

# 21 DAYS *of Prayer*

THE YEAR OF POWER



# INTRODUCTION

God's power and purpose is available to you every day—but you must be ready to receive it.

I have always been inspired by the diligence and steadfastness displayed by Elijah and Elisha during one of the most difficult and darkest historical periods on earth. They lived in a corrupt and hostile time in the world, yet they remained faithful to God during it. Although they had every reason to shrink back, they experienced God's power, faithfulness, and provision in facing impossible circumstances.

I believe that God has a purpose for your life. But it's so easy to get distracted from that purpose. It's easy to lose spiritual momentum and to move away from what's most important. Often, we want to strengthen our faith and live by the power of the Holy Spirit, but the culture, our emotions and the circumstances of life can quickly cripple our faith.

It's in that vein that this devotional series is being shared with you.

Throughout this year, we'll focus on the power of the Holy Spirit and how God's power enables us to build His great church and accomplish His perfect will for our lives. But in this devotional, my hope is to help motivate you towards that power and that purpose.

This devotional is filled with 21 days of encouragement or "boosts" towards that destiny using the lives of Elijah and Elisha. Think of them like daily pep talks or reminders of how God wants to use you.

While we'll focus on the book of Acts in our weekends this year, I'd encourage you check out the stories about Elijah and Elisha in I Kings 17 through II Kings 17 as we use some of those stories to help you remember God's power as you attempt to live out God's promises for your life.

With whatever challenges are in front of you right now, I know the examples of Elijah and Elisha will encourage and challenge you that 2024 can be a year of power in your life where God does an incredible work through you. I hope you grow deeper in your faith as you reflect on examples of God's past workings as a predictor for his future moves.

# HOW TO USE THIS PRAYER GUIDE

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.

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 features a short thought about the topic for you to consider.

## Section 3: Application

This section is designed to help you take the devotional and scripture reading and make it personal. Some choose to journal about the questions provided while others choose to simply meditate on the questions. Whatever works best for you is what we advise although there is great value in having a past record to look at and see how you have grown throughout the years in God.

## Section 4: Prayer

The prayer provided is simply a model to help you get started. Take some time and really lean into God. I recommend that you spend at least 5 minutes on the Bible reading and devotional thought, 5 minutes on the application and 5 minutes in prayer as a base or starting point adding time where you feel you should appropriately.



# PERSONAL PRAYER TARGETS

We encourage you to use this section to write down things and people you'll pray for over the next 21 Days. Take time to pray for them every single day.

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)

## 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: \_\_\_\_\_

## THOSE I AM INFLUENCING

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## THOSE WHO NEED GOD

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## MY NEEDS

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# WAYS TO INCLUDE CHILDREN IN 21 DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING

At Heartland Church, we begin each year with 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting. We believe this a family rhythm—a disciplined practice we use to dedicate and consecrate the coming year to the Lord. We believe in partnering with parents to build the next generation, so our team has come up with some ways that will help the families of HC include their children in these practices as we re-set our priorities, turn our attention, and focus on God, seek His Presence, and listen for His voice and direction for the days ahead.

Below are some ways to include your children in practicing the rhythms of listening for God's voice through three main areas: Bible study, prayer, and fasting. As you go along in this 21-day devotional, choose one method from each area to do with your child daily! Remember, no one is a better disciple of your children than you!

## Bible Study and Memorization:

1. Choose one of the scripture references from the daily devotions to focus on as a family for the week. Recite the scripture together. Have small children repeat each phrase after you. Have older children write the scripture and reference on a Post-it note or index card or small piece of paper. Post the scripture reference somewhere they will see it each day.
2. Ask the children what the scripture means. Explain any words they may not understand.
3. Ask one or all of the following questions for family discussion:
  - What does this scripture teach us about God?
  - What does this scripture teach us about ourselves?
  - What does this scripture teach us about how we should live?
4. Each day, recite the scripture and pray the truth of the scripture over each member of the family. Ask one or both of the following questions for family discussion:
  - What did you think about this scripture today?
  - How did this scripture help you today?
5. As the week progresses, try having the children recite the scripture without looking at or referring to it. Reward their efforts with affirmation and hugs. Remind them that they are hiding God's Word in their hearts and that He is pleased with them! Keep asking your children what they are learning about God through the scripture. You may be surprised at the ways God reveals Himself to them simply because they are thinking about His Word.

## Helpful Tips:

- Make memorizing the scripture fun. Use music, dance, and/or games to help your children remember the verse. We want them to remember it long after the week is over!



- You will be amazed at the difference God's Word makes in your children's attitudes, hearts, and minds. If you see them practicing the truth of the scripture, celebrate that! Your approval and excitement will make an impact on them. It's also important that they begin to recognize that God is speaking to them through His Word.
- Each week, review the previous week's verse. By the end of three weeks, they should have at least three verses memorized. Consider giving the children a reward if they can quote all three verses at the same time. If you continue memorizing scripture together throughout the year, you could use an incentive chart, rewarding stickers for each scripture memorized which could add up to a reward each month or so.

### Prayer:

Set apart time for prayer as a family each day. This can be any time during the day that works for your family. Make some simple rules, such as all devices and electronics off, all family members in the same room at the same time, etc. Your prayer time doesn't have to be formal, but it should give each member of the family an opportunity to participate. The format below is a "kid-friendly" format that will help the prayer time stay focused and effective.

### W.I.T.H.

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>Wow!</b>      | Praising God for who He is. Worship Him for His goodness, kindness, faithfulness, and mercy. He loves us, protects us, and provides for us each day. He is worthy!             |
| <b>I'm Sorry</b> | Asking for forgiveness and forgiving others. We confess and repent for sins known and unknown. We forgive as we have been forgiven.  |
| <b>Thanks</b>    | Thank God for forgiving us and for sending His son to die for our sins. Thank God for every good gift He has given. Thank God for hearing and answering prayer.                |
| <b>Help</b>      | Ask God for His help in your family, with your friends, at school, or in your neighborhood. Ask for His help for any problem! He's a big God, and nothing is too hard for Him. |

End with praise and worship!

### Fasting

Fasting is an important part of building our relationship with God. Just like in a human relationship, you have to intentionally put away distractions from time to time in order to grow closer to the other person and hear their wants and needs clearly. The same is true in our relationship with God. The point of fasting is to align ourselves with God's purposes and commands. It is effective when we deny ourselves so we can say, "Jesus, You are Lord, and I love You more than I love \_\_\_\_\_." Otherwise, we may simply be dieting or abstaining with no spiritual purpose. The point of fasting is not what or how much is taken away as much as it is about what is added in time spent with the Lord.

Consequently, if your children are old enough to understand the reasons for fasting—we are saying “no” to something we want so we can hear God’s voice more clearly and we can say “yes” to partner with Him to bring God’s kingdom to Earth—and they want to fast, then here are some suggested ways they can participate. These are not the only things they could do; they must participate in the discussion about what they will say “no” to for a time, but they will need your oversight and wisdom as they go through the “fasting” period. If your child does not want to fast, do not force them to. Children, especially infants and toddlers, should never be forced to fast. If your child has a medical condition, we do not recommend fasting food. Use wisdom and ask the Holy Spirit to help you as you consider what is appropriate for your child if he or she wants to participate in fasting.

Partial Fast: Not recommended for children under 7.

- Abstain from a favorite food, snack, or drink. Replace with water and fruit or vegetable.
- Abstain from all processed sugar or some carbohydrates. Replace with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Abstain from electronic devices for entertainment. Number of days each week should be determined by parent and child. Replace with reading, board games, puzzles, outside play as needed. Consider doing your family devotion during a time when your children would normally be playing on their devices.
- Abstain from playing with a favorite toy or from any rhythm or ritual that takes the place of spending time with the Lord or with family.



# THE EXAMPLE OF THE OVERCOMERS

## Day 1

You may be tempted to view people in the Bible as perfect. But the truth is that they are just as flawed as you and me. God's word, from beginning to end, is not a narrative of sinless and picture perfect people, but instead it shares the stories of flawed, but faithful, men and women persevering amid trials and tribulations.

They faced overwhelming obstacles, dealt impossible situations and dangerous times that forced them to put their trust in God. No. The Bible is not a book filled with perfect people. The Bible is a book of overcomers. Just consider some of the best-known believers, and what they had to overcome.

In the Old Testament, Abraham had to overcome the deceit of others, as well as his own tendency to deceive. God promised that he would be the father of many nations, and yet in old age, Abraham and his wife, Sarah, had never conceived until God gave them their son, Isaac, forcing them to overcome their doubts and the limitations of biological logic.

Consider Joseph, Abraham's great grandson, and all that he overcame: abandonment in the pit, betrayal by his brothers, the lies of his boss's wife, and being thrown in prison. Yet Joseph ended up as Pharaoh's right-hand man, overseeing the harvest, storage, and distribution of grain. His leadership not only saved the Egyptians, but also Joseph's own family and the nation of Israel. Many generations later, when the Israelites became enslaved in Egypt, Moses overcame his past, his temper and Pharaoh himself to lead God's people through the Red Sea in pursuit of the Promised Land.

Story after story repeats this theme of overcoming, and the New Testament reinforces it as well. Peter overcame his impulsive nature and the cursing of his blessing. Mary Magdalene overcame her past mistakes and residual reputation. The apostle Paul overcame angry mobs, jail time, earthquakes, shipwrecks, and snakebites. And Jesus, the son of God and our wondrous savior, overcame darkness, death, and defeat.

Over the course of this devotional, that's what we want for you—to follow the example of the overcomers before you refuse to give up the fight. Don't allow your circumstances to determine the direction of your life. You might feel weary right now but your battle isn't over. God's power in you through the Holy Spirit will always prevail. When you have the Spirit of God in your life, you no longer depend on your own abilities and limited resources. You have the unlimited, infinite, and eternal power of the living God inside of you!





# THE PLOW OF PREPARATION

## Day 2

Elijah was a man with a mantle, a message and a mission. Although he was God's prophet, Elijah didn't enjoy an easy life of comfort and convenience. He was called to preach a message of repentance to the people of Israel, including its wicked King Ahab, and Queen Jezebel, who were worshiping idols. Elijah met resistance at every turn, even after winning a spiritual showdown where he demonstrated God's immense power over the inability of idols. Running for his life from the vindictive royals, Elijah became discouraged and depressed until God met him, and gave him a new mission: to find his successor, Elisha, and mentor him as God's prophet.

Renewed by God's loving care and confidence in him, Elijah went in search of the younger man who was to become his protégé, and found him leading a team of oxen and plowing a field. Elijah then placed his mantle on Elisha, indicating that it was time for Elisha to leave his plow, and take on the new role and responsibilities for which God had anointed him. It's no coincidence that Elisha had been farming the land prior to receiving his mantle.

Farming requires hard work, dedication, vigilance, patience, and perseverance. These are all traits that would serve Elisha well in his new role as prophet. As a farmer, Elisha invested his labor in plowing fields, planting seeds, protecting the crop and harvesting the fruit of his investment. He had no idea God was preparing him for a much greater role and more power. Elijah simply did his best to fulfill the responsibilities required to steward the land and produce a harvest.

God used these life skills to build Elisha's character in anticipation of the role He had for him. Elisha's plow prepared him to wear God's mantle and wield the power and responsibility that came with its wearing. We believe that God wants to use whatever you're currently doing to unlock the same power in your life as well. When we faithfully carry out the roles and responsibilities God assigns us, then he gives us more—more power, more provision, more passion to meet the next challenges that were called to face.

Although we usually don't like trials and challenges, James tells us to "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance" (James 1:2-3). When you know God is training and equipping you for a greater service, then you can endure painful moments and tough times because you know they serve his perfect purpose. Purpose is waiting on you, so remain patient while pushing your plow!





# CUTTING THROUGH THE CULTURAL DARKNESS PART I

## Day 3

While the challenges you face today may seem urgent and unexpected, remember that Elijah and Elisha faced similar forces in the form of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel thousands of years ago. These two prophets endured cultural shifts towards immorality, idolatry and individuality that threatened their faith and endangered their lives. Then and now, forces all around us are urging us sacrifice God's truth on the altar of acceptance and progressivism. These forces try to tell us what to believe and how to act, attempting to coerce us into conforming to their own idolatrous agendas rather than obeying God's word.

Today, there are leaders in every realm of culture and society that are like Ahab—doing whatever is expedient for their own power and profit while pretending to care about their followers, but intent on exploiting them for selfish gain. They are social media celebrities, style icons, politicians, actors, actresses, media moguls, corporate executives, and the sorts—seducing followers to imitate them without any limits to their language, behavior and morality. Many are driven by greed and worshipping mammon rather than the truth of the living God.

Let us warn you clearly! These are modern Jezebels that want to construct counterfeit temples to legitimize bogus institutions that marginalize God honoring ideologies of righteousness and justice. They sell self-delusion and vanity. They construct idolatrous altars and attempt to drown out the cries of the persecuted, impoverished, wounded and those in need.

Our own trials and suffering can become intensified by the gloom resulting from the decline of truth in our world today which is so easily accessible as we scroll our favorite sites or view the latest news.

But in all of this, as followers of Jesus, we must never let the darkness obscure our vision or diminish our hope. No matter how bleak things may seem or discouraging the world might be, nothing can separate you from the power and purpose of the almighty God. Injustice may seem to momentarily triumph, but it will never prevail. Nothing you face as a believer can separate you from the love of Christ. "Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?"...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Romans 8:35, 37).

The power of God always triumphs over the darkness.





# CUTTING THROUGH THE CULTURAL DARKNESS PART II

## Day 4

Hard times are the trophy cases of God's power.

Although the people of Israel engaged in repeated disobedience and frequent idolatry, God didn't abandon them. Instead, he sent prophets including Elijah and Elisha with His message of repentance and power to conquer the adversity.

While on the surface, it seems like the enemy was winning as Ahab and Jezebel blatantly worshipped pagan gods and performed their rituals, this would only create an opportunity for God to reveal his power through His people. What the evil royals attempted to manipulate for their own glory, greed and pleasure, God turned as a stage for His character, love and mercy.

If Elijah and Elisha had given up or stopped trusting God, then they would have missed out. Instead of questioning God, they persevered in the cultural climate of their time, pushing their respective plows. As a result, they received God's blessing.

Today, you face the same opportunity. You can be a part of what God is doing or sink in the cultural mud that attempts to pull you under. Each of us has a choice to either splash in the relentless currents of the unexpected circumstances we face OR to grab the lifeline of power God extends to those who trust Him. You cannot control all that happens to you and around you, but you always have a choice in how to respond.

Let me assure you: Your battle may not be over, but it is already won. God will never give up on you and instead anoints you with the power to overcome darkness and the sin infection in your life. God's power will prevail. Nothing is finished until God declares it is.

If you're pushing the plow, spiritually speaking, you can be rest assured that God's mantle awaits you. And when God's mantle rests on you, then nothing or no one can stop you. When you have the Spirit of God dwelling in you, you never have to fear the seasons of the world again. You may face trials and tribulations. You could endure storms but you will never be defeated permanently. God's joy and peace will not cease from your life.





# TAKE HEART IN THE WAITING

## Day 5

As we have covered in a previous devotion, Elisha waited for the promise of God, he stayed faithful to the plow. But when you are pushing the plow for a long time, it's natural to find yourself growing weary in the waiting.

I'm guessing you know what this feels like. You keep doing the same things day after day, and even though others depends on you, they may not show their support or appreciation. You can begin to feel overlooked and taken for granted—or worse, used and exploited. You could be juggling multiple responsibilities and feeling pulled from one plow to another.

Gradually, the weight of your plow can become heavier and overwhelming. You can persevere, but you can also begin to lose perspective, and as a result, you can let the emotions of anger, resentment, frustration, loneliness, and insignificance overwhelm you.

If this describes your experience in, anyway, then take a moment to catch your breath. Remember that Jesus told his followers, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy in my burden is light" (Matt 11:29-30).

While pushing your plow may never seem as easy or light as you would like it to be, Jesus provides the key to getting a second wind as follow His example and rest in the spiritual piece of the Holy Spirit.

Also, keep in mind that if your plow seems too heavy, or feels stuck in place, then you may be pushing the wrong plow. Sometimes you may be doing something you once were called to do, but now, God has called you to move on from that thing. Whether out of fear, or doubt, or simply by not paying attention to the whisper of the Holy Spirit, you may be suffering because you're holding your plow even when your mantle is ready.

No matter how you feel or who overlooks the ground where you plow, you must know that your Heavenly Father sees you and values you. Your creator designed you for a special and specific purpose, so even if you feel ready for your mantle before it is given, take heart and remain patient. God hasn't forgotten you and will never abandon you. Soon, you'll be carrying the mantle of new challenges, new goals, and new resources. Take heart and prepare for a holy deposit of God's grace and power that will enable you to magnify the name of Jesus like never before.





# THE GOD OF THE PROCESS

## Day 6

Several years ago, after an intense season of personal work and reflection on myself, I kept having people in my life telling me, "There's something different in you." The only problem was that I didn't know what they were talking about. I didn't feel different. Although I had been working intently on myself, I didn't sense that anything in my life had changed. The truth is that there are times that it's hard to see God's power at work in your own life because you're right there in the middle of it.

As you receive God's mantle and experience more of God's power in your life, you may still be uncertain where God is leading or how He wants to use your gifts and abilities. Keep in mind that what you experience on the way to your destination is just as important as arriving at it. Often times, it's what happens on the way that truly prepares you once you do arrive.

Many often think of Elijah's mantle being passed onto Elisha as one of the greatest culminations of His ministry. But the truth is, on the way to his destination, that mantle experienced some dramatic and intense events. The mantle was upon him as he unleashes a drought on the wayward nation of Israel and its idolatrous leaders (1 Kings 17). The mantle accompanied him when he hid in a ravine next to a brook where ravens brought him food. The mantle was with him when He followed God to a widow whose flour and oil never ran out. The mantle became a prayer shawl when the widow's son became ill and died as he cried out for God's healing power to restore the boy's life. The mantle was on him when he called fire from heaven.

Some moments along the way, I'm sure Elijah felt God's power moving in his life, while others caused him to wonder where God was at all.

The point is this: The God of the process is the God of the outcome. While the life God has called you to has low moments that can bring great heartache, you can never confuse the temporary with the eternal or the momentary with the permanent. God wants to enlarge your perspective about his power. He wants you to learn to trust Him when your future feels uncertain.

When the path leads to a detour or a dead end, you may be tempted to question and doubt God rather than to reconsider your expectations. But trust that the mantle God gives you will cover all areas of your life and realize that His power is developing you in ways that you might not be able to see.





# THE MANTLE OF HOLY CONFRONTATION PART I

## Day 7

Part of God's power for us is found in our willingness to embrace holy confrontation. What is holy confrontation? It's speaking up for what is right in the eyes of God rather than holding our tongue in order to conform to the consensus of others. Because the church has been accused of being judgmental, Christians are apprehensive to call out injustice, unrighteousness and idolatry in the world around us. It's easier to look the other way rather than rock the boat of the status quo.

Any time we embrace holy confrontation, there will be a price to pay and consequences to content with. We risk being unfriended and disliked, being criticized and chastised by opponents who disagree with us. We risk being misunderstood and judged as unloving and judgmental. But the consequences of choosing to back away from the battle and look the other way are much greater.

Now more than ever, the political, social and cultural divisiveness in our nation and world requires us to stand apart from the majority. It requires us to go against the powerful privileged. Whether we are intimidated by a culture that cancels and criticizes or not, we must muster the courage displayed by Elijah when confronting King Ahab.

At one point, Elijah confronts King Ahab saying, "I have not made trouble for Israel...But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the Lord's commands and have followed the Baals" (1 Kings 18:18). This was an exercise of holy confrontation.

Clearly, there are times to turn the cheek and to simply let love reign. But there are also times where we must take a stand for the kingdom of God. Whenever we do this, we will be viewed as a troublemaker or even an instigator. But that courage is necessary to remind our world of God's precepts and commands. My prayer for you is to have holy confrontation at the appropriate times. We are to love God's commands and hate evil and what you tolerate, you approve.





# THE MANTLE OF HOLY CONFRONTATION PART II

## Day 8

As you wear the mantle of God's power and purpose, you will find courage for the inevitable holy confrontations in your life. They are unavoidable. Why? Because there is friction between good and evil, between heaven and earth, between the spirit of God and the spirit of the world. Remember Jesus' words to his followers, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As you it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you" (John 15:18-19). Holy confrontations are sometimes unavoidable. But trust that when they happen, God will empower your victory and more importantly, advance His kingdom and display His glory for others to see.

We see this in the spiritual showdown Elijah initiated after King Ahab called the prophet a troublemaker. As if to prove his point about the true source of Israel's problems, Elijah gave an ultimatum to the people of Israel, their king and queen and bogus pagan Gods.

Two altars would be built, two sacrificial bulls would be chosen and two prayers would be offered—one by the prophets of Baal and the other by Elijah. Whichever sacrifice caught fire would reveal the true and living God (1 Kings 18). With the competition underway, the 450 prophets of Baal prayed and chanted without success—even when Elijah gave them extra time. The spectators watched in awe as Elijah proved his point even more emphatically by digging a trench around the altar and calling for four large jugs of water to be doused in the trench, on the stones of the altar and over the bull carcass.

Barely had the words left his lips when "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" (1 Kings 18:38).

When faced with a holy confrontation, you must trust the outcome into the God who empowers you. When we stand for His kingdom, He will stand with us and will experience undeniable victory.





# SPIRITUAL MOMENTUM PART I

## Day 9

You may not know how to define momentum scientifically, but you have most likely experienced it many times. Simply put, momentum describes the way you tend to pick up speed and keep going once you're moving forward. You might recognize the phenomenon of momentum in the way you take care of your home or invest in relationships or complete tasks for work.

For example, you might be cleaning your kitchen, fulfilling orders online or tackling items on your to do list. Soon you realize that the more you do, the more you want to keep going and do all the things that need doing. That sense of picking up speed and continuing at that level until you reach your goal is what momentum is all about.

Spiritual momentum works much the same way. The more we trust God and step out in faith, the stronger our faith in Him will be the next time we are required to take a risk in moving forward. The more we experience God's power, purpose, and peace in our lives, the more we want to experience it all the time. The more we get to know the love, kindness, and mercy of the Lord, the more we want everyone to know him as their Lord and Savior.

This kind of pure spiritual momentum keeps us moving forward—in our life, our relationships, our work, our ministry—in a straight trajectory at a consistent pace. In our fallen world full of broken people, however, spiritual momentum can be difficult to maintain. The enemy also wants to derail our spiritual pace with temptations and obstacles.

Ideally, we would maintain our spiritual momentum, no matter what our circumstances happened to be. The hope is that we would not let our disappointments, failures, regrets, and emotions influence our spiritual life. But since none of us are perfect like Jesus, the reality is that we all encounter obstacles that affect our momentum.

When obstacle slow your spiritual pace, the key is to keep going, to step out in faith, relying on God as the source of your power, as well as your speed, day by day. Rather than grow discouraged, when we stall or must slow down, we trust that God's perfect timing applies to our rate of growth. He prepares us according to His perfect will, so that we grow at just the right pace to become more like Jesus.





# SPIRITUAL MOMENTUM PART II

## Day 10

The speed of life rarely accelerates your spiritual momentum—unless you rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. You know that in this life you will always have problems, that the world will always persecute you for following Jesus and that the enemy will try to sabotage your spiritual progress. But the tangible expressions of these barriers can often stop you in your tracks.

You want to grow in your faith by developing a steady, strong spiritual momentum, but then you lose your job. Or your child gets sick and requires hospitalization. The car breaks down and needs a new transmission. Bills begin to snowball until you are overwhelmed by an avalanche of debt. You get sick or injure yourself and become discouraged or impatient in the recovery. You feel depressed or anxious by so many events beyond your control causing you to relapse into an old addiction, bad habit, unhealthy relationship or destructive pattern.

Life's speed bumps can deter us from experiencing and maintaining our spiritual momentum. Events can slow us down or send us into an emotional tailspin. Circumstances can temporarily pull us away or send us into an emotional tailspin. We can make wrong decisions and suffer consequences because of a temporary place of pain.

If this sounds like something you're going through, let me just remind you of this: Through every experience, God is there with us. His spirit is the breath of fresh air that lifts our sails and gifts us a second wind. The Bible assures us, "The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged" (Deut. 31:8). His Son, Jesus, is the Lord for whom we run our race of life. Like the apostle Paul, we run so as to finish our race and complete the task God has set before us (Acts 20). Yes, we may stumble, slow down or slack off, but God is always there to help us get back on our feet and hit our spiritual stride again.

Just as we push our plows and persevere until we receive our mantles of promotion, we must also learn to maintain spiritual momentum if we are to experience the fullness of all God has for us. He wants us to trust Him for all our needs and not be distracted, disrupted or disturbed by the interruptions, obstacles, and adversaries in our lives. We are sons and daughters of the King, created in our Creator's holy image, co-heirs with Jesus Christ and immortal beings temporarily in mortal bodies.





# GET BACK UP AGAIN

## Day 11

Your enemy, the devil, knows that the way to stop you in your spiritual tracks is by tempting, threatening, or taunting you. Once he gets a foothold in your life or inside of your head, he can prevent you from experiencing the abundant life of a joyful purpose for God's kingdom. And as you could probably guess, he often attacks us right after a major spiritual victory.

That's what happened to Elijah. After dramatically defeating the prophets of Baal and humiliating Ahab and Jezebel, he had to feel incredible. But his celebration didn't last long because the angry queen threatened to kill him in I Kings 19. Rather than stand up to the bullying, "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die" (I Kings 19:3-4).

How could Elijah spiral and crash downwards so quickly? Despite all he had seen and experienced—the drought, the holy confrontation, the fire, and the rain—he allowed his fears to overcome his faith temporarily. When he allowed fear to enter his heart and Jezebel to get into his head, Elijah went from being the conductor on a heavenly bullet train to being held hostage by his feelings on a roller coaster.

Consider your own experiences. You can probably look at your own life and see some high points when God intervened in amazing and miraculous ways that you still celebrate to this day. You can likely also see the moments when you disappointed yourself by the way that you turned your face away from God that it still stirs up feelings of regret and maybe even shame.

These mile markers remind us that spiritual momentum isn't a straight line but often is filled with highs and lows. There are times of blistering speed and advancement and then times of a slowdown or stop. The important thing is to get moving again. You must remember who you are, what you're made of, who made you, what you're called to do, where you are right now and where you're going for eternity.

When you are going at a fast speed and hit a wall, it's likely going to feel disorienting. But as you get back on your feet and regain your bearings, you refocus on what you know is true. How can you stay down when the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives within you?





# PRESS FORWARD

## Day 12

Elijah let his fear get the best of him. After all that he had experienced and seen God do, Elijah ran away to hide. He let his trust in the Lord slip away and overlooked the truth of God's word: "Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you" (Deut 31:8).

With the certainty of this promise fueling the engine and the power of the Holy Spirit moving in our life, we can press forward no matter who or what tries to stop us! No matter where we go or what we encounter, God has already gone before us to pave the way. Even as Elijah ran to Beersheba, God was already there.

Regardless of what lies before you, when you move forward towards God's best plan for your life, God is already there. He paved your path to promotion before you ever took your first step. So no matter what enemy, obstacle, barrier or pothole you hit, God has already gone ahead of you and prepared a way forward.

That river in front of you, God has already crossed.

That mountain that stands in your way, God has already climbed.

That serpent that waits to strike you, God has already shaken off.

That Jezebel that makes threats to destroy you, God has already silenced.

That giant that mocks and threatens you, God has already knocked down.

God always goes ahead and prepares the way for you to do greater things.

You must keep moving, keep trusting and keep going.

God's word confirms this: "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father" (John 14:12). God has gone ahead of you, and He is for you and not against you. So, no matter what you're facing, God has already solved it, healed it, removed it or fixed it. If you're concerned about your children, your health, your education, your marriage, your career, a relationship, that secret, or the addiction you're still battling, remember: Let not your heart be troubled.

God knows and he's preparing the way for you to win this battle. He's exposing the traps and clearing the way because He loves you!





# TRUST HIM FOR ENOUGH

## Day 13

While God's instructions to us often become clear after the fact, rarely do they make sense in the moment, and they almost never seem rational to people who are far from God. But when God is on the move, we as believers must learn to trust in His divine authority and direction.

At one point and after more than three years of a drought, God spoke to Elijah and instructed him that rain was about to come. Based on his complete confidence in God's direction, Elijah sent his servant to look for rain—not once but seven times. Only on the seventh occasion of looking did the servant report back reporting, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea" (1 Kings 18:44).

That doesn't sound exactly like the beginning of a torrential downpour, but that's exactly what it was and Elijah knew it! Acting on his prophetic knowledge of this imminent rainstorm, he instructed Ahab to return home.

Imagine how much faith it took to make such a bold declaration. After all, no one had seen rain in three years. But God was waiting for Elijah to step out in faith and declare what He had told him. And this is so true for our lives as well. While we're waiting for God to answer our prayers, he's waiting for us to be obedient to a word He's already spoken to us. While we're waiting on God's timing, God is waiting on us to fully trust Him.

The truth was that God had used a little bit to do a lot several times prior in Elijah's life. The ravens had brought him just enough food when he was near the brook of Cherith. The widow he met in Sidon had just enough oil and flour to produce bread for herself, her son and her new guest day after day. The children of Israel were given just enough manna to help them get from one day until the next. So when Elijah heard about a cloud the size of a man's hand, he knew that this was more than enough for God to move.

Today, be encouraged to trust God wholeheartedly for what seems impossible by human standards. What God promises doesn't often make sense in the moment, but his instructions will become clear after the fact if we'll just be faithful to obey.





# GET OUT OF THE WAY

## Day 14

It's possible that you're getting in the way. When our expectations aren't getting met about what we're hoping for God to do through us, it's natural for us to grow impatient, feel confused or disappointed. Perhaps you've served faithfully, experienced His blessing only for something in your life not to go as you expected it to.

Often when this happens, we worry that maybe we've misunderstood God. "Did I take the wrong step? Did I go in the wrong direction? Did I not hear correctly?" Suddenly, the focus is on us rather than on a willingness to trust God completely and wholeheartedly and let Him worry about the outcome.

When we get in our own way, the Lord will wait patiently for us to exhibit the maturity or wherewithal and fortitude required to manage the gifts that he's given us or come back to a place of surrender and trust. Paul learned this lesson along the way on his own missionary journeys. He said that he knew that he was maturing whenever the things that would've bothered him previously no longer troubled him. If anybody had a reason to question if he had heard God correctly, it was Paul. He endured shipwrecks, beatings, stonings, lashings and snake bites. Yet Paul declared, "If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness" (2 Corinthians 11:30).

This is the goal of spiritual maturity. When things that used to worry you no longer do, you are maturing. When the people who once were able to drive you offside and sideways no longer do. When worry that would abound over the lack of results no longer does. When fleshly desires that once led you into sinful situations no longer do. These are all examples of a maturing heart—a growing heart.

When we're willing to hand our gifts over to God and allow Him to use them for His glory the way that He sees fit—these are the moments that we'll truly be used by God. Because at that point, it's no longer about a position, ministry, title, accomplishment, or a result—it's simply about being obedient to God. Be encouraged: obedience and not the results is the mark of spiritual maturity in your life.

The power that God has given you isn't a status symbol. It's not a badge of holy honor for others to see. It's not a spiritual fashion accessory displaying your prominence and status in the kingdom. God's power through you is a privilege.

So, get out of the way and let God move how He wants to in your life.





# MAKING ROOM FOR OTHERS

## Day 15

One of the most powerful things about walking in the power and authority of God's spirit is when you realize that your stewardship over the gifts that He's given you actually makes room for people following behind you. Every time you move out of your comfort zone and choose to complete the mission or run the race that God is calling you to, you create opportunities for others to pick up the baton and follow in your footsteps.

Elijah was doing the same and his mantle would be passed on as well. Perhaps it's not been said as of yet, but that mantle was a piece of clothing that prophets would wear. Elijah wore his as a symbol indicating his authority and responsibility as God's chosen spokesman. Some theologians see the mantle as a symbol of the spirit.

As Elijah was running to Jezreel, it's important to know he was running with his mantle. While the mantle was difficult to run with, Elijah paid careful attention to make sure that the cloak was not discarded, but instead carefully tucked. It couldn't be lost, or ignored. It was a symbol of the prophetic power testifying to God's power and presence.

Later on, after Elijah had mentored Elisha and was being taken up to heaven, Elisha found his way forward put picking up the mantle. The word says "Elisha picked up Elijah's cloak, which had fallen when he was taken up. Then Elisha returned to the bank of the Jordan River. He struck the water with Elijah's cloak and cried out, 'Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?' Then the river divided, and Elisha went across" (2 Kings 2:13-14 NLT)

Elijah protected the mantle representing his anointing for the next generation. He left it behind so that Elisha could pick it up and assume the authority that went with it.

Don't forget that you're stewarding God's power in your life not just for you, your ministry, and your purpose. You are stewarding God's power for those who will follow in your mission. Be careful not to leave your mantle behind—dismissing some things as unimportant. You have plowed too long and too hard. Instead, make sure to pay careful attention to it. Protect it so that those who are coming after you will be able to pick it up.





# THE RESULTS ARE UP TO GOD

## Day 16

Even when you've seen the Lord demonstrate unbelievable, amazing, incredible, and miraculous displays of His power in your life in the PAST, it's still possible to make excuses that prevent you from experiencing all that He has for you in the PRESENT.

It's so common to put our eyes on our own humanity and balk when God challenges you to do something that you feel completely unworthy or unqualified to do.

In fact, one of the biggest excuses that you'll bump up against time and time again has to do with your own capacity and abilities. You'll feel like you aren't equipped enough, resourced enough, qualified enough, or prepared enough. But despite all of that, you must stay obedient and press forward towards what God is speaking to you about.

There were so many times in Elijah's story that he didn't feel like he had enough going for him when compared to the incredible amount of resources and support that it seemed like King Ahab and Queen Jezebel had. But while Ahab had horsepower, Elijah had an angelic engine!

When God empowers you, your qualifications, your abilities and your resources simply aren't the point—God's strength is the point! And that strength is made perfect in your WEAKNESS! The power in you will always overcome the pathetic in the enemy! The darkness could have a head start in some areas, but heaven will always close the gap and finish first!

God is able to meet every need you can't meet on your own. His power will always prevail in your prayers that you think aren't strong enough. His favor will always prevail over your disqualifications. He empowers and blesses those who believe in Him and trust Him with every area of their lives.

You didn't push the plow for nothing. God will see you through! So run with all your might towards the promises of God. Say YES to his instructions. Embrace His callings. When God is with you, it doesn't matter how strong the other side is, you will outrun them all through the power of the Almighty!





# REMEMBERING GILGAL

## Day 17

Elijah would soon be whisked off to heaven. But before that happened, he began a journey where he would visit spiritually significant places beginning with a place called Gilgal (2 Kings 2:1). Gilgal was significant because it was the place where the Israelites crossed the Jordan River on the way to the Promised Land. As Joshua led the people of Israel, the Lord miraculously parted the waters of the Jordan so that they could safely cross with the ark of the covenant which housed the Ten Commandments. Once across, Gilgal was established as a way of commemorating their crossing. To mark the location, they gathered 12 large stones, one for each tribe of Israel where they would create a memorial that would serve as “a memorial to the people of Israel forever” (Joshua 4:6-7).

But the place was named Gilgal because of another significant event that would occur there not long after the Israelites would cross the Jordan. After God delivered them from Egypt, the Israelites wandered for forty years before reaching the Promised Land. By then, the younger generations of men were no longer being circumcised which God had established all the year back with Abraham the men of his household (Genesis 17:10). The act was a powerful and symbolic act of the covenant that God had established with His people. So before they could take possession of the land, God told Joshua to “make flint knives and circumcise Israel again” (Joshua 5:2).

Afterward, God declared, “I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you,” which is why the place came to be known as Gilgal. In Hebrew, the word for “roll” is similar to “Gilgal” both as a verb and as well as a noun. As a result, the name refers to the circle of stones the Israelites had gathered, which were likely so large that they had to be rolled into formation, as well as the explanatory message the Lord gave to Joshua about rolling away “the reproach of Egypt.”

Every believer has a similar place to Gilgal. It’s a place that reminds us of where we used to be and where God is leading us now. It’s a sacred place that symbolizes leaving our past behind to embrace our future. Your personal Gilgal is where you truly experienced the power of God for the very first time. At this place in your life, whether a literal or a symbolic spot, you cut ties with old habits, addictions, a default pattern of behavior and most important, your sin. You recognized God helped you to move beyond yourself in a new life He had for you. Remembering Gilgal is a powerful way to celebrate where God is leading you.





# GROWING AFTER GILGAL

## Day 18

If you've ever crossed over state lines into a new state before, then you've probably seen the signs that display the new state's name as well as the welcome centers, tourist bureaus or visitors' rest areas. These places mark the transition from one territory to another and the state goes to great lengths to make sure that you are aware that you're in a new territory and on new turf.

Gilgal marked a similar transition for the people of Israel. Crossing Gilgal was like crossing state lines. As we saw in our last devotional, after the children of Israel had crossed the Jordan, they had marked the spot as an eternal monument with twelve large stones.

It was a significant moment not only because they reintroduced circumcision back into their culture, but it was also the place where the manna stopped. "The day after Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate the produce of Canaan" (Joshua 5:11-12).

During their forty years in the wilderness, the Israelites ate manna, similar to unleavened bread, which the Lord provided daily. It couldn't be collected and saved for later—each day's supply was designed to nourish people only in the present moment. But having finally reached Canaan, the long anticipated land flowing with milk and honey, the manna stopped. An arrival at their new destination represented a new place of maturity. God no longer provided manna because they had arrived.

For years, God had taken care of His people each step along the way. Now Gilgal had become the welcome center created to commemorate a major milestone for the people. It wasn't their final destination, but it had a profound mark on their maturity. Gilgal meant that they had grown throughout their journey, and now it meant that it was time to grow once more. The same is true for you. If you want to experience all that God has for you, there are times where you must grow up once more. Before Gilgal, milk was plentiful, but after Gilgal, it's now time for maturity to eat meat.

You are not where you used to be! You have matured and grown and developed spiritually. With maturity comes transition from the plow into God's power and into God's responsibilities for your life. God's expectations are clear: you have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others" rather than needing "someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word (Hebrews 5:12).





# A PLACE CALLED BETHEL

## Day 19

If Gilgal was all about recognizing and honoring the hard places in your life, then the next stop on Elijah's farewell was a place that reminds us to hold onto our dreams.

Bethel was the next stop on the trip and it means, "house of God." Bethel got its name by Jacob who later would receive a new name himself—the name Israel. While his journey to become a father of a nation wasn't easy, Jacob experienced the life-transforming power of God through a dream at a place that would eventually become extremely special. After cheating his twin brother, Esau, out of his birthright, Jacob tricked their father, Isaac, into blessing him with what was rightfully not Jacob's to receive (Genesis 27). Furious over the deception, Esau vowed to kill his brother. As a result, Jacob's mother, Rebekah, sent Jacob to stay with her brother, Laban, until Esau had cooled down.

So there was Jacob, escaping the wrath of his brother, when God shared a dream of his divine destiny. While sleeping, Jacob dreamed of stairs reaching from earth to heaven, with angels going up and down its steps. At the top stood God, who told Jacob that he would become the father of a nation with countless descendants (Genesis 28). Then the Lord blessed him and said: "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you" (Genesis 28:15).

This was a significant moment in Jacob's life. No matter how badly he had blown it in his past, God had still given him a dream to realize. Bethel was the name that Jacob had given to his anointed dream site—the place that would bridge his past and his future. Gilgal is the place where sin is laid down, but Bethel was the place where dreams get picked up.

So when Elijah ventured to Bethel, he went there knowing that he was about to go to his ultimate destination, his Heavenly home with God. Chances are you are right in between two places—Gilgal and Bethel. It reminds us that we are in the land of in between—past the struggles of the past, but still pushing towards the dreams of the future.





# FIND YOUR VOICE IN JERICHO

## Day 20

When you're waiting on a promise, it can be challenging, frustrating and even overwhelming as you wait for its fulfillment. But as you experience the growth in your own life as you begin to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, God reveals himself in waves and waves of grace and truth. As He reveals His presence to you in new ways as you spend time with Him, that presence has the power to overcome every obstacle and helps to create a way where you cannot see one. It's in this that you begin to trust Him more and more.

On Elijah's third stop of his farewell tour before being swept up to heaven on a chariot of fire, this is the message that emerges. After leaving Gilgal for Bethel, Elijah then heads to Jericho. Just as Gilgal and Bethel had held significant spiritual history for Israel, so had Jericho.

After Joshua had shepherded the people of Israel into Canaan, Jericho was the first city standing between them and claiming the Promised Land. They had escaped Egypt by running through the Red Sea, which parted miraculously for their passage. They had wandered in the wilderness for forty years. They had crossed the Jordan River, which had also parted for them. Now, they had finally arrived at their divine destination only to hit a wall—the fortified walls protecting the city of Jericho.

Despite God's promises, the Israelites wondered how they could possibly conquer a city so heavily fortified. But the lesson of Jericho was all about the Israelites learning how to find their voice. Rather than using military might to bring down its walls. After marching around the city for 6 days, God instructed them to shout it down on the seventh day saying, "When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in" (Joshua 6:5). Israel didn't realize it, but God had already delivered Jericho into their hands.

Much like in Jericho, God has already won the victory for us as well. Whatever Jericho's stand in front of you on the way to the promises you are believing God for, you must realize that His power has already delivered it into your hands. So you must learn to find your voice. You must learn to shout in obedience to the Lord. What is the Jericho promise? It's the power of God to transform every wall we face into a bridge for God's glory. It's the promise that whatever walls block your progress are nothing compared to your God. It is the expectation of God's power to make a way where you cannot—and the anticipation of what's on the other side. Today, this promise is so important to remember when you're on the plow dreaming of what God has next.





# EYES ON THE PRIZE

## Day 21

As we wrap up this time of 21 Days, I hope that these devotions have built your faith in God's power in your life. As we close, we want to share one last bit of encouragement with you.

Once you invite Jesus into your life and His spirit into your heart, failure is not an option. You are not a failure (you were never a failure)—you are God's beloved child, washed by the blood of the Lamb, forgiven, and made new. Not only are you not a failure, but you will never live in failure.

When you are in God's hands, it's impossible to live in failure. Why? His word promises us, "From eternity to eternity I am God. No one can snatch anyone out of my hand. No one can undo what I have done" (Isaiah 43:13 NLT). We are assured by Jesus, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

Even when we fall, we fall within the confines of the shadow of the Almighty. We fall in the grace and hand of God. When you are in the hands of God, how could you fail? It's impossible.

Elijah knew firsthand that any falls he had were not failures—a truth he would pass onto Elisha. Elijah had experienced fear, exhaustion, anxiety, and despair and yet God still met him, provided for him and restored his body and spirit. He was a "soul survivor" and so are you.

The Lord promises to be with you. He says "When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you" (Isaiah 43:2 NLT).

God's power is made PERFECT in your weaknesses. So, over this year when you suffer loss, battle trials and tribulations, deal with addiction, manage broken relationships—remember that although you fall, you do not fail. Keep your eyes on the prize. God's power in you makes you unstoppable. When you do this, every hard place can become a high place. And with the power of God with you, God will be faithful to complete EVERY work, dream, and hope that He has put in your heart.

Walk this year in full confidence and look to God's power. He will never fail you.







