



21 DAYS OF PRAYER

A Guide For Prayer
2018 FALL EDITION

HOW TO USE THIS PRAYER GUIDE:

In this guide, we're going to help you understand how to pray more effectively and to hear God more clearly. The first 7 days are devoted to hearing God while the second 14 days are all about your prayer life.

While this guide will help give you specific topics to pray about, we want you to use it as a daily devotional as well. As a result, here is a specific guide of the sections that will be included each day and how you can effectively use these sections to help you grow spiritually.

SECTION 1: SCRIPTURE READING

The Scripture reading is a passage of Scripture that we want you to study. You will notice that we only reference the passage and do not include it. That is because we want to encourage you to open a physical Bible, preferably not an electronic form, and read the text. (Recommended Time: 5-10 minutes)

Once you have read the passage, reread it a second time and use a highlighter or pen to underline key words that stand out to you in the text.

SECTION 2: DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

The devotional thought is an aspect of leadership that we all face and will help you jump in to today's thought. (Recommended Time: 1-2 minutes)

SECTION 3: JOURNALING

The third section is a place for you to journal. Here we want you to write your observations about the text as well as how you believe the Holy Spirit is challenging you to grow you in the specific area. You can get as detailed as you like in this area. (Recommended Time: 5-10 minutes)

SECTION 4: PRAYER

The final section will give you a daily prayer challenge to consider in your personal prayer time. However, in addition to the daily prayer challenge, we also encourage you to take the time to consistently pray daily about a short list of items that you will write down on the next page. Pray the daily Scriptures over your own life, pray about the daily challenge and then pray for your specific list that you will have written down for the duration of the 21 days. (Recommended Time: 5-10 minutes)

When using all four of these steps, each day can take as few as 15 minutes and as long as 35-40 minutes. By doing these steps, this will help you to not only pray over the 21 day period, but also to build a healthy and habitual devotional and Bible reading life as well.

21 DAY SPRING PRAYER GUIDE

Dear Reader,

If there was one thing that I desire for Heartland Church, it is that we would be a sincere people of prayer! After all, every great revival, move of God and movement was birthed out of a prayer movement. Find praying people, and you'll find God's hand.

Since I can remember, Heartland Church has given the beginning of our year to 21 days of prayer. As we approach the fall, it's a sort of a new start for many, especially with the school year starting up again. As a result, it's important for us to get our spiritual eyes and ears refocused on our heavenly Father. But our emphasis is different in the fall than it is in the spring.

Our emphasis in the spring is to pray and fast. Our emphasis in the fall is to pray and feast. We feast on God's word, we feast on His presence and we make sure our hearts are aligned in Him.

I want to encourage you to join us on Saturday mornings during this 21 Day Prayer period to pray with us corporately from 9am-10am. The first 15 minutes is a time of worship and includes a short thought from a team member, our prayer leader. The next 30 minutes is individual alone time in prayer and the final 15 minutes is corporate prayer. It's important for us to seek God with all of our heart and together, we'll ask for His will to be done in our lives.

Understanding the necessity of prayer is not enough. In order for it to become a part of our life, it needs to become something we look forward to doing. I'm convinced most people don't enjoy prayer because they have never been taught how to pray. That's where this simple prayer guide can help. Enclosed is my personal effort to give you a guide to help you develop a devotional life with Jesus using Bible reading, journaling and prayer.

This is our attempt to make prayer more personal, and this booklet is designed to bring joy into your time with God. When you discover the beauty of daily conversation with Him, you'll experience the presence of God that will change your life.

Once you learn how to pray, prayer can become a part of everyday life.

Prayer changes everything!
Pastor Dusty Dean

PERSONAL PRAYER TARGETS:

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

Pray for those in authority and those under your authority.

MY GOVERNMENT

President: _____

National Leaders: _____

State Leaders: _____

City Leaders: _____

MY FAMILY

Spouse: _____

Children: _____

Parents: _____

Siblings: _____

Extended Family: _____

MY CHURCH

Pastors: _____

Small Group Leader: _____

Small Group Members: _____

MY LIFE

Employer: _____

Co-Workers: _____

Employees: _____

Teachers and Professors: _____

HOW DO I PRAY SCRIPTURE?

One of the most powerful things that you can do is pray Scripture. Yet I've found that when I challenge our church to make this a daily habit, most people don't know what I'm talking about. As a result, I want to share with you three practical methods to pray the Scripture—none of which require special tools or advanced theological training.

1. THE PERSONALIZE-IT METHOD

Simply substitute your name (or the person's name you are praying for) in the place of pronouns or nouns in Scripture.

For example, if I were personalizing John 3:16, I'd write something like this: "For God so loved Dusty, He gave his one and only Son so that Dusty would not perish but have everlasting life."

Or, for Philippians 1:6: "He who began a good work in Dusty Dean will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Put your name in the text, and you'll strengthen your faith and encourage yourself.

You can also re-write the verse as if God is talking directly to you. For example, Philippians 1:6 would be: "I, who began a good work in you, Dusty, will carry it on to completion."

2. THE PRONOUNCE-IT METHOD

The "pronounce it" method of biblical meditation is an easy method for meditating on Scripture — and getting every ounce of spiritual nutrition you can out of it.

You start with a verse and read it over and over again. Each time you read the verse, you emphasize a different word. It's the simplest way to start unlocking Scripture. You can do it even if it's the first time you've ever opened up a Bible. It's simple but amazingly powerful. Each time you emphasize a different word, you get a different perspective.

Take the first part of Colossians 3:16 for example. The verse says, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you" (NLT).

The first time you read the verse, emphasize the word "let." "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you." What does it mean to let? It means "give permission." I open the door; it's my choice. We have to choose to let the Word of God dwell in us richly.

Then, read the verse again and emphasize "word." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." That means I need to get God's Word in my mind.

Then, emphasize the third word of the verse, "Christ." You're not dwelling on what some philosopher, guru, or talk show host has to say. You're dwelling on the words of Christ! I don't want to let the word of the world dwell in me, but I do when I spend my time watching TV instead of reading God's Word.

Then you focus on the word "dwell." "Let the Word of Christ dwell within you." The word "dwell" means "to hang there for a long time." It's not rushing through God's Word so you can get on with the rest of your day. To let the Word of Christ dwell in you is to let it live within you.

Then you stop and emphasize the word "in." It's good to have the word of Christ around you. You can put the Word of God on a plaque or a bumper, but it won't change your life until you let it in your life.

Then focus on the word "you." The Bible isn't just God's Word for your pastor, a seminary professor, or your Sunday School teacher; it's God word for you! The Bible is instruction for every single believer.

Finally, emphasize the word "richly." What does that mean? It means the opposite of poorly. In other words, richly means lusciously, extravagantly, and profoundly. God doesn't want his Word to be a poor substitute in your life. He wants it to create beauty in your life.

See all the great jewels you discovered in this passage just by focusing on one word at a time? You didn't need a seminary degree or a great library of reference tools. You can do this!

3. THE "PRAY-IT" METHOD

In this method, you put whatever passage you're studying in first-person and pray it back to God. Using this method, you don't have to wonder whether you pray or read the Bible first during your quiet time. You do them together! And, you know your prayer will be answered because it's in Scripture.

Here's how you might do it with Psalm 23: "Thank you, Lord, for being my shepherd. Thank you for making me lie down in green pastures. Thank you for leading me beside quiet waters. Thank you for restoring my soul. Thank you for guiding me in the paths of righteousness for your name's sake."

Stop and think about the prayer for a bit. Has God ever made you lie down? Sometimes we don't have enough sense to rest or relax. Sometimes God forces you to lie down. Sometimes he makes you lie down in green pastures because you are not taking care of yourself. That's something to thank God for!

Have you ever felt down and depressed and were restored by God? Does

God lead you down right paths? Of course! Psalm 23 provides a great opportunity to thank God for what he has done in your life.

Meditating on Scripture using the pray-it method will open up a whole new world to you in God's Word.

Day 1 | Sunday, August 5th

PROMISE #1

I WILL GIVE YOU STRENGTH

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 40:29-31

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

Some time ago, I was really struggling through an extremely busy season in our church. I was working long hours, coming home late and seemingly never truly getting enough crossed off the list of to-do's.

I remember telling Kendra that our family needed a vacation so that I could take some time to get away. We spent a few days away, but when I came home, I was surprised that the feelings that I had when I had left were still there. I just had returned from a trip, but I still felt the same tired feeling.

That is when I realized that there is a difference between being tired and being empty. When you are tired, a good night's sleep can help you feel better for the next day or next week's tasks. However, when you are empty, that is not something a vacation can fix. Emptiness is something that nothing on this earth can replenish; it's only something your heavenly Father can satisfy.

When our cups are empty, when it feels like we are never going to get it right, God tells us to come to Him. Our human strength is limited, but God's power is limitless. When we are operating in our own strength, we will always burn out. God promises that when we slow down, turn to Him, and move at His speed, we will never grow weary.

That's why I love this promise in Isaiah 40. "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength." I think the last part of the verse is my favorite: "They will run and not grow weary."

I want to encourage you today: If you are feeling tired, then take a nap. But if you are feeling empty, then turn to God and let Him fill your cup again and renew your strength.

JOURNALING:

In your life right now, would you say that you are more tired or empty?
Where is your hope? What or who do you look to for security, comfort, or strength?
What step could you take today to begin living as if this promise is true?

PRAYER:

Take a few minutes and read this promise from the Lord out loud and then ask the Lord to fill you up today in the places that you are empty in your life.

Day 2 | Monday, August 6th

PROMISE #2

I WILL HELP YOU WHEN YOU'RE SCARED

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 41:10

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

Fear drives our decisions about all kinds of things — from what to wear, where to go to school, and which career to pursue. Fear can keep us in relationships longer than we need to be.

Fear is a big deal in our story with God. In fact, the most repeated commandment in the entire Bible is to “fear not.” I read recently where someone added up all of the “fear not’s” and apparently, there are 366 of them in the Bible. That’s one for every day of the year including leap year!

Consider this statistic: People in the western world take more medication to sleep at night than the rest of the world takes in a lifetime. I find it interesting that the society with the most money, the most material blessing and the most assurance about the necessities of life struggle the most with fear.

When we belong to God, fear doesn’t have to control us. Our God is the same God who spoke creation into existence. There’s no need to panic and no need to fear when He’s with us. He promises to help us when we’re scared, to hold us steady, and give us the strength to face the fears in our lives.

You need to know that the remedy to fear is always faith. Whenever you are feeling fearful, you must do things that help increase and feed faith. Fear and faith get fat on what we feed it. The truth is, in your life right now, you are feeding one of them and whichever you feed the most will rule your life. Remember this: The antidote to fear is faith and the sound track of faith is worship! So feed your faith through worshipping Jesus today and let Him minister to you!

JOURNALING:

What are you scared of right now?

What has that fear caused you to do or prevented you from doing?

How do you need God to help you and strengthen you in that situation?

PRAYER:

Take these fears that you journaled about and lay them before God and turn some worship music on. Confess your faith in Jesus is higher than your fears.

Day 3 | Tuesday, August 7th

PROMISE #3

I WILL NOT STOP LOVING YOU

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 54:10

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

Have you ever really stopped to consider how incredible it is that God's love for us NEVER fails or stops? Who could love like this? No one has a never-ending love. No person loves with perfection—at least, not any person. But God is not a person. Unlike our love, His never fails. His love is immensely different than ours.

I find it interesting that when Paul says "love never fails" in the book of I Corinthians, he uses a verb for the word "fail" that is also used in another passage to describe the demise of a flower as it falls to the ground, withers and decays. Contrary, God's love, according to Paul, never falls to the ground, never withers and never decays. It is a permanent love.

No matter how hard we try, we will always let other people down. We'll forget a birthday, say the wrong thing, misread a social cue. Even when we want to love each other well, we still fail. But God's love, it never fails.

God doesn't change His mind or renege on His covenants. When we asked Jesus into our lives, we became part of God's family forever. No matter how messy our lives get or how troubled our hearts are, God does not abandon us. He promises to love His people and take compassion on us even when our lives are in chaos.

So many people are struggling with this sense that "I'm not good enough for God" and yet God's love for you is not contingent on your goodness. Accept this gift today from God. You will never let him down to the point that His love changed. How freeing is that?!

JOURNALING:

Do you ever feel unlovable? What makes you feel that way?

When God says His love is unshakable, how does that make you feel? Does it affect how you interact with Him?

Is there any area of your life where you need God's peace and compassion? Spend some time in prayer and tell God how you feel.

PRAYER:

Where do you sense condemnation? Give it to God today and let Him free you!

Day 4 | Wednesday, August 8th

PROMISE #4

I WILL ALWAYS TAKE CARE OF YOU

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 13:5

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

The love of money—a craving for money as the source of our security—is an epidemic in our world, and maybe especially in our nation. So how do we kill the craving within us?

Some of the most difficult texts in the Bible are when God commands us to feel or not to feel something. How many times have we told others, “I can’t unfeel this!” Yet, here is God doing exactly that!

In a word, the answer is trust. Yet, trust is difficult to give, especially when it comes to money and stuff. Trusting a friend with your car opens you up to financial liability. Trusting your teammate with a project could put your career on the line. Trust makes us vulnerable, and no one likes to feel vulnerable.

So the here’s the bottom line: We have to preach God’s promises to ourselves until they change us. We’ll never obey God by just waiting for our feelings to change. We must get up and preach the truth to ourselves as often as it takes.

God knows about the issue of trust, which is why He promises to never forsake us. We trust God with the future because He will always take care of us. We don’t have to worry about if we’ll get the job or if we’ll have enough because God promises to be with us. And He will always be enough.

JOURNALING:

Is there any area of your life where you are not content?

Where did that discontentment come from?

What would it look like to trust God in that situation?

Do your feelings about the future change knowing God will not leave you or forsake you?

Why or why not?

PRAYER:

Preach to yourself in the Lord about trusting God. Find trusting verses and read them. Ask the Lord to help you learn to trust Him with all your might!

Day 5 | Thursday, August 9th

PROMISE #5 I WILL FULFILL THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART

Scripture Reading: Psalms 37:4

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

Think about the last time you wanted something desperately. Maybe it was a car, an office, or the person who eventually became your spouse. We've all experienced longing — this sense that if we could just get that one thing our lives would be complete. But they never are, are they?

So often, we miss the true message of Psalm 37:4. In context, this Scripture reveals that before the desires of our heart are answered, there is another step often left out. That step is to "take delight in the Lord."

When we begin to delight in the Lord, our priorities, needs and desires begin to change. We take on his heart and the things that matter to Him begin to matter to us. That kind of alignment always brings about blessing because our desires are now shaped by His perfect will.

God isn't like an Amazon account where we type in our wish list and then get what we want with two day shipping. He is our God and by our love for Him, we allow our thoughts, goals and lifestyle to be shaped by His perfect will.

The only thing that will truly delight us, now and forever, is the Lord. His love makes us whole. And as it does, a funny thing happens. Our desires begin to change. What's important to God becomes what's important to us. What makes Him happy is what makes us happy.

God promises that as we keep company with Him, He holds nothing back from us. In Him, our joy is complete.

JOURNALING:

What is the desire of your heart today?

What is the longing you are hoping that desire will fulfill?

What's one way you've seen God fulfill a desire you didn't know you had or answered a prayer in a way you didn't expect?

PRAYER:

Ask God to help you make sure that your desires for your life match up with His desires for your life. Ask for more of His heartbeat through your life and mind so that you have his heart.

Day 6 | Friday, August 10th

PROMISE #6 – I WILL GIVE YOU PEACE

Scripture Reading: John 14:27

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

I wonder how many Christians have really come to understand the great fact that peace is our inheritance. Peace is what Jesus has left us. It is fundamental and cannot be taken away from us by any circumstance. That is what He means by, "I do not give to you as the world gives."

How does the world give peace? If you were troubled and you went to a doctor who was not a Christian and asked him, "What can I do to gain peace?" what would he tell you?

"Take a trip. Go to Hawaii. Get away from it all." In other words, "Change your circumstances. Go to a place where nothing bothers you, where everything is peaceful around you. Then you can be at peace."

But Jesus says, "I give peace right in the midst of trouble, right in the midst of distress and turmoil and heartache and pressure. I can impart peace to your heart right there, and not as the world gives." Why? Because we can return to that basic relationship we have--"You in Me, and I in you." Out of that comes the guarantee that He is working out His purposes. He will bring us to the end of the trouble. He will still the storm and quiet the waves. We rest in the boat, content, knowing, "No water can swallow the ship, where lies the Master of ocean and earth and sky." That is peace.

"Peace I leave with you. [Therefore]," the Lord adds, "do not let your hearts be troubled." That is addressed to you! It means you do not have to be upset and anxious, weary and worried. "Do not let your hearts be troubled." How? By returning to that place of rest. Return to the phone booth and rest there in the confidence that Superman is within and will work the situation out for you and will accomplish His purpose through you.

JOURNALING:

What does it look like for someone to be at peace?

Have you ever been in a difficult situation where you've experienced unexplainable peace? What happened?

Is there anything you're stressed about today?

PRAYER:

Philippians 4:6-7 reminds us that peace and prayer go hand in hand. Take some time and pray and let the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, guard your heart and your mind.

Day 7 | Saturday, August 11th

PROMISE #7

I WILL GIVE YOU REST

Scripture Reading: Matthew 11:28-30

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

Matthew 11:28-30 is one of my favorite passages in the Bible. In this passage, Jesus was addressing the people of Israel who were feeling overwhelmed and weighed down with the legality of all the “to-do’s and don’ts” of the Pharisees. This religious barometer kept people always feeling guilty, frustrated and dissatisfied in their faith.

Jesus compares that religious entanglement to yoke that oxen wore. They were bulky, wooden harnesses that allowed them to pull farming machines. Weighed down by their yoke, the work was exhausting — even for a big, strong ox.

It is in the midst of this religious setting that the Lord makes a very gracious invitation to all who would want to experience the relief, joy, and the blessings of His life through a grace/faith relationship with Him. This is an invitation aimed at all, at the curious and at the convinced to bring them to a place of a deeper level of commitment in which they are to take His yoke and learn from Him as committed disciples.

We all know what it feels like to be weighed down from religion and from life. We don’t need to have seen a yoke to understand what it feels like to be burdened. The burdens of life weigh us down and wear us out. What Jesus offers us is an exchange: Take off the yokes we’re carrying and attach ourselves to Him instead. Jesus promises that when we work alongside Him, we’ll find rest for our souls. No longer weighed down by our old burdens, Jesus teaches us a new way of operating and brings purpose to what once felt like meaningless toil.

JOURNALING:

What’s wearing you out or weighing you down?

What would it look like for you to exchange your yoke for Jesus’ yoke?

PRAYER:

What kinds of things are burdening you? What areas of your walk are you walking around feeling condemned because you don’t measure up? Take them to Jesus right now. Tell Him about them and let Him speak to you.

Day 8 | Sunday, August 12th

PROMISE #8

I WILL GIVE YOU LIFE TO THE FULL

Scripture Reading: John 10:10

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

Every day, our hearts and minds are busy with what to think, what to feel, and what will give us the most satisfaction. Jesus promises to simplify our choices and calm our restless hearts. Jesus left heaven and came to Earth with a single-minded purpose: to give us life to the full.

I love that. I love that's the kind of God that he is.

When I was growing up, we had a chart on the wall for bad behavior. Every time that we messed up, our name was written on the board or a check mark was put beside us. I was constantly living in fear because, truthfully, my name was on that board often!

When my daughter started kindergarten, I found out that her school didn't just have a chart for when kids acted poorly, they had one for when they behaved well too! What an incredible concept! What I was quick to learn was that my daughter was more motivated out of a desire to receive a reward than she was motivated by an imposing punishment.

I love that we serve a God that is a rewarder. I love that instead of just commanding obedience, he promises a life of following him while costly, also receives rewards. Even our weakest efforts are an opportunity for him to shower praise and blessing on us.

Knowing this gives us a weapon against every sinful temptation, deceptive desire, and worldly distraction that Satan uses to harm us and steal our joy. Maximum fulfillment comes only in relationship with God, and Jesus is the only way to find it.

JOURNALING:

Have you experienced harm from seeking satisfaction outside of God?

What does it mean to you to have life to the full? Ask God if your definition of fulfillment is the same as His.

PRAYER:

Take some time and thank God for the promise of a full life. You have so much to be thankful for. Repent for seeking life outside of him and ask Him to remind you of where real fulfillment comes from.

Day 9 | Monday, August 13th

PROMISE #9 I WILL PURIFY YOU

Scripture Reading: I John 1:9

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

One of my favorite things about the love of God is that He doesn't just forgive us, but takes the time to purify us as well.

Now I need to be clear: I love purification after it has taken place. I hate it when it's happening. After all, purification only happens in a process. Gold is refined by fire. Water is purified after being poured through a filter. Those things aren't fun. They sting, they hurt and they aren't something we long for.

The process of purification will feel lonely at times. Job claimed that he couldn't see God regardless of whether he looked to the north, south, east or west (Job 23:2-9). Of course, Job was wrong. God was with Him, but it didn't FEEL like it in that moment.

Later, Job had a realization in the middle of his purification process. He said, "[God] knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." (vs 10). You've probably heard it said that God loves you, but loves you too much to let you stay the way that you are.

The truth is the sin of our circumstance causes most of us from embracing our spouses, our future, our calling, our destinies. Maybe that's why David didn't just accept purification, he ASKED for it in Psalm 51. He knew that purification made him better, richer and fuller. What about you? What needs to be purified in your life?

JOURNALING:

What areas of your life need to be purified?

Why do you think God would want to purify us?

What do you think that process looks like?

PRAYER:

This is a dangerous prayer to pray but if you are ready, ask God to purify your heart.

Day 10 | Tuesday, August 14th

PROMISE #10 I WILL SAVE YOU

Scripture Reading: Romans 10:9-10

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

God promises that when we put our faith in Jesus, we will be saved. Salvation isn't something we do, it's something God does for us.

For many of us, the most difficult part of salvation is not believing that Jesus is who He says He is. It's continuing to believe, through all our ups and downs, that God will make good on His promise — that we have been and are being saved.

Sometimes, as we talk about this powerful truth of the gospel, Christians tend to quickly skim the page and move on to the next point. "I know all about salvation... I don't need to read this one."

But if that is true, then why are so many Christians constantly caught up in striving to attain God's love. We're often guilty that we're not doing enough or we're fearful that we messed up as if God's love for us is conditional in us being good enough.

I want assure you that Christ saves. He loves, he forgives and he saves. If you have put your trust in Christ and begun to walk out this salvation through your life—not just aimlessly doing your part to jump through hoops—you need to know that Christ covers you. When the Father looks from heaven at you, He doesn't see you—He sees Jesus, the substitute that took your place and endured the wrath of God for your sin.

You aren't disgusting, you aren't too far gone, you haven't messed up so much that God doesn't love you. Be rest assured. Your salvation is in Christ and He's enough!

JOURNALING:

Who do you say that Jesus is? If you have asked Jesus into your life, what are some ways your life reflects that decision?

If belief is what saves us, why do you think God also asks us to profess our faith (or say it out loud)?

What is one step you can take today to trust God's plan for your life?

PRAYER:

If you've never asked God to be your Lord, take the time to ask Him now. If you have, take a few minutes and thank him for this gift. Truthfully, we could never thank Him enough.

Day 11 | Wednesday, August 15th

PROMISE #11

I WILL GUIDE YOU THROUGH DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:13

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

I don't know how old I was when someone told me, "Don't worry. The Bible says that "God won't give you more than you can handle"? I'm not sure why we started believing that this statement was in the Bible, but more than just a few people believe that it is.

I need you to know that it isn't. And not only is that true, but undoubtedly, you've probably been in a situation before where you realized how untrue it was. There are TONS of examples where what I was going through was more than I could handle. If I could handle everything that I went through, why would I need God?

But because our adversities are often a reminder of our need for Him, it's also important for us to be reminded that we will never have to walk through them alone. In fact, God promises to guide us through the adversities we face—so in a way, it's like God is promising us adversity too!

One of the best things that can come out of an overwhelming situation is a deeper understanding of how much we need God's help. Difficulty doesn't have to drive us away from God. If we'll lean into what God wants to show us, difficulty will drive us closer to God in ways good times can't.

I want to encourage you today: God has and will continue to give you everything that you need to get through what you are currently going through. Read that statement again if you need to. Just like the three men thrown into the fire in the book of Daniel, God goes through the fires of life with us and He will make sure that they won't burn us up!

JOURNALING:

Do you feel overwhelmed with more than you can handle? What's weighing you down?

When are you most likely to question God's guidance?

What's one step you can take to remember God's presence in those moments?

PRAYER:

Take some time and talk to God about your difficult circumstances and acknowledge your need for him.

Day 12 | Thursday, August 16th

PROMISE #12

I WILL NOT HOLD YOUR SIN AGAINST YOU

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:1-2

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

When my buddies and I first started going to Chili's years ago, one of the things that we loved were that the chips and salsa were bottomless. They even called it that on the menu: "Bottomless Chips and Salsa." For teenagers, it was like a dream come true--chips and salsa that never ended. Combine that with free refills on Dr. Pepper and we didn't even need to eat an entrée!

I love the fact that God's mercy in our lives is bottomless. It never runs out, it never ends, you can't find the bottom to it. Outside of salvation is a condemnation that will surely be delivered. When something or someone is condemned, that thing or person is doomed and unfit for further use or freedom. Understanding God's condemnation is what makes his mercy so extravagant. When we understand that his justice is like a huge stone falling on a house crushing or devastating it, and that Jesus became that house is overwhelming and humbling.

If we are left to ourselves, the result is everlasting death—literally condemnation. But for those who are in Christ Jesus, he promises no condemnation and instead, life. Not just life, but life more abundantly (John 10:10). When Jesus saves us, He gives us a new identity. We are no longer who we used to be. Jesus' death covered our sins: past, present, and future.

No condemnation means that you are declared righteous and clean and I want to encourage you to take joy in that gift that God has given you through the work of Jesus Christ.

JOURNALING:

How do your interactions with God change when you know He isn't holding your sin against you?

Is there anything you're having trouble accepting forgiveness for? What's one step you can take today to put action behind the belief that God is not condemning you?

PRAYER:

Take your prayer time and thank Him for His forgiveness of your sins. Confess any parts of your life that you need to continue to bring to Him and lay down before Him.

Day 13 | Friday, August 17th

PROMISE #13

NOTHING CAN SEPARATE YOU FROM MY LOVE

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:38-39

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

Recently, I was watching my children play in our pool at the house. They were laughing and splashing, throwing water balloons, and doing canon balls. As I watched them, I was reminded of the feeling that I had experienced in my own childhood. It was the freedom of worry and stress that appeals so much to me from childhood.

When you were a kid, you didn't worry about bills, or the future. You didn't worry because you knew your parents had you taken care of. If you were hungry, they were going to feed you. If you were thirsty, they were going to give you something to drink. If you were tired, there was a bed for you to lie your head down. If you fell, they were going to pick you back up again.

Sometimes, we need to be reminded of how loved we are. While we're doing all the things of this life that we're doing, God keeps the earth rotating for us. He keeps changing the seasons and raising and setting the sun each day. Without any help from us, He changes the patterns of the lights in the sky. We don't have to pray to tell God it's nearly spring time. Spring just comes.

Be reminded today: There are a lot of things that are going on in your life that are probably difficult, but there is so much that has already happened today that God has done to show you how much he loves you. His grace is immeasurable, his mercy inexhaustible and his peace inexpressible. There is nothing that you can do today that will stop his love. There is nothing that's going to happen in the next week that will stop that love. You can rest knowing that you have a God who loves you so much.

I think reminding ourselves of that sometimes can bring such comfort and peace to our lives. You are so loved.

JOURNALING:

Is there anything you're holding back from God because you're worried He'll stop loving you?

How does it change your perception of death and your approach to life knowing that nothing, not even death, can separate you from God's love?

PRAYER:

God has poured His love out on you, so take some time in worship today and pour your love out on Him. Ask Him to remind you and show you all the things He's doing to express that love.

Day 14 | Saturday, August 18th

PROMISE #14

I WILL GIVE YOU STRENGTH AND PROTECTION

Scripture Reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:3

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

Make no mistake about it; you are in a spiritual battle right now. There is a battle for your soul, a battle for your will and—maybe talked about the least—a battle for your productivity. Satan often concedes that some people will go to heaven as long as you don't take anyone else with you. The battle for your witness and testimony is just as important to Satan.

In the midst of this battle filled with fiery arrow and attacks, it brings comfort to know that God provides protection and provision in the midst of that battle. He is fighting on your behalf. He is protecting you from obstacles that you don't even know about it.

When you were young, your parents would protect you from dangers that you weren't even aware of. They would move you or shield your head from the dresser, they would hold your hand as you walked down the stairs. They were aware of dangers that you weren't aware of. I think when we get to heaven, there are so many things that we are going to see that God shielded us from that it will cause us to break out in a crazy praise. Take comfort in knowing that you aren't fighting the battles of life alone.

We can be sure God is faithful. His past performance in our difficult circumstances points to His unchanging character and faithfulness. In addition, Jesus' resurrection from the dead proves Satan's impotence and confirms that in Christ, no situation is hopeless.

We are aware of the enemy's schemes. He comes to steal, kill, and destroy. But our God is a strong Father, guarding and establishing our steps. He has not left us alone. While the enemy may prowl around like a lion seeking to devour the weak, our God is strong and makes us strong. We can stand up and endure no matter what the enemy throws our way.

JOURNALING:

Where have you seen God's faithfulness?
What's one area of your life where God has strengthened you?
How have you seen the Lord protect you from evil?

PRAYER:

Where do you feel vulnerable in your life right now? Take those things to God and ask for his provision.

Day 15 | Sunday, August 19th

PROMISE #15

I WILL GIVE YOU WISDOM

Scripture Reading: James 1:5

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

We all have a hard time making sense of life. We mostly tend to grumble about discouraging things and despair about trials. We even doubt God will help us through them! What we don't often do is ask God about them.

If I'm honest, I can sometimes be a skeptic. Recently, I was sitting down with a financial advisor and I remember thinking to myself, "Would his advice line up with another's advice? What if his advice isn't as good as someone else's? How do I know that I'm getting this right!"

If you've ever thought those kind of thoughts before, just know that you aren't alone. But here's the thing that puts me at ease: God never makes a bad decision. He never gives perspective that's faulty or shouldn't be considered. He never has made a mistake and he says that if we trust Him and listen to Him, He'll guide us. But, we have to ask Him by faith.

This is why your Bible reading is so important. So many of the answers that you need to the circumstances of your life are found within the pages of the Scriptures. What if I told you that I had a book for you that was going to help you navigate your life and that if you read it carefully, you would very rarely stumble or stray? If you trusted me at all, you'd go back to the book often. You'd reference it frequently.

The Bible IS that book. The solutions for pain, confusion, relationships, character and wisdom are found within its pages and so we must use it, reference it and look to it often.

God promises to give us the wisdom we need for understanding. God doesn't expect us to know everything we need to know to meet our challenges or make the right choices. But He does expect us to ask Him and listen for His answer.

JOURNALING:

Do you remember asking God for wisdom for a situation in the past? How did it turn out?

What is the difference between having more information and more wisdom?

Can you think of a situation or choice where you need wisdom right now?

PRAYER:

Ask God for wisdom today. Take the answers to the last journal question and ask God for help.

Day 16 | Monday, August 20th

PROMISE #16

I WILL GUIDE YOU ON THE RIGHT PATH

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 3:5-6

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

If I asked you to sit down and make a list of the five most important qualities in a relationship, without a doubt, you would probably write “trust” next to one of the numbers.

I don’t think our relationship with God is any different.

When Hernán Cortés and 600 men arrived in Mexico in 1519, after a long and treacherous voyage across the Atlantic, he gave a rather interesting order.

“Burn the boats.”

The Spanish conquistador’s order was given prior to his stunning mission of battling, defeating and plundering the riches of the entire Aztec Empire.

As Christians, the road to a straight path is paved by staying power. In your relationship with Jesus, you don’t need an exit strategy, you need a staying strategy.

It’s probably obvious as to why: There will, at any particular moment, be a million reasons to give up according to your emotions. But of course, your emotions lie to you and so it is that in those moments that you need staying power. You need trust. You need to trust that the same God that brought you to this moment is going to get you through this moment.

God promises to keep us on the right path through the problems and challenges of life. He only asks that we let go of our ideas and assumptions of what’s right and good and give Him complete control. Following Jesus takes us beyond what’s familiar or comfortable, and we must trust and depend on God’s Word to stay on the right path. He’ll get us safely to our destination on the most direct route, guaranteed.

JOURNALING:

Can you think of a time when you leaned on your own understanding? How did it turn out?

What’s one area in your life where you need to give control to God?

What’s one thing you can do every day to remind you to lean on God?

PRAYER:

Ask God to help you develop staying power in your trust for Him.

Day 17 | Tuesday, August 21st

PROMISE #17

I WILL DO GOOD WORKS THROUGH YOU

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:10

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

We've all felt worthless, hopeless, or useless. But God promises you have a special purpose. You are created by God and for God. You are not an accident or a mistake. You are God's masterpiece, hand-crafted with pride and joy.

There is one Scripture that when speaking about the way that you were made references that God "knitted you in your mother's womb."

Remember that every word of the Scripture is purposeful and full of intent. God could have used many examples regarding your formation, but he used the idea of knitting. Knitting is meticulous. It's a process. It takes time. No one knits quickly. You were created in that fashion—slowly, over time, in process, with intent.

Knowing that is so important. What it means is that God has been planning your life from the beginning. Your life, your purpose is good, it's important and valuable and it has been that way from the beginning of time. Don't allow yourself, Satan or anyone else to say your life has no purpose, meaning, or value. If you are alive and breathing, you can be sure God is working in you and working through you. God promises He will fulfill your destiny.

JOURNALING:

Is there a time when you have doubted your worth to God?

How does this promise make you feel? Ask God to show you the "good work" He is doing in your life.

PRAYER:

Take all of the areas of your life where you feel worthless and lay them down before Jesus. Take some time and let Him speak to you. Let Him tell you about your value. Let the Holy Spirit fill your cup.

Day 18 | Wednesday, August 22nd

PROMISE #18

I WILL REDEEM YOUR PAIN

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:10

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

The night that Jesus is going to be betrayed, He takes the disciples to a spot to pray, but He doesn't pick a random spot. He picks the Garden of Gethsemane. It's a beautiful place filled with olive trees.

The symbolic nature of what Jesus is doing in the garden is so incredible. Every olive has the ability to produce oil. We buy it in the store. You can get a container of olive oil for three or four dollars from a grocery store. If somebody were to ask you how much oil cost you, you would be able to look at the oil and say that it cost \$4 dollars.

The reason you can say that is because you aren't the olive.

Somewhere behind an oil refinery sitting in the trash can is a bruised, beaten, discarded olive. If you were to ask the oil how much it costs for every drop of the oil, the olive would give a very different answer than you would. Because in order for the oil to come forth was for the olive to be pressed, beyond measure.

Jesus knew that His pain was necessary as He prayed in the garden. He didn't want it, but nevertheless, he knew it was still necessary. The reason is because Jesus understood this principle: That our greatest place of pain will create the greatest form of blessing.

Let the words of Ephesians 2:10 speak to your heart today. If you currently find yourself in a position of pain, know that God is going to redeem it for His good and for yours as well.

JOURNALING:

Can you think of a past struggle that you're thankful for? Why?

What has stopped you from experiencing hope in difficulty?

How could you respond to a struggle differently today knowing God is using it to bring you His love?

PRAYER:

Take all of the areas of your life where you feel worthless and lay them down before Jesus. Take some time and let Him speak to you. Let Him tell you about your value. Let the Holy Spirit fill your cup.

Day 19 | Thursday, August 23rd

PROMISE #19

I WILL BLESS YOU

Scripture Reading: Malachi 3:10

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

Our money is a direct reflection of the priorities of our lives. We like to disconnect the two, but really they are very connected. Jesus said, "Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be" (Luke 12:34). We will invest in our passions. If you want to find out what a person's interests are, then take a tour of their checkbook or expense account and see where they are spending their money.

Although some make more money than others and some are more successful than others, here is the thing we all need to keep in mind: We need to take what God has given us and be wise stewards over it, investing generously in the work of the kingdom of God. God will bless generosity.

When we bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, God promises to bless us beyond our capacity to receive. God doesn't just bless his children just enough, He blesses His children more than enough. He sends blessing to us in order that blessing might get through. The test is a test of the heart. Will we be willing to give the first of our income as an act of faith and trust in the Lord?

Many people followed Jesus because He fed them (John 6). They wanted His stuff, not Him. Tithing tests our commitment to the person of Jesus over the provision of Jesus. Will we follow Jesus simply because we get Jesus? Tithing is the ultimate test of the position of our possessions and the lordship of Jesus in our heart.

JOURNALING:

What is one blessing you have seen as a result of obeying God?

What next step is God urging you to take today in your finances?

Is there any area of your life where God is asking you to take a step of faith and trust Him to provide?

PRAYER:

Ask the Lord to give you a passion and a zeal for His house. We say often, "Ask the Lord what to give and do what He says." What is the Lord asking you to give? Take some time to hear Him.

Day 20 | Friday, August 24th

PROMISE #20

I WILL HEAR YOU

Scripture Reading: I John 5:14-15

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

We've all done it. A call drops, but we keep talking. Sometimes it takes a few seconds and sometimes it takes a few minutes, but eventually, we realize no one is listening.

Few things can be as frustrating or make us feel as foolish as recognizing we aren't being heard. It's the reason we cringe when customer service transfers us for the sixth time, and it's the reason many of us struggle with prayer. We pour our hearts out to God, but we wonder:

Is God listening?

How do I know He heard me?

That's why this verse is so important for you to know. God always hears our prayer. Fighting through the frustration and persevering in prayer is about our hearts more than it is about getting God's attention. With each prayer, we remind ourselves where our help comes from and we make space in our day to hear from the Lord.

God is working and we can trust Him, even when it seems like nothing is happening. Take heart in knowing God hears you and is working all things, even the hard things, together for your good (Romans 8:28).

Why can we pray with such a high level of expectation? First, God is our Father. If earthly fathers give good gifts to their children, how much more will our heavenly Father give us good things? Secondly, if God has given us Christ, why would He withhold from us any good thing?

Because of Jesus, we can approach God with boldness. Our access to God is no longer restricted by our sin. As a result, we have confidence that God hears our prayers and will respond.

JOURNALING:

Has your understanding of a good father affected your understanding of our heavenly Father?

What is your confidence in approaching God in prayer based on?

What are you praying in expectation for right now?

PRAYER:

Pray that the desires of your heart align with God's will and then spend some time in prayer.

Day 21 | Saturday, August 25th

PROMISE #21

I WILL GUARD YOUR HEART AND MIND

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:6-7

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

There is nothing more prevalent in the age in which we live than the increasing problem of worry. Worry is a powerful force to disintegrate the human personality, leaving us frustrated, puzzled, baffled and bewildered by life.

Sometimes you hear the expression: "sick with worry", and anyone who has experienced it knows it is no empty expression. You can be literally sick with worry.

Paul's answer to this is a blunt, "Do not be anxious about anything." The entire Word of God is a constant exhortation to believers to stop worrying.

We all worry. But for some, worry defines and dominates every waking thought. Imagine being able to live with a peaceful, quiet mind. In Jesus, it is possible. Just as Daniel slept peacefully in the lion's den, we can be free from constant worry even in a world filled with opportunities for anxiety. Daniel's secret is available to us. Daniel regularly cast all his anxieties on the Lord through prayer and petition. He spent time thanking God for his blessings and making his needs and requests known to God.

God promises to protect our hearts and minds from worry. Having all that free space to peacefully think about other things would truly be hard to imagine. You might say that it would transcend all understanding.

JOURNALING:

Why don't we pray more?

What could you do with the extra time you spend in worry?

What are you worried about right now?

PRAYER:

Take some time and pray for God to give you a spirit of peace. Name the things in your life that you are worrying over. Confess them to God and ask Him to give you a spirit of peace.