong,” She explained. “I thought I did what God wanted me to do, so why is this hard?”

Megan’s mentor listened then reminded her of Peter. “The moment he got out of the boat, the winds and the waves didn’t calm. They intensified. Just because you’re facing opposition doesn’t mean that you’re not exactly where you’re meant to be.”

Prayer

God, give me strength when the waves toss my anxious heart about. Help me to remember that You are here, that You see what’s going on. Fix my eyes on You and what You’re doing, not my circumstances. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

DAY 76

When You Need a Breakthrough...

***“So on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days.”
Joshua 6:14, NIV***

The plan would have sounded crazy to anyone else. Joshua, the leader of the Israelite nation was about to move into the Promised Land and take possession of it. This land would be his and his descendant's forever. There was just one problem...Jericho was a heavily fortified city.

So what did God ask Joshua and the Israelites to do? Did He tell them to begin making swords? Did He instruct Joshua to start sharpening blades or training young men for war?

No, God doesn't ask His people to do any of those things. Instead, He issues a simple battle plan: Walk around the city walls with trumpets playing. There's to be no talking—not even a whisper. On the seventh day, the army is to give a mighty shout of praise.

Joshua follows God's orders and on the seventh day, the walls fall. The Israelite nation enters it and destroys everyone except for Rahab and her family.

New beginnings sometimes require us to step out in faith. God asks us to walk in obedience and as we do, nothing appears to change. Life seems to go on just as normal...your son is still addicted to drugs, your spouse is still cheating, your daughter is still sick.

But don't discount what God is doing in your life. He can still breakthrough. What looks so impossible to you (the sober son, the healed marriage, the healthy daughter) is no challenge for the Almighty God.

Prayer

Father, help me to walk in obedience. Others might think I'm silly or crazy for listening to You. But I believe You're at work here. In the meantime, give me the grace and strength to keep waiting for this new breakthrough. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 77

A Better Tomorrow

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

Tim Keenan, a man living in Colorado, was inspired to recycle old mattresses. He started a business when he saw a need for the service—landfills in his area charge residents for throwing away mattresses because they don't decompose easily.

Tim had the idea to recycle the individual components of the mattresses—selling the wood for firewood and the springs for scrap metal. He even recycles the foam and fabric, so nothing is wasted.

But that's not all Tim does—he also wants to recycle lives, too. That's why he hires men that have recently been released from prison or that are residents of halfway houses. Tim named his business, A Better Tomorrow Recycling—an organization that wants to change lives, one mattress at a time.

Sometimes, it's easy to label certain people as "broken". It could be the single mom down the street, the former drug addict, or the man who was just released from prison. But

God is in the business of transforming lives and creating better tomorrows.

Prayer

God, thank You for the plans You have for my life! Help me to be an encouragement to someone who needs to know that You never turn anyone away. Let me be a light and comfort to that person today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 78

The Spark

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” – 2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV

Jana was in college, driving an old car when it began to sputter on the highway. She guided the car safely to the side of the road, thankful she hadn't been in an accident or injured by the failing car.

She reached for her cellphone to call her father who lived several hours away. But when she found her phone, she realized the battery life was too low for a phone call. As she was wondering what to do, a police officer knocked on her car window.

He gestured for her to push the lever for her hood. When she did, he went around to the front of the car and jiggled a switch. He signaled for Jana to start the car and to her amazement, the engine came to life. When she thanked the officer, he said, “That’s the thing—sometimes, there’s one tiny spark of life left that you can’t see.”

The words stayed with Jana who went onto become a minister who works at a local women’s prison. Her goal is to

be that spark for the women she leads. She enjoys watching as Jesus brings women who feel hopeless back to life.

Prayer

God, thank You for making me a new creation! Help me not to write off others because I think they're too far gone. Instead let me wrap arms of love and mercy around them, speaking Your truth over their lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 79

New Mercies

“Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” - Lamentations 3:22-23, NIV

The end of the year and the beginning of the next one often inspire people to contemplate their lives. What have you done in the past year that you’ve regretted?

Did you speak out of turn in a situation where you should have remained silent? Did you abandon a family member or friend in their time of need? Did you lean deeper into a habitual sin?

In the book of Ezra, the Israelite nation returns to Judah after seventy years in captivity. They were taken from their homeland and forced to live in Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. The seven decades of imprisonment was God’s way of getting the attention of His wayward child.

Sometimes, God lets us walk through darkness so He can redeem us from some sin in our lives. Maybe your husband discovered your pornography habit and asked for a trial separation. Maybe your retail therapy is costing you thousands of dollars in debt.

Rest assured that though these days might be difficult, God is still using them for your good. His plan is to redeem you from your sin and restore you to a right relationship with Himself. God's compassion and His faithfulness will never fail you.

Prayer

God, I confess—I haven't honored You with my words and deeds this past year. I acknowledge this sin and confess it before You. Please redeem my story and restore me in Your timing. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 80

When the Past Paralyzes You

“Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus.” – Acts 9:8, NIV

Saul had spent his life doing the “right” things—He came from the right family. He taught the “right” doctrine. He zealously persecuted anyone who didn’t live up to his idea of righteousness.

Then in one blinding moment, Saul learns that he’s stood for the wrong things. He’s failed to understand the Gospel of Christ. He’s struck blind and left wondering what’s next. He spends the next few days in earnest prayer.

Finally, a man named Ananias because of the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The other disciple lays hands on Saul and he can see again.

But just because Saul has become saved doesn’t mean that his past no longer exists. Rather than let his past paralyze him, Saul immediately begins speaking out about his newfound faith and the revolutionary change in his life.

If anyone could have let his past mistakes and sins stop him from being an effective witness, it was Saul. He had every

reason to wait it out on the sidelines. But he didn't. He chose to step forward in faith, despite his failures and his fumbling.

As you look forward to a new season, you might be overwhelmed by your past. Maybe you're tempted to believe that you should sit on the bench. But take a page from Saul's playbook and boldly proclaim the power of Jesus right where you are.

Prayer

God, thank You for forgiving me. When my past seems to haunt me, remind me to shine Your light and love wherever I am. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 81

Be Courageous

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” – Joshua 1:9, NIV

In the book of Joshua, readers find the nation of the Israelites in the middle of a new beginning. Their previous leader, Moses, has passed away. They’ve finished wandering in the desert for forty years.

It’s now time to enter the blessed Promise Land. While the moment may have felt exciting, it also had to feel scary, too. After all, there were most likely still giants living in the land (Numbers 13:31). If they were going to claim the Promised Land, they would have to fight for it.

Sometimes God calls us to fight for our new beginnings, too. Maybe God has called you to pray for your failing marriage, your wayward child, your failing health, or your unbelieving relative.

Don’t be afraid in this land of unknowns—for God is with you! He’s with you as you struggle to find a kind word to say to your spouse, as you long for your beloved child, as your

strength fades, and your loved one seems to slip farther away. You are not alone in this fight.

Prayer

God, help me! I feel overwhelmed when I think of (situation). I know that sometimes, You call us to fight for new beginnings. So I'm fighting the only way I know how—with prayer. You see what's going on here. Give me strength and courage for the battles ahead. Remind me again that You are near. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 82

Messy Lives

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” – Psalm 34:18, NIV

David was a man who passionately loved God. But that didn't mean his life was free from chaos, heartbreak, or drama. If anything, David had more than his fair share of these three things.

He lived with the chaos of war as he attempted to stabilize the warring factions of Israel. He survived the heartbreak of losing an infant child after his relationship with Bathsheba. He dealt with the drama from a son that tried to steal his throne and another who raped his sister.

But through it all, David did one thing right—he kept turning back to God. He didn't hide his sins or pretend he was doing OK. He poured his grief, anger, heartbreak, and betrayals out into the book of Psalms.

Many times when we think of a new year, we think of Hallmark perfection. You might long for the ideal marriage, the beautifully blended family, or the joy of holding a child after years of infertility.

But even in the middle of your chaotic and messy life, God's still with you. He doesn't abandon you when hardship and heartbreak coming knock on your door. Instead, He draws close and gently bandages your wounds.

Prayer

God, sometimes I'm tempted to think that my life needs to look perfect before I can approach You. Help me to let go of this belief...I want to invite You into every area of my life, especially the ones that are messy! Be my Guide; show me how to release my broken pieces. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 83

The Guardian Redeemer

“It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord’s hand has turned against me!” – Ruth 1:13, NIV

Naomi had two sons and a loving husband. But within the space of a few years, all three men died. Naomi was a widow and she was in deep despair.

She returned to her hometown but when the local women called for her, she no longer answered to that name. Instead, she wanted to be known as Mara, a name which means bitterness (Ruth 1:20).

As a widow in Biblical times, Naomi would have struggled to provide for herself. Not only is she facing the heartbreaking death of her sons and her husband, she’s now financially destitute.

But God provides for this widow through the hand of Boaz, a Godly man. He redeems both Ruth and Naomi from poverty by marrying Ruth.

As the Guardian-Redeemer, Boaz’s first child would not be considered from his lineage but from Naomi’s. The birth of this child was a sign of God’s care and provision for Naomi despite the hardship she suffered.

Sometimes, new beginnings feel bleak. It can seem as though God has abandoned you or turned away from your suffering. But just as Naomi's story proves, God can (and will!) redeem your heartbreaks.

Prayer

God, thank You for being my Guardian-Redeemer! You rescued me from despair just as You rescued Naomi through Boaz. Please grant me strength on this journey and bless this new beginning. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 84

Pressing Forward

“Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” – Philippians 3:13-14, NIV

Many years ago, a young man and his mentor were traveling to remote villages to share the good news of the Gospel. When they came to one town, there was an angry woman standing beside the road.

A deep puddle filled with mud prevented her from crossing. She was angry with her servants who were busy trying to hold onto her purchases from the general store. As she continued to berate the servants, the older man stepped in.

Without a word, he pulled the woman on his back and carried her safely across the road. He got mud on his own clothes but hers stayed in pristine condition. Rather than thank the man, the woman shoved him and went back to her journey, sulking now that the way was too long.

As the two men continued on, they walked in silence for several miles. Finally the younger man demanded, “Why did you carry that woman? She didn’t even have the decency to thank you!”

The older man looked perplexed. “I put her down hours ago but it seems you’re the one carrying her now.”

It’s easy to hold onto the past, especially if we feel we’ve been wronged. Maybe your ex-spouse has spread vicious lies about you, perhaps a friend you trusted betrayed you, or maybe your co-worker stole the credit for your project.

You don’t have to carry these hurts and betrayals into a new season. It’s time to release these burdens and like Paul, press on toward the true prize—spending eternity with Jesus.

Prayer

God, I release the burdens I’ve been carrying into Your hands. I don’t want to be so focused on my past that I miss the joy of the present. Help me to fix my eyes on You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

DAY 85

Be an Encourager

“But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.” – Acts 9:27, NIV

If there was one thing Barnabas was known for, it was his encouragement. He always had a kind word to say about everyone. He was quick to be a cheerleader to those around him.

He could expertly soothe ruffled feathers while still proclaiming truth. He never despised a small beginning—he could worship as easily with the new Christians as he could the mature believers.

When Barnabas heard that other Christians were afraid of Paul (then called Saul) for his past, he stood up for the new apostle. He took Paul under his wing and invited him into fellowship, even though no one else wanted him around.

Look around your own circles. Is there someone on the edge who could use an encourager to stand up for them? Maybe there’s a woman in your business group who needs you to vouch for her. Perhaps there’s a new attendee at your

church who could use an encouraging mentor. Don't be afraid to reach out and love on those around you!

Prayer

God, I want to be like Barnabas. Give me wisdom to spot those who need an encourager. Put Your words in my mouth that I would always speak light and life over others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 86

Cluttered Heart

“Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.” – 1 Peter 2:1, NIV

Recently, Cindy decided to move her bedroom. She’d been sleeping in a downstairs bedroom but recent construction noise from her next door neighbor had made it difficult to sleep. She decided to move her belongings into an upstairs bedroom that was further from the noise.

But she didn’t want to just haul her stuff from one room to the next. She wanted to clean both rooms thoroughly. As she started working, she quickly realized that her room had too much clutter. She made a pile for donations that she could give to a local church.

It took the weekend but when Cindy was done, she was happy again. Her new space looked cozy and comfortable. She knew she’d enjoy spending time in her bedroom again, now that it was clutter-free.

Sometimes, our hearts can get cluttered. In the verse in 1 Peter, he lists a few things that can cause emotional clutter: malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander.

But what's the solution if you're dealing with a cluttered heart? You need to release these sins by confessing them and seeking God's forgiveness.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9, NIV)

Prayer

God, I confess—my heart is cluttered with sin and pride. Please purify and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. I know You are faithful to forgive me. Thank You for that sweet promise. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 87

Shining Love

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

Hannah was a passenger onboard a large cruise ship. As one of the guests of the captain, she received a personalized tour from the man. He took the small group through the ship, stopping in at the bridge.

The captain had each worker introduce himself and explain what his job was. Everyone was listening intently and asking questions.

Finally, a five year old asked about the shiny brass. “Why does it shine?” He asked as he ran his fingers over it.

The captain smiled at the small boy. “It’s constantly polished. If it’s not polished every day, it won’t shine at all.”

When Hannah went to bed that night, she thought of the captain’s words. She’d stopped reading her Bible and praying a few months ago after a painful breakup. But she’d founded she missed spending time with God daily.

Now, she picked up her Bible and opened it to the book of Psalms. She started reading the verses, determined to rekindle her old habit.

Do you have a spiritual discipline that you've abandoned? What would happen if you picked it back up today?

Prayer

God, thank You for waiting patiently for me! You always woo me back to Your embrace. Help me to lean into my faith this week and shine Your love to those around me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 88

The Moment of Betrayal

But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same. – Matthew 26:35, NIV

When Jesus began to talk of His coming death, it was Peter who piped up first. "I'll never deny you even if I die with you." He proclaims this confidently thumping his hand over his heart.

But just a short while later, Peter goes back on his word. Not just once or twice but three times. Three times he has the chance to proudly proclaim that he knows who Jesus is. Yet each time, he betrays the Rabbi and his friend.

Can you relate? Have you ever betrayed what you knew to be true just so you stayed safe? Maybe you didn't stand up for that kid who was getting bullied. You just turned a blind eye.

Perhaps you didn't turn off that pornographic ad when it came across your phone screen. Maybe you didn't comfort a friend struggling with depression because it would mean you had to relive your most painful moments.

Betrayal flows through our veins. Like Peter, we're left to weep bitterly on the doorstep of failure. But this is not the end of the story. Jesus makes an interesting statement when he predicts Peter's coming betrayal. He says:

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31-32, NIV)

Did you catch that? Jesus used the words "when you have turned back"...failure doesn't have to be a permanent destination. You don't have to live in the shadow of your shame for the rest of time. Jesus has paid the price to set you free and enable you to walk in victory.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for the Cross! Thank You for holding onto me even when I fail. Please strengthen me. Help me to remember that failure isn't fatal and it doesn't get the last word. In Your name, Amen.

DAY 89

The Gift of Second Chances

“From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.” – Acts 13:13, NIV

Paul and Barnabas were traveling and ministering to the Christian church. While they were on their mission, they invited John Mark along. Although little is known about this Biblical character, many believe that John was a young Christian who was still newer in the faith.

During their mission trip, John suddenly leaves. No explanation as to why is provided in Scripture. Perhaps an aging parent became ill. Maybe the family business came calling and John couldn't say no. Perhaps he was unhappy with one of the missionaries. Whatever his reason, John Mark left.

Later, Barnabas reconnects with John and wants to bring him along on their next missions trip. Paul puts his foot down and the two argue so intensely over this that they eventually part ways.

What's interesting though is Paul's mention of John Mark years later in a letter to the Colossians. In Colossians 4:10, he says:

“My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)”

Not only does he instruct the church to welcome John. He also mentions that John has been one of his comforters during his imprisonment (verse 11).

Sometimes, God calls us to give a second chance to a brother or sister in Christ. It's a gift that God gives us every day and one He wants us to generously share with others.

Prayer

God, help me to give a second chance to those around me. Remind me again that I need Your grace daily, hourly even. Let me be humble and kind to the John Marks in my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 90

Facing the End

“The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.” – Matthew 28:5-6, NIV

The news begins to spread among the disciples: Jesus has risen! When Jesus appears in the flesh, the news turns into a celebration. Joyous wonder envelops the group of His followers.

But remind just three days ago and you'd find anything but joy. There's only pain. Suffering. The feeling of abandonment. The crushing weight of shame. The burn of the thorns. The sting of betrayal. The sound of flesh being ripped from bone. The bitter disappointment. The questions...

Why?! I thought I was following the Messiah...

Was He who He said He was?

He was coming to restore Israel's kingdom...what happened?

In moments like these, the questions swirl without answers. And you're left feeling like this is the end. The end of your life. The end of everything good. The end of joy.

But perhaps that's the paradox of the Crucifixion. What feels like the end is actually the beginning. The beginning of the Holy Spirit's work. The birth of the church. The start of a beautiful eternity.

The next time the enemy whispers in your ear, "This is your end", you remind him that so was the Cross...until three days later. This is the hope of Christians everywhere—that death does not have the final say. That death is not all powerful. That it isn't a foe we have to fear.

It's just another new beginning.

Prayer

God, thank You for Jesus and His sacrifice. Because of it, I can live with hope and comfort. When all I can see is the end, please remind me once again that You have a knack for turning the end into a beautiful beginning. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 91

Made in His Image

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. - Genesis 1:27

We all have moments in our lives when we question our worth and value. When we fail, we label ourselves a failure, when people reject us we can feel unlovable. We may feel like we're not capable or good enough to do certain things. We can easily fall into the comparison trap and think that other people are more deserving than us. So often we're quick to judge ourselves, yet we're so slow to accept ourselves for who the bible says we are. We're told right at the beginning of Genesis that God has made each one of us unique and special; He created us all in His image to reflect the many different facets of His love and beauty. It's easy for us to see our perceived flaws and focus on them but God sees us differently and He doesn't make mistakes. He doesn't look at us and base His opinion on what we do or achieve, He looks at us and sees all that He has made us to be - and He delights in what He sees!

Be truthful with yourself for a moment. What do you see when you look in the mirror? How do you feel when you see your reflection staring back at you? If that image is a

negative one, give it up to God today and ask Him to open your eyes to see what He sees.

And from now on, when you look at yourself in the mirror each morning, remember these words from Genesis 1:27 and choose to remind yourself that regardless of how you feel or what other people might say to the contrary - you are created in the image of Almighty God and you are loved more than you could ever know!

Prayer

Dear God, help me to remember that you created me in your own image and that I am worthy of your love. Help me to accept myself as I am and remind me each day that I am loved beyond measure. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 92

Chosen Before Time Began

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart.

-Jeremiah 1:5

No doubt you have heard this before but consider this a reminder: you are not an accident! You are not a fluke! You are chosen! Before the world was created and time began, God chose you. He had a purpose for you in mind long before you were born. That truth should bring some reassurance and comfort to us all.

As Christians, we are not powerless victims in this life - long before time existed, the Creator set apart a people for Himself. He didn't just randomly create us and then figure out what to do with us later. He knew exactly who we were supposed to be before one of us was ever born. He foreknew everything we would ever do and say and think, and He still chose us to be His own. What an amazing thought!

Maybe you feel like you need to prove yourself - that your value is based on what you do or how others perceive you. It's easy to lose sight of the fact that no matter what, God picked YOU! Whether it's big or small, no matter how insignificant it may seem in the grand scheme of life, God

saw what you were capable of, and He chose you from eternity past to do it. He stamped you with His seal of approval and said, "This is my child!"

Whenever life gets tough and it feels like nothing is going your way, remember that God chose YOU before time began. You are not a mistake or an afterthought - you have been hand-selected by the Creator for a specific purpose. Let that sink in today and be encouraged!

Prayer

Lord, I thank you for choosing me before time began. I thank you for your plans for my life, even if I don't know what they are yet. Be my guide as I choose to live out the purpose you have set for me. In your name, I pray, Amen.

DAY 93

You Are Seen, Known, and Loved!

You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. -Psalm 139:2

Our core desire as humans is to be seen and known. To be accepted and loved despite our imperfections and flaws. It's a need that we all share, and it's a beautiful thing when we are surrounded by those who see us for who we really are, and who recognize and honor our unique gifts.

But what about when we feel unseen, forgotten, or misunderstood? It's in moments like these that Psalm 139:2 can be an anchor of comfort for us. God gives us so much more than just seeing and knowing who we are. He knows everything about us, and He loves us deeply! He knows when we get up and when we sit down. He knows the thoughts that come into our mind, even before they do! His knowledge of us goes far beyond anything we could ever imagine or understand. It's amazing that the God of all creation knows us on such an intimate level and still loves us. And even more amazing is that His love for us is unconditional and never-ending.

God looks beyond your flaws and weaknesses; He looks at the heart of who you are. He knows your hurts, your disappointments, and all the ways you have stumbled in life.

But instead of condemning you or holding these things against you, His love covers it all and brings healing and restoration. You can lay aside all feelings of shame or discouragement and receive joy from knowing you are seen and known by the God of Love Himself! You don't have to worry about being accepted or approved, because His love is already upon you.

Remember today - you are special and valuable in His eyes, and He loves you more than you could ever imagine!

Prayer

Lord, thank You that You see and know me and that You love me so very deeply. Fill me afresh with the experiential knowledge of Your Love so that I can carry it in my heart today and always. Amen.

DAY 94

God's Special Possession

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. -1 Peter 2:9

When we read this verse, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed by the enormity of those phrases. Chosen people? Royal priesthood? God's special possession? It can all seem a bit much, especially when we're not used to thinking of ourselves in these terms. But this verse is a wonderful reminder of how precious we are in the eyes of God.

When we think about our own cherished possessions, we usually think of something deeply valuable, like a family heirloom or a beloved pet. Maybe even a particularly meaningful book or piece of jewelry. They are something to be highly treasured and held close, and we usually take special care to treat them with the utmost respect and reverence.

When God looks at us, he sees something much more precious than any earthly possession. He created us in His image and views us as His most precious possession, deserving of love, honor, and protection for eternity.

On days when we feel lost and alone, those words in 1 Peter 2:9 are a great source of comfort for us. We're reminded that God has set apart His people from the rest of the world, and the love He has for us will never fade or waiver. No matter our circumstances or mistakes - we are His, and He will never let us go.

So, take time today to stop and reflect on the magnitude of this truth. Rejoice in the knowledge that you are God's special possession and that you belong to Him. Allow yourself to feel the immense love and grace that has been extended to you. It's immeasurable and unending - don't ever forget it!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the reminder that I am Your special possession. I'm so grateful for Your deep and abiding love, and the assurance that You will never leave me or forsake me. Help me to remember this truth every day, and to live in a way that reflects it. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 95

You Are Fearfully & Wonderfully Made!

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. -Psalm 139:14

When you see a master craftsman at work, creating a beautiful piece of art or furniture, you can't help but be in awe of what they have created. The precision involved in the creation process is a joy to behold and the years of practice that have gone into developing the skills needed to create such amazing works is inspiring.

God is an even greater master craftsman than any of us could ever imagine, and WE are His creation! The Bible tells us that we are God's workmanship, lovingly created and crafted with intention, care, and attention to detail. From the moment we were conceived in our mothers' wombs, God was already forming us into His beautiful masterpiece.

This same sentiment is echoed in our verse in Psalm 139 – God's works are wonderful, and He has made us fearfully and wonderfully.

Sadly, most of us don't think of ourselves this way. We spend so much time comparing ourselves to others and

wishing we were more like them. The truth is - no two people on the earth are alike. Each one of us is a unique and beautiful masterpiece created by Him. Sometimes it's hard to fully appreciate that when all we see is our own flaws and failings.

Remember that when God looks at us, He sees a work of art - His beautiful masterpiece with no flaw or blemish. Although you may not feel worthy, the truth is that you are exactly who God created you to be. Embrace your identity as His wonderful creation and take pride in the fact that He has made you exactly who you are. And when the voice of comparison or doubt creeps in, remember these words: You are fearfully and wonderfully made!

Prayer:

God, thank You that you are the ultimate master craftsman, and for making me fearfully and wonderfully according to your perfect plan and design. Help me to remember that I have an identity as Your beautiful masterpiece. Fill my heart with joy and confidence in who You made me to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 96

Strength is All You Need!

My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

-2 Corinthians 12:9

As Christians, we have been given a precious gift — the fullness of God’s grace. As we’ve already established, our worth as Christians is not based on our own efforts or accomplishments, but on God’s love and acceptance of us. We may not always feel worthy in our own eyes, but 2 Corinthians 12:9 reminds us of God’s limitless capacity to love and accept us, even when we don’t feel like we can measure up to His expectations. He doesn’t ask us to be perfect or flawless — just to trust Him and believe in His love for us and HIS power to help us become all He created us to be.

Not feeling very strong today? Not sure how to handle a difficult situation? Remember that God is the ultimate source of strength, and He can give us the courage to face any challenge. We can ask Him to help us find the strength and grace we need in any situation. And no matter how feeble or unequipped we may feel at times, we are reminded that God’s grace is unfailing and that it’s HIS power and strength in us that is the game-changer - not our performance.

We may never be able to fully comprehend God's grace and love for us, but we can continue to be thankful for it and celebrate the fact that even when we feel weak or unworthy, He will always remain strong and faithful. If you find yourself feeling down today, remember that your worth as a Christian is rooted in His unimaginable love, acceptance, and grace. You are strong because He is strong. You are worthy because He says you are. Let God's strength fill you up today and be reminded that His grace will always be enough for anything life throws your way!

Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of your grace. No matter how unworthy I may feel at times, please help me to remember that my worth is rooted in You and Your unfailing love and acceptance. Fill me with Your strength today so that I can face any challenge with courage and confidence. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 97

He Knows Every Hair on Your Head!

And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. -Matthew 10:31

Do you ever feel like you don't matter? That your life is insignificant, and that your value has diminished? It's easy to feel this way in a world that often tells us we have to be and do more, or worse yet, fix up what is wrong with us. But God wants us to remember that we are deeply treasured by Him! We are worth so much more than what the world tries to portray. You don't need to do anything or act in any certain way - He simply loves you right where you are.

The truth is - we have always been precious to God, and He knows us even more intimately than we think. In today's verse in Matthew, Jesus reminds us that God is so aware of our lives and every detail of them - not only does He know our names, but He also knows every single hair on our heads! It's an incredible reminder of His deep love for each of us.

No matter what the world says, we must never forget that God considers each one of us to be uniquely and immensely valuable. We are all precious in His eyes, worth more than many sparrows, and He loves us so very much!

Is there an area of your life where you need a reminder of God's love and appreciation? Take a few moments to meditate on the truth of this verse and let His love overflow your spirit. You are loved, you are treasured, and you are beyond precious to Him! Spend time with Him today, and let His love uplift you. Take comfort in knowing that even the smallest details of your life are known by a loving God who is always with you.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for reminding me that I am so deeply treasured by You. Thank you that you know even the tiniest details of my life and that You love me just as I am. Help me every day to remember how precious I am in your sight. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 98

He is Perfecting You

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. -Philippians 1:6

We are all a work in progress, as God is continually at work in us, perfecting us and completing the good works He began in us before the beginning of time. This verse in Philippians tells us that whatever good work God has started to do in our lives will be carried out until the day of Jesus Christ.

God isn't interested in leaving us as we are; instead, He desires to shape and mold us into His image. You may feel like you're just getting started on your journey of faith, but in actuality, you've been on a path since before you were born. The Lord has always had plans for your life and destiny, even when it seemed like things weren't going to work out as planned.

God is the one who takes an active role in our lives; He is the one who perfects us and brings about change. He is the one who provides guidance, direction, and strength when we need it most. He is the one who molds our hearts and minds with His Word and makes us more like Him each day.

No matter how much work you feel needs to be done in your life, always remember the promise of Philippians 1:6. God is not finished with you yet. When the Holy Spirit starts working on something within you, it becomes an ongoing process of transformation and growth. You can trust that whatever He starts in you, He will finish; He is faithful to His promises. As you continue to walk with Him and stay by His side, you will see the fruits of His labor in your life as He completes the good work He has begun.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for being faithful and true in all that You do. Help me to trust You and have faith that whatever You start, You will finish. Guide my steps so I can follow Your path and be spiritually renewed each day. Amen.

DAY 99

He Thinks About You More Than You Know!

How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them!

-Psalm 139:17

God thinks about you. A lot! Did you know that? He created you; He knows everything there is to know about you, and yet every moment of every day you are on His mind. That's amazing to think about! When we try to wrap our heads around the love and worth that God has for us, it's impossible to grasp the sheer magnitude of it.

Psalm 139 is a beautiful Psalm about how God created us, how much He loves us, and how His presence is always with us even when we don't realize it. Verse 17 specifically talks about how "precious and vast" His thoughts are toward us. Just like the grains of sand on the seashore, the number of thoughts God has about us is so immense that we can't even comprehend it!

Here's the takeaway: God thinks about you all the time. No matter what's going on in your life, how much chaos you may be experiencing, or how much doubt and fear might be consuming you - know that God's thoughts toward you

are precious and abundant. He loves you and values you more than you can imagine.

Take comfort in knowing that no matter what your circumstances may be, you have a Father who knows you inside out and loves you no matter what. Take some time today to thank Him for loving you so much!

Prayer

Dear God, I thank You that even though you know me inside out, you think about me so often and your thoughts toward me are so precious. Help me to remember this truth whenever life gets hard and fill my heart with the confidence of being so deeply loved by You. Help me to soak up Your love and to rest in knowing that I am so precious to You! In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 100

You Are the Aroma of Christ!

But thanks be to God, ...who uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. -2 Corinthians 2:14-15

Regardless of how insignificant we may sometimes feel, this verse reminds us of the truth - that we have been given value beyond what our human minds can comprehend. We are not merely a speck in the vastness of humanity, but we have been made beautiful and unique in God's sight. He has chosen us to be His fragrance of Christ and to spread His message throughout the earth.

Consider the fragrances you find pleasurable - the sweet smell of honey, the citrusy aroma of freshly cut oranges, or the calming scent of lavender. These scents bring joy to our senses and remind us how precious life can be. Just as these fragrances are pleasing to us, so is the fragrance of our lives to God. Just as our physical senses can perceive certain smells, God takes pleasure in the fragrance of Christ that He has imparted to us. We are his beautiful aroma, like a pleasing scent wafting through the air.

Expensive, luxurious perfumes are made up of rare and precious oils that create an aroma that often lasts for many

hours. In the same way, our worth in Christ is lasting and valuable beyond measure - and it is God who makes us this aroma of Christ to the world!

We can rejoice in knowing that our lives are precious and of great worth to God. He sees us as an offering, a pleasing smell that brings Him joy. Friend, may you never forget just how beautiful you are, whose fragrance you bear, and the value that you have in His eyes. You are the aroma of Christ - may it be your joy to spread this beautiful fragrance throughout the world.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for making me the aroma of Christ and that through the fragrance of my life, others may come to know You better. Help me to remember that I am of great worth in Your sight. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Dr. Damian Hinton As the Senior Pastor and Shepherd of Life Changing Ministries, and he is also the founder of The Apostolic Network of International Churches and Ministries, he has a passion for the presence and power of the Word of God. He is a graduate of the historic Morgan State University, in Baltimore, MD, with a Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy, and has a Masters of Divinity, Masters of Theology and Doctorate Degree from world-renowned, Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. However, what is most valuable to him is his loving wife, Cheryl, and his five children, Alex, Vashti, Isaac, Manasseh, and Keyona.

