



2010 NEW YEAR CORPORATE FAST

Psalm 63:1,

*“O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My Soul thirsts for You;
My flesh longs for You; In a dry and thirsty land; Where there is no
water.”*

*Antioch Christian Church
Senior Pastor Norris Q. and Executive Pastor Tonya McGill
2041 Walnut Hill Lane
Irving, Texas 75038
972-756-0010*

www.antiochchurchfamily.org

ANTIOCH CHRISTIAN CHURCH

NEW YEAR CORPORATE FAST

We are embarking upon a new year corporate fast to seek and honor the Lord as we begin a new year.

Psalm 42:1-3 NLT, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for God, the living God. When can I come and stand before him? Day and night, I have only tears for food, while my enemies continually taunt me, saying, "Where is this God of yours?"

We believe a great time to fast is the beginning of a new year. **Matthew 6:33** tells us that when we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all things will be added unto us. When we make God our number one priority at the beginning of the year, we position ourselves for God to do amazing things in our lives. Now more than ever we must become sensitive to the voice of God. As we fast, we will increase our ability to hear from the Holy Spirit as we remove distractions. Our goal is to usher in the presence of God in a way that will draw multitudes of souls to Him so that we may **BUILD PEOPLE TO REFLECT JESUS**. Furthermore, we desire to see very limitation and stronghold removed from the minds of God's people so that His power can be seen.

Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore; brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service".

There is a great promise in the **Book of Isaiah Chapter 58 proclaiming that the chosen fast will "undo the heavy burdens and let the oppressed go free."** During these challenging times that we live in, we can see many who are oppressed, depressed and without hope. As we fast and pray during this time, I believe that God will heal the land and burdens will be lifted and oppressed set free! **IT IS IMPORTANT THAT DURING THIS TIME OF FASTING, WE ARE DILIGENT AND CONSISTENT IN PRAYER BECAUSE FASTING WITHOUT PRAYER IS JUST A HUNGER STRIKE!**

Executive Pastor McGill and I are excited that you have made a decision to prepare yourself to be used of God in a way unlike ever before by participating in this fast. We believe that God will move in your life in a supernatural way. Ask the Lord to show you areas to study during your time of fasting and prayer. Set aside time everyday to study and meditate on the Word. Study the specific areas of focus and expect God to perform His Word. Don't quit, go the distance and complete the fast, remember **Hebrews 11:6 says that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**

Be Strong in the Lord and the Power of His Might,
Senior Pastor Norris McGill

WHY FAST?

The purpose of fasting is to strengthen you spiritually, mentally and physically. The goal is to help cleanse your temple of the destructive and negative forces that interfere with your relationship with God. Through fasting, your ability to hear, see and accomplish God's plan will become clearer. Fasting is not a penalty or a punishment, fasting is a benefit! By making fasting a part of your Christian walk and seeking God through prayer, you will grow closer to the Lord and mature in the faith like never before. Fasting is one of the most powerful weapons God has given us for our daily lives, *Mark 9:29, "And he said unto them, this kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting"*

FASTING GOAL:

The goal of fasting is to increase your ability to deny the flesh when needed. An ability to deny the flesh is an ability to get closer to God and His plan for you. During your time of fasting, be diligent in your study and meditation of God's Word. Fasting without prayer is a hunger strike and does not manifest any supernatural benefits. Purchase a journal, record your daily Bible readings and what God has spoken to your heart. This journal will serve as your guide for the Will of God concerning you. It will also be your encouragement as you go through the year and may question your purpose. Each day, set aside specific time to spend time in prayer and meditation.

BENEFITS OF FASTING:

Through fasting, you can experience:

- Release from the bondage of sin
- Spiritual renewal
- Restoration in your relationships
- Financial blessings
- Supernatural healing
- Greater revelation/confirmation from the Lord
- Vision for your life

AS YOU FAST:

1. Pray for God's direction and guidance
2. Study and meditate on God's Word
3. Be serious about your fast; make a commitment in your heart that you will do this AS UNTO THE LORD for the main purpose of GROWING CLOSER TO THE LORD.
4. Set aside a specific place and time to pray. Prayer is critical during the fast to increase your ability to hear from the Lord.
5. Sacrifice by giving up things that are pleasurable to you and use that time to spend time with the Lord
 - Married couples – "Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time"... 1 Corinthians 7:5a
 - Children may not be able to fast food but can fast video games or fast foods
6. Write down the things God speaks to your heart.

7. Focus on the dreams and visions that God will show you and ask God to reveal to you wisdom on how to accomplish them. ***Daniel 10:10-11, 14***, God revealed to Daniel the understanding of the vision; after fasting, Daniel obtained clarity and understanding.

MEDITATION SCRIPTURES:

God will do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21)

In addition to the daily meditation passages listed in the prayer journal, please concentrate on praying for these areas specifically for the church as a corporate body.

1. Spiritual Growth

- a. Developing in the love of God (Matthew 22:37-40; Philippians 1:9-11; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13)
- b. Bear fruit (Galatians 5:22-23; Colossians 1:9-11)
- c. Deliverance from strongholds (Mark 9:14-29; Psalm 34:19)
- d. Maturity in the Word (Hebrews 5:12-14)

2. Church Growth (Acts 2:41-47; Acts 5:14)

- a. Making disciples of all men (Matthew 28:19-20; Matthew 10:7-8)
- b. Pray for health, prosperity and peace for all of our members (Philippians 1:2-7)
- c. Pray for unity in the Body (Ephesians 4:13-16; Psalm 133:1-3)

3. Each One, Reach One (Matthew 18:11)

- a. Pray for unsaved loved ones (Acts 16:31)
- b. Pray for the harvest of souls God has assigned for us to reach

4. Pray for Divine Protection (Psalm 91; Psalm 3; Isaiah 54:17; 58:8)

5. Favor of God (Psalm 102:13; Psalm 5:12; Psalm 30:5; Psalm 41:11)

6. Wisdom of God (James 1:5; Proverbs 4:5; Proverbs 5:1-2; Proverbs 7:4)

7. Manifested Glory (2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 4:17; Colossians 1:27)

- a. Marriages (Ephesians 5:22-33)
- b. Families (Acts 16:31; Genesis 18:18-19)
- c. Finances (2 Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 4:19; Deuteronomy 8:18)
- d. Health (3 John 2; Matthew 8:16-17; Exodus 15:26)
- e. Businesses (Deuteronomy 28:8; Daniel 6:2-3)

8. Leadership (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

- a. Our President and His Family
- b. Vice President and His Family
- c. Congress
- d. Mayor of Irving and City Officials
- e. All Government Authority
- f. Our Pastor and his family
- g. Church leadership wisdom and unity (Elders, Deacons, Ministers, Ministry leaders)

CORPORATE FASTING INSTRUCTIONS:

NO MEATS (nothing that flies, swims, walks or crawls)

NO SWEETS (no cakes, no cookies, no pies, etc)

NO JUNK FOOD (no chips, pretzels, popcorn, etc)

NO FAST FOOD (no Taco Bell, Wendy's, McDonald's, etc)

NO CAFFEINE (Starbucks, Cokes, Chocolate, etc)

LIMIT YOUR **PLEASURABLE** TV TIME EACH DAY no more than 4 hours per day

NO **LEISURE** INTERNET SURFING, VIDEO GAMES

NO MOVIES ON TV OR THEATERS

BE SURE TO DRINK PLENTY OF WATER

AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, LIMIT YOUR STRENUOUS ACTIVITIES since your diet will be changed

REMEMBER THE GOAL IS TO QUIET DISTRACTIONS and BECOME SENSITIVE TO THE SPIRIT AND THE VOICE OF GOD.

THINGS TO EAT:

- Vegetarian Dishes (Use this opportunity to eat healthier, find recipes in cookbooks or internet). Think of pasta as a main course or tortillas or potatoes
- Fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned fruit
- Fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned vegetables
- Vegetable Burgers
- Whole Grains (whole wheat, brown rice, grits, etc)
- Nuts and Seeds (sunflower seeds, cashews, peanuts, sesame, peanut butter, etc)
- 100% Fruit Juice
- Spring water, distilled water or other pure waters

With the exception of individuals who are pregnant, have diabetes, hypertension, children and toddlers, and those who may be on required medication, everyone is able to fast at this level.

If you fall into either of these categories please be sure to talk with your doctor before making any changes to your diet. If you are unable to participate with the dietary changes, you can give up the other pleasurable items (television, internet, etc).

Tips for Success:

1. Understand that when you fast your body detoxifies, eliminating toxins from your system. This can cause mild discomfort such as headaches and irritability during withdrawal from caffeine and sugars.
2. Naturally, you will have hunger pains.
3. Limit your activity and exercise moderately.
4. Take time to rest.

5. Fasting brings about miraculous results. You are following Jesus' example when you fast.
6. Spend time listening to praise and worship music.
7. Pray as often as you can throughout the day.
8. Get away from the normal distractions as much as possible and keep your heart and mind set on seeking God's face.

Preparing Spiritually

Confess your sins to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of weakness. Forgive all who have offended you and ask forgiveness from those you may have offended. Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ and reject the worldly desires that try to hinder you.

Determine to minister to the Lord during this time of fasting. Fasting is a time we can have more intimate fellowship with the Lord. Purpose in your heart that during this time of fasting, you will grow more in your personal relationship with the Lord. Make a commitment in your heart to set aside these 21 days to cry out to the Lord and draw closer to Him.

Increase Your Prayer Time:

Remember Fasting without Prayer is a Hunger Strike! During this time it is important that you pray and seek the Lord consistently throughout the fast. Begin each day with prayer and reading the Word and end the day the same way. It is important that corporately we pray according to the areas listed.

Breaking Your Fast:

So many individuals complete the fast successfully and then do damage to their physical temples by breaking the fast incorrectly. In breaking the fast, please do not eagerly seek to eat every type of food that was sacrificed during the fast, one minute past midnight on the final day of the fast. Because your body has been through a transition, it is important to slowly break the body in. Begin eating solid food gradually; eat small portions or snacks.

It is suggested that after you feel your body has adjusted, begin to eat small quantities of a healthy diet.

Fasting Resources:

The following websites are helpful resources to aid you in understanding more about the Daniel Fast. Knowledge is power!

<http://daniel-fast.com/about.html>

<http://daniel-fast.com/recipes.html>

<http://daniel-fast.com/support.html>

<http://danielfast.wordpress.com/daniel-fast-food-list/>

MY 21 DAY FASTING COMMITMENT

I commit to participate in our Church Corporate wide fast from Monday, January 10, 2010 to Saturday, January 30, 2010.

My purpose for fasting is: _____

Specific areas I am praying for during this fast:

MY SUCCESS PLAN:

1. I will find an accountability partner, someone who will encourage me when the temptation to quit arises. *Note: This person should be in agreement with your desire to complete the fast and a spiritually mature person who can encourage you with the Word. Ecclesiastes 4:12, "A threefold cord is not quickly broken".*
My accountability partner for this fast is _____.
2. I will set aside time every morning from _____ am to _____ am to praise God, read my Word and pray.
3. I will set aside time every evening from _____ pm to _____ pm to praise God, read my Word and pray.
4. I will NOT allow the enemy to accuse me or shame me should I fall short. I am determined to use this time to draw closer to the Lord. I WILL DENY MYSELF SOMETHING PLEASURABLE TO SUCCEED. *Note: If you are unable to abstain from meat the entire 21 days, you can do no sweets, no caffeine, no tv, etc. There are things that you CAN sacrifice and still gain the benefit of fasting. Do what you can!*

PRAYER AND FASTING DAILY JOURNAL

**JOURNAL PAGES TO RECORD MY EXPERIENCE
WITH THE LORD DURING THIS TIME OF FASTING
AND CONSECRATION...**

Day	Scriptures that ministered to my heart	Things God spoke to my heart
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

Day	Scriptures that ministered to my heart	Things God spoke to my heart
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		

Day	Scriptures that ministered to my heart	Things God spoke to my heart
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		

PRAYER AND FASTING DAILY MEDITATION

DAY 1 – 1/10/10
GROW ME UP LORD...NO MORE EXCUSES!

Scripture Reading: Exodus 4:1, 10-12

Prayer Focus: Breaking strongholds in the mind 2 Corinthians 10:1-6; Philippians 4:8

According to Webster's dictionary, the word excuse means "to make an apology for, to justify, an expression of regret for failure to do something." How many times have we been guilty of reaching for any excuse to justify or explain the reason we did not accomplish a task? Making excuses can become an extremely bad habit and can therefore become very detrimental to your success with God. This is a habit that must be broken if we are ever going to succeed with God and in life. Many of us have grown so accustomed to making excuses that we don't realize that we are doing it. It has become an acceptable way of life. If we are not careful we will become much better at explaining why we failed rather than seeking ways to ensure success. I have found that God does not accept our excuses. Why should we accept the excuses of others? Ministries, life, businesses will always operate at a level of mediocrity if we continue to allow this disease to spread. We must all be held accountable to a higher standard as children of God.

In the text God has called Moses to deliver the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. Once Moses received the instructions the first thing out of his mouth is an excuse. He looked for a way that he would fail rather than a way he would succeed. "They will not believe me," was his response. Moses felt that since they would not believe him, that there would be no reason for him to go.

When Moses stopped making excuses and obeyed God, he led millions into freedom and has shaped nations and laws with the commandments that he received from the Lord. He did all this because he reached the point in his life where he said, **NO MORE EXCUSES**. Today find ways to succeed, not excuses to fail or to escape your destiny. God desires to do more in you and through you this year, will you submit or will you make excuses?
THE CHOICE IS YOURS!

DAY 2 – 1/11/10

LORD HELP ME GO THE DISTANCE

Scripture Reading: Acts 20:24

Prayer Focus: Breaking strongholds in the flesh 2 Corinthians 10:1-6; Romans 7

Every believer must be aware of what I call **distance killers**. A distance killer is anything or anyone that will discourage you from going the distance in your faith. We have all been called by God to finish. It stands to reason that there will be forces standing in our way to prevent us from finishing what God has called us to do. Mature believers will be aware of the distance killers that come to thwart God's plan for their lives.

In the text, Paul is speaking to the elders of the church from Ephesus. He gives them a wonderful account of his life and ministry and the perils that still stand in his way to finish his course. Paul stated something that we should always remember to practice. **“None of these things move me”** How many times have we been moved? How many times have we allowed anxiety, fear or procrastination to stop us? It's happened to me more times than I care to remember.

Today, I will deal with two specific distance killers. The first is anxiety. The origin of the word comes from the Greek word, *Mirimna*. *Mirimna* is defined as an abnormal or overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear marked by physiological signs (sweating, tension, increased pulse, etc); self doubt about one's capacity to cope with; rushed decision made without peace. God does not want His children to be anxious about anything. In fact, in Philippians 4:6 we are charged to be anxious for nothing. Yet we live in a world that thrives and profits on anxiety. We are bombarded with advertisements, rushed decisions and purchases. These things are strategically placed in our paths to distract us and kill our distance. Remember what God has for you is for you and nobody can stay God's hand. We can overcome anxiety by practicing these five things:

1. Patience- We must operate in patience and wait on God's promises to manifest
2. Cast all your cares upon Christ – Practice giving your cares to the Lord and do not take them back
3. Resist the five senses - We must learn to walk by faith and by sight (things we can perceive with our natural senses)
4. Be filled with the Holy Spirit – We must be filled with the Holy Spirit everyday and be sensitive to and led by His Spirit
5. Pray fervently – We must be persistent in prayer. When we really pray, our vantage point will change from how we see things to the way God sees them.

The second distance killer is Procrastination. Procrastination means to put off intentionally the doing of something that should be done to the detriment of one's own well being. We all know the “I am going to get around to it Christians.” Paul was a man of action and we are still benefitting from his ability to overcome procrastination. For those of us who have been attacked by this distance killer here are some practical tips on winning this battle.

1. ACT NOW - Today, at this moment, move closer to what needs to be done
2. Establish relationships with action oriented people (people of faith)
3. Recognize procrastination for what it is – a character flaw
4. Submit yourself to someone that will hold you accountable and give them permission to push you without offense.

DAY 3 - 1/12/10

THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN

Scripture Reading: Ecclesiastes 12:13

Prayer Focus: Breaking strongholds from the past 2 Corinthians 10:1-6; Philippians 3:7-16

Growing up as a young boy, I always wanted my parents to be proud of me. It was very important to me, for them to be pleased with me as their son. I had a great deal of respect for them and how they lived their lives. I did not want to do anything that would cause them disappointment or embarrassment. Consequently, I behaved myself as best I could while around others and especially around grown ups that knew them. I certainly did not want them to give my parents a bad report about me. This caused me to not only behave myself in their presence but also away from my parents' presence. I realized that I had a fear or respect for them and it mattered to me what they thought.

As I got older and began to spend more and more time away from them, my attitude changed and it became easier for me to misbehave. I realized that not having that close fellowship and relationship with them had caused my attitude and my actions to change. Although it still mattered to me how they felt, it was not enough to alter my behavior. I had lost something that I once had. It slipped away because I had been absent from their presence and their influence.

This is what happens to believers when we don't stay in the presence of the Lord. It is very easy to lose our Fear of God. The fear of God prevents us from doing certain things because we know that He would not be pleased with them. It shouldn't matter what person we are hiding things from or what we think we've gotten away with. When we fear God, we know that He is not pleased, and we value what He thinks above what anyone else knows or finds out about us. It should grieve us as believers when we do something against the commandments of God. The more we stay in His presence, the more we know about Him and the more we Fear Him and the more sensitive we become to His spirit. We know when we are doing wrong and when we are too close to the edge.

God blessed Solomon with a supernatural wisdom and he used that wisdom to come to an important conclusion in the above passage of scripture. After much seeking ,searching and researching, he came to the realization that you could boil life down into one sentence. The whole duty of man (mankind) is to FEAR GOD and Keep His Commandments. The Greek word for fear here is Yare it means to respect, to honor, to stand in awe of, to reverence. We must honor God with our attitude, with our behavior, with our speech, and in our activities. Our treatment of others is a direct witness of whether we have a fear of God or not. Our obedience to laws and submission to authority is a direct witness of our Fear of God. How we behave on our jobs, in business or even with our spouses and children all testify of our fear of God. Our church attendance and attitude toward serving in ministry is a witness of our fear of God. It shouldn't matter if the Pastor or Leader saw you or knows about your indiscretions. God knows and if there is a fear of God in you, it matters to you that He knows. Fear God and keep His commandments this is the whole duty of man.

DAY 4 - 1/13/10

LORD TEACH ME HOW TO FORGIVE

Scripture Reading: Luke 22:34

Prayer Focus: Breaking strongholds from others 2 Corinthians 10:1-6; Psalm 1

What a wonderful picture of forgiveness that Jesus gives us to follow. Sometimes as believers, we can forget that we are followers of Christ. We are not beside Him and we most certainly are not in front of Him, the position we are to occupy is follower. Here He gives us a great example and model to follow in forgiveness. In this passage of scripture, an innocent man has been tortured, ridiculed, lied on, mocked and beaten, yet His response is to forgive them.

Let's examine the text: Jesus said Father, forgive them. Many times the image we have of God is one of anger and judgment, ready to strike us down every time we make a mistake. Although God does get angry and He executes judgment, that's not how He is all the time. If that were a true image, then this would be as good a time as any to strike someone down. What we see instead, is compassion and love in the midst of evil and wrongdoing. Jesus showed us God's heart and love when He walked the earth. The woman caught in the act of adultery certainly qualified to be stoned to death under the Law. Only the Judge of all the earth could pardon her and He did, saying "he that is among you that is without sin let him cast the first stone." God is love and under our covenant, Jesus is on the mercy seat, ready and willing to forgive us. There are two things that I want to point out that we must do.

First, we must receive His forgiveness. This is one of the great benefits in our covenant. All the things you have ever done in your life against the will of God, He chooses to forgive when we ask for forgiveness. The word used in this passage is the Greek word *Aphiemi*; It means to send away, To keep no longer. The root of the word is the Greek word *Apo*; it means to separate, to put distance between. It's ok to shout now. When God forgives us, He does not keep our sin. He also separates our sin from us as far as the east is from the west. The east and west will never meet, they will always remain separate. God makes a choice to forget our sins. It's time we make the same choice. Receive His forgiveness and forgive yourself. Don't allow the devil to condemn you about things that you have already been forgiven of. You won in the courtroom and the Judge pronounced you Not Guilty.

Secondly, we must be willing to forgive others the same way He forgave us. I have learned that whatever I can receive, I can also give. If I can receive forgiveness from God, I most certainly can forgive others. Many people find it difficult to forgive others because they have not received God's forgiveness for themselves. God's forgiveness is not a feeling; it's a promise and a deliberate act from God. Once you choose to forgive, it will keep your relationship with God intact. There is a freedom and peace that we experience when we truly forgive others. No one or no thing is worth you jeopardizing your relationship with God. If you still get angry or have a negative reaction when you think about them then you have not forgiven. Let it go and be free today. Follow Christ and forgive them.

DAY 5 - 1/14/10

AM I IN THE RIGHT PLACE?

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:18

Prayer Focus: Breaking strongholds from issues 2 Corinthians 10:1-6; Galatians 5:1

There is a quest and desire that transcends social, educational, economical and geographical lines. That quest is the pursuit of happiness. It is a search for meaning and purpose for our lives. We want to know why are we here and what are we supposed to be doing? This is a human issue that is common to all mankind. The Bible gives us insight and actually identifies who we are and where we are supposed to be. God has a set place for you and a set time for you to do what He purposed for you to do. There is a great line in the Movie Forest Gump. His commander Lt. Dan, asked him if he had found Jesus. His response was, "I didn't know I was supposed to be looking for him sir." Unfortunately this is the testimony of many people, even some in the body of Christ. You will never find yourself until you discover the One Who created you and sent you into the earth. Many people wander and set out on this quest for the fulfillment. Often the road leads to places that we never intended to go. No one would say, "When I grow up I want to go to jail, or I want to create mass chaos and cause great pain." However in many a pursuit, this was the outcome. What happened? They never found their set place. In essence we waste time trying to fill the void with riches and pleasures of this life, only to find we are more miserable and less fulfilled than when the journey began.

Let's examine two points in the text that gave me revelation knowledge. First, God placed us in the body. There are things that were already established before He placed you. One cannot place a part in the body without the body. The body is the local church. The church was established by Jesus long before we arrived here. If you follow the progression, the church was established and God made you a part that would fit perfectly in the body and cause the body to function and be fruitful. Therefore there has to be a set church prepared for you to serve in and a set place in that church for your gift to operate.

Secondly, God placed me in the body as it has pleased Him. God decided what I would do, when I would do it, where I would do it and for how long I would do it. This was predestined for all of us before the foundation of the world. The key here is submitting to the perfect will of God and finding the joy and fulfillment of being in my set place. You cannot allow the behavior of others to cause your will to override God's will and vacate your set place. If you do this, prepare yourself for a wilderness experience that was never intended for you. When you are not in your set place, there is no grace and you will be angry, frustrated and unfulfilled. We must come into agreement with the will of God and accept what He wants us to do. I thought I knew what I wanted to do with my life and I began to pursue it with a reckless abandonment. I found a road that left me empty, angry and discouraged. Once I submitted to what God wanted for me, the most amazing thing happened, I found that what I thought I wanted, I really didn't want and what I thought I didn't want is what I really wanted all along. I feel like Paul in Romans 7. The point is, you're lost until you find Jesus. Once you find Him, He points you to your destiny and purpose. There is a set place for you that God has ordained. Don't just go to church and listen to a sermon and go home. Get involved in your local church and serve with the fire and passion that God placed in you. Your Pastor and local congregants and the body of Christ need you. Make it a great day.

DAY 6 - 1/15/10

TRY THE SPIRIT BY THE SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: 1 John 4:1

Prayer Focus: Breaking strongholds from past mistakes 2 Corinthians 10:1-6; Ephesians 4:17-32

As believers we must be constantly aware that there is a spiritual realm that directly affects the natural realm. Since we operate in the natural realm, it is not a stretch even for the most mature believer to begin to justify and evaluate things only from a natural standpoint. We have to train ourselves to look at everything from a spiritual standpoint first, lest we be deceived by falsehood. We must evaluate everything, whether it is a prophet, friend, spouse, business partner or even people in the church. God gave us His Spirit to keep us from being deceived. We must rely on the Holy Spirit and not forget to utilize His help in this area of our lives.

In this text the Apostle John reminds us to evaluate things by the Spirit of the Lord who was given to us by Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the standard of measurement we must use to distinguish truth from error. Examine your relationships. Some have already passed the test, others have failed, and still others are still being examined. Train yourself to try every spirit by the internal Spirit of God that lives in you. The Spirit of God will always look beyond what you can see with your natural eyes. Time is a revealer and if you wait long enough, all things will reveal its true nature. God will spare us from unnecessary grief and drama if we listen to Him. We must be careful not to be yoked together with the spirit of error that's not of God. God doesn't necessarily want you to shun people that have the spirit of error. He may want you to minister to them and lead them into truth. He does however want you to recognize the spirit and not be deceived by it.

We are admonished to try every spirit. The word try in the text is the Greek word dokimazo. It means to test, examine, prove, and scrutinize to determine whether a thing is genuine. This is an interesting word because it is derived from the word dokimos. This word was used to authenticate coins and money. During biblical times coins would often be melted down and recast. Unscrupulous people who did not have integrity would melt down the coins and not add the proper weight and still attempt to trade the coins for the full value. The men who had integrity refused to trade or accept any currency that did not reflect the accurate weight and value. These men of integrity were called Dokimos. They were approved and if you went to them, you were assured of not being deceived or cheated when you did business with them. They were tried and had proven that they were true. This is the reason Paul wrote to Timothy and told him to study to show himself "approved" a workman that needed not to be ashamed. God's spirit has been given to us and helps us to test the spirit of people who may look, speak and appear to be authentic. It is only by trying the spirit by the Spirit are we able to know whether they are of God. Thank God for the safeguards He has provided us as we travel down the road to victory. Prove all things and make it a great day.

DAY 7 - 1/16/10

HE THOUGHT YOU WERE WORTH IT

Scripture Reading: Matthew 27:45-46

Prayer Focus: Breaking strongholds from sin 2 Corinthians 10:1-6; Romans 6:1-23

This is one of the greatest moments in human history. Jesus willfully goes to Calvary to be crucified on a cross for the sins of the world. These were our sins that He took upon himself. He was willing to go through excruciating pain and public humiliation because he thought you were worth it. Every sin was paid for and has been accounted for by Him. This kind of love for us defies our human understanding. How can God still love me, after I have done so many horrific things? It is not necessary to understand how, we must accept that He does and receive this greater love.

In the text darkness fell all over the land about the sixth hour. The sixth hour is 12 noon. It is not a normal occurrence for it to be dark at 12 noon. Something abnormal is occurring at this hour. The Bible in 2 Corinthians 5:21: For He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. It is at this moment that Jesus began to take on the sins of world. Every sin that could be conceived, He became. This was not a normal day. Jesus is now the Lamb that would be sacrificed to appease the wrath of God against us. Darkness fell because God The Father in Heaven cannot fellowship with sin. He had to leave Jesus at the moment He became sin. We see in the text that Jesus never cried out, while they were mocking, beating and shouting at Him. We see this cry of being left alone and forsaken by God that pulled this plea from our Lord. For the first time in eternity past, Jesus was separated from the Father. This hurt him tremendously. For three hours until 3pm, Jesus was hanging there on the cross, separated from His Father, for our sins. He thought you were worth it. No one has ever loved you this much. Never allow anyone to determine your value. Always remember that Jesus has already proven that you are worth it. Make it a great day.

DAY 8 - 1/17/10 READY, SET, RUN!

Scripture Reading: Matthew 27:45-46

Prayer Focus: Moving Closer to Jesus, James 4:8; Luke 14:28-33

I believe it's just human nature to inquire about the affairs of others when there are affairs of our own that need tending to. Let's face it human beings are generally nosey by nature. Ever wonder why tabloid television and gossip columns are still in business? We now have Twitter, Facebook and blogging which allows people to stay on top of the latest hot topics and the exploits that occur in the lives of others. Armed with this revelation about ourselves, we must contend with our flesh to control the urge to be nosey. I have not known a nosey person that matured and were fruitful in their walk with the Lord. Why? They are so busy focusing on the lives of others they don't have time to focus on the race that has been set before them. Jesus began to focus Peter on his race and not John's. We all have our own race to run. No one can run our race for us. We must be careful that while we are running our race we do not get distracted, delayed or even stop running altogether. Jesus did not want Peter to get so concerned about John's ministry that he would fail to be successful in his own. I have had to fight this temptation throughout my ministry. I would look at another person's church or success and begin to wonder and say what about us, and when is it our time? There certainly is a time to glean and a time to learn from the success and failures of others. The problem arises when we become preoccupied with another and begin to neglect our own race that has been set before us. I have learned that **wondering** can lead to **wandering**. If you have ever seen a horse race, you will notice that they put blinders on the horses' eyes so that the horse can only see what's in front of them. If the horse begins to see things to the left and the right of them, they could get distracted and never finish the race. I like the response that Jesus gives Peter. In essence He says to Peter, "If I wanted John to be alive when I came back to rapture the church, what difference does that make to you?" It makes no difference to you Peter; focus on what I have called you to do. John has a race that he must run and you have a race that you must run. Stop being nosey and follow me! Today keep the blinders on and run your race. Make it a great day.

DAY 9 - 1/18/10

SPEAKING CORRECTLY!

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 18:20-21

Prayer Focus: Naked and Not Ashamed, James 4:8; Luke 15:11-32

How will you use your mouth today? The bible lets us know just how powerful the tongue is. We can build with it or destroy. We can encourage or discourage. We can give hope or give despair. We can draw people or repel them with our words. The scripture we will focus on today was written by King Solomon. He asked God for wisdom to govern a nation and God blessed him with wisdom and great wealth. Today let's tap into the Wisdom of Solomon. In verse 20 a man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth. The word belly is the Hebrew word (beten) it is the same word used for womb. In this text it refers any place in our lives that is empty or barren.

First, that empty place shall be satisfied with the fruit of OUR mouth not God's mouth. God has already spoken. We must now use our mouth to produce the fruit that we want. It is our mouth that will fill the empty place. What is your mouth producing? Examine the evidence in your life. It tells a story. If I don't like what I have, I should change what I am sowing.

Secondly, the mouth produces fruit and increase. This means that we must speak this way continuously on a daily basis. I am married to a wonderful woman, she is a great wife, mother and lifelong partner, and we have a great marriage. In the beginning of our marriage I did not have this testimony. I would have said the direct opposite. We have been married now for over 18 years and could have easily ended the marriage before the 1st anniversary. What changed? When the marriage was still bad, I began to say that we had a great marriage and that I was her ideal husband and she was my ideal wife. I began to say that we could get along and enjoy each other's company. I began to speak what I wanted, not what I had. My wife began to speak the same thing. We spoke it before we saw any changes. This was an empty spot in our marriage and we satisfied it or filled this emptiness with our own mouth. This is a very important note: We spoke this by faith, with total confidence that what we were saying was true. We did that because we believed God's word over how we felt or how things appeared. God had already spoken in Genesis concerning our marriage. The change was not up to Him, it was up to us. Also we did not stop speaking after the marriage got better. We continued to speak the same things and continue to do so today. This works in every aspect of your life. God is meticulous and He is concerned about the small things in your life as well as what we consider the great things in our lives.

Finally, death and life are in the power of the tongue. The word power here is the Hebrew word, Yad, it is the same word used for hand. How do you use your hands in the natural? We can think of hundred ways we use them. We can give and receive, we can build and defend; we can create, embrace or push away. You must see your mouth and use it as your hands in the spirit. When you speak, see the words doing what you say. This is faith in action and working to bring to pass naturally what you see spiritually. In due time, what you spoke will manifest itself in the natural. Speak correctly and make it a great day.

DAY 10 - 1/19/10

STAND UP FOR THE GOSPEL

Scripture Reading: Romans 1:16

Prayer Focus: Pursuing the Master, James 4:8; Matthew 13:44-46

I have noticed that many people who go to church have no problem witnessing and testifying to people who are in church. It is human nature to be at ease talking to people who are like-minded. Jesus has ordained us to be a witness to everyone especially to those who are outside of the church and have yet to receive salvation. Too often we believe that we must be called into evangelistic ministry in order to win people to the Lord. Once we are born again, we become soldiers who have been given the authority to witness and are qualified at that moment to testify. There are many factors that I have found that contribute to our being timid when it involves witnessing to others. Fear is the main culprit. Fear of rejection, low self esteem, fear of not being astute enough in scripture or feeling unqualified are just a few. These are all feelings. We must not allow feelings to rob us of God's best for us. I will remind you of the woman of Samaria that Jesus encountered at the well in John's Gospel chapter 4. This woman was a sinner, living in sin and hiding from church people. Jesus made sure He arrived to meet her at a time when she wasn't expecting. He engaged her in conversation. He began the conversation. He treated her with kindness and did not judge her condition.

How terrible it would be if a patient who was diseased and broken went to the doctor for help and the doctor immediately began to judge and mock and reprimand the patient for being in that condition. No doctor would do such a thing. They would immediately begin treatment to help the patient to a path of recovery. Too often we don't view people as being diseased or sick spiritually. Jesus saw this woman's sickness and healed her. He had to look beyond the flesh. How many people have we encountered that looked good on the outside but were broken and lost on the inside. The woman immediately left and began to witness to people she knew and didn't know in her home town. She got the whole town excited about this Man who had transformed her life. Jesus gave her no formal evangelistic training; He did not take her through school or minister's class. He took the time to minister to her where she was.

This woman was not ashamed of the Gospel. She realized its power and evangelized an entire city. Every person we will ever encounter is in need of a savior. We cannot be moved by appearances. We must be moved by His spirit. How many people have you talked to this week about Jesus? How many people have you invited to church to hear about Jesus? How many people have you personally witnessed to this week? We can all do more for the cause of Christ. We are not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Make it a great day.

DAY 11 - 1/20/10
THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITH

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 12:2

Prayer Focus: Following Jesus, James 4:8; Matthew 24:45-51

God is the only One He finishes before He starts. This means that there is no situation that you will ever encounter that He has not already written for you. The author of something holds a very powerful position. If you look closely at the word you can see authority in it. The Author has the power to determine the outcome before anything is ever put on the pages. They can also change situations to benefit the characters that are being written about. Hold on you may be a paragraph or a sentence away from your breakthrough. The Lord shared with me that our situation is never in control rather what He has written is what is in control. We must learn to view our situations from the vantage point of the author. There is not a circumstance that you should be under. Rather every circumstance you have been put over by the Author that wrote about it before you got in it. God is not the author of confusion. If there is confusion, He did not authorize it. He authorized Love, joy, peace, endurance, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self control. He authorized the abundant life. The things that were not written for me, I simply do not receive and you do not have to receive them either. Spend time meditating on what has been written, the Word of God and receive all that God has for you. Make it a great day.

DAY 12 - 1/21/10

YOU CAN HANDLE IT!

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:13

Prayer Focus: Laying down my life, James 4:8; Luke 10:30-37

Whatever you are going through you can handle it. I know how it looks sometimes and how it feels sometimes, but what does the word of God say? We walk by faith and not by sight. The revelation in the above scripture is awesome. Let's examine some things that are promised here.

First, the word temptation here is the Greek word *peirasmos*; it is used here to denote a trying, testing or proving. God does not tempt us to do evil. God does in fact test us all the time. The test causes us to grow and really know where we are in our faith and relationship with the Lord. The devil tempts us to sin against God and solicits us to do evil. Even though the same word is used, the purpose of its use and users are vastly different. The good news is, be it a test by God or a temptation by the devil, you can handle it.

Secondly, this is my favorite part of the verse: but God is faithful. Stop here and meditate on this. When all else fails, God is faithful. This has kept me through many a test and temptation. When I am unfaithful, God is faithful. It means I can depend on God to always be in position, to always keep His word, to always provide help. God knows what I can handle and what I can't handle. The things that I can't handle, I have never had to go through. It's not because I am faithful, it's because God is faithful. This also means every temptation or test that I failed, I could handle. I chose to not make my escape or I chose not to endure. The test allowed me to see where I am spiritually. You may think you have been delivered in an area. You can't truly know until you have been tested in that area. We are promised by the Lord that He would not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to handle. You can handle your children. You can handle your job. You can handle your ministry position. You can handle people in the church. You can handle the beautiful woman or the handsome man. You can handle school. You can handle everything you are facing and are yet to face. The things that you cannot handle, God has kept them from you. You have never seen them.

Finally, know that God will always provide a way of escape out of temptation. When you are tempted to do evil, learn how to say, ok I can handle this, then begin to look for your escape route. You know God has to provide one, so your eyes and ears should be looking for how can you get out of there now. When you find the escape, don't hesitate or tarry as Lot's wife did. Take the Holy Transportation to safety that God has provided for you. **YOU CAN HANDLE IT.** Make it a great day.

DAY 13 - 1/22/10

TRUST HIM AND REST

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 3:5

Prayer Focus: Total Trust, James 4:8; Luke 12:16-21

One of the most comforting things about being a believer and living the abundant life is having a trusting relationship with the Lord. In today's scripture there are some key things to extract. Trusting God is key to being able to successfully navigate through the twist and turns and ups and downs of everyday life. It is not possible to have peace without trust. Every relationship will struggle and eventually fail without trust. One of our biggest misconceptions is that people view faith and trust the same way. They are vastly different. I have counseled many people and have had to make a distinction between the two. Faith in someone says that I believe they will do the right thing. Trust says that I know they will do the right thing and I will not spend any time wondering or worried about them doing the right thing. If you do wonder or worry about them doing the right thing, you don't trust them. When my family takes a road trip out of town, my wife may read a book, or take a nap, my children will play video games or fall asleep. They are not the least bit concerned about Dad being up or driving safely. Why? Over time Dad has successfully driven them to and from various destinations. What they are saying is "Dad we trust you so much we'll go to sleep and not worry about you taking us somewhere else." You can have faith in someone that you just met. Trust however, is built over time and is born out of a relationship. Trust is gained through a period of consistent fellowship. God did not ask Abraham to sacrifice Isaac until they had spent over 35 years together. It took time for their relationship to get to that point. There are many people who have not entered into a trusting relationship with God because they are not spending time with Him. Marriages fail because trust is never established. If you want a miserable life, marry someone that you don't trust and you will have one. Once trust is established, however, you are guaranteed peace even when the storms arise. Even the world understands this principle as you see many financial institutions that put the word trust in their names; they want you to feel safe with them handling your money without any worry of them violating your trust. They want you to be able to go about your daily business having peace knowing that your retirement and financial well-being is secure. They will often use their longevity and track record as key selling points to put you at ease. Unfortunately there are believers who have more trust in these institutions than they do in God.

The scripture tells us to trust in The Lord with ALL your heart and to not lean to our own understanding. This revelation really helps my walk with the Lord and allows me to go through sickness, disease, death, calamity, natural disasters and all the devastation that our generation is witnessing with peace, hope, joy and encouragement because I truly trust God, even when there is more that I don't understand than that which I do understand. When we don't trust the Lord with ALL our heart we begin to pick and choose what we want to hold onto and what we want Him to have. When I FEEL myself getting worried or losing peace, I DOUBT my FEELINGS and I trust God. If I don't understand why, I don't lean or depend on my knowledge; I lean and depend on His knowledge. His ways and thoughts are higher than my own. This allows me to function despite the pains and wounds of life. It is not only a great way to live but it is the way Jesus commanded us to live. When you trust Him, you sleep well at night and even take naps in the day. Glory to God. Trust God and Rest today. Make it a great day.

DAY 14 - 1/23/10

WHAT ARE YOU FULL OF?

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 3:5

Prayer Focus: Addicted to His Presence, James 4:8; Luke 14:16-24

We've all heard the saying 'you are what you eat.' There is biblical truth to these words both physically and spiritually. The Lord gave his people a diet that would cause them to live fruitful, healthy lives. He was very specific in what was clean and unclean. The manufacturer knows what needs to go into his creation. The Lord gave us a spiritual diet as He instructed us to meditate on His word day and night. He knows what we need to be full of. Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit and left no room for anything else to seep in. It is easy to be led by the Spirit when we are full of His Spirit. We must be careful not to eat the wrong things. Doubt, fear, unbelief, and confusion are just a few of the items on the menu that God does not recommend we receive. When we do receive these things we become full of doubt or fear and it becomes difficult to move in obedience or stay on a consistent course because we are full of the wrong things. Be quick to change your diet. As you go through the course of your day there will be many things offered to you through various mediums, television, the internet, radio, cell phones, and acquaintances just to name a few. No one would go into a restaurant and eat everything on the menu. We don't have to receive everything that's offered to us. Is this offer coming from the Right Spirit? Remember who you are and the diet that you are on. Every day ask God to fill you with His Spirit and when you feel yourself getting hungry again, only eat what He serves from His table. This ensures that you will please God today and give to others what He has given to you. What a wonderful God we serve Who has freely given to us His Spirit. Let your light shine today. God bless you and I love you.

DAY 15 - 1/24/10

DRESSING FOR SUCCESS

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 6:10-11

Prayer Focus: Being led by the Holy Spirit, Galatians 5:16-25; Luke 4:1-15

If I were a soldier in the military on the battlefield with an enemy trying to kill me, I would look rather ridiculous if I were dressed in a tuxedo or a 3- piece suit. Not only would I look ridiculous, I would almost certainly guarantee my demise. What's wrong with this picture is quite obvious. No one who's sane would walk on a battlefield without dressing for success. Surprisingly, I know many sane believers who do this on a regular basis. We tend to forget that we are soldiers in God's army, under His command. Too often we enter the battlefield not dressed for success. We also have a tendency to be more concerned about our natural wardrobe than we are about our spiritual wardrobe. We can spend hours at the malls looking for just the right outfit, and spend very little if any time, dressing for success with the spiritual battle that we will certainly encounter. Our battle is not against a flesh and blood enemy; therefore it can seem that we are safe when entering the battlefield without the appropriate uniform. The scripture clearly identifies our enemy. **Ephesians 12** *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* Since we are aware of this particular enemy, we must always dress for success in this battle. We cannot be negligent with our attire.

When we examine the text, it is worth noting that the Apostle Paul wrote this epistle while he was imprisoned in Rome. This was an epistle that was to be read by several congregations. This message was to be a universal message for the entire body of believers. Paul also spoke in a language that the readers of that day would fully understand. He used the uniform that a Roman soldier would wear in battle. He made sure that we would understand that we needed to put on the whole armour of God. This is a battle where we can ill afford to leave any part of our uniform off. The piece of the uniform that we fail to put on and leave exposed will be the exact spot the enemy will attack.

Each day we are to awake and dress for success. Our loins should be girded with truth. We must flee fornication and illicit sexual activity. Righteousness should cover our body. When people see us they should see our righteousness. Jesus has made us right, now we must act right. We must walk in peace with our feet shod in the gospel. The gospel is good news. We should be good news wherever we go. We have a shield of faith, which is able to quench all the fiery darts of the enemy. A Roman shield was covered in leather and had oil on the shield in case a fiery arrow was shot at the soldier. The shield would protect the soldier from the arrow, and the oil would extinguish the fire.

We use our faith as a shield and the Holy Spirit extinguishes the fires the enemy shoots our way. Glory! We have a helmet to shield us from the lies the enemy speaks to us. We are able to have perfect peace despite what is being said about us. Our offensive weapon is our sword, the word of God. This sword is sharper than any two edged sword. This sword does whatever job needs to be done. This is the same sword that David used to slay his giant. How many Giants has your sword slain? Each day we should dress for success. Our weapons have been sharpened and laid out for us; we are to only remember to put them on. Make it a great day.

DAY 16 - 1/25/10

AMAZING FAITH

Scripture Reading: Matthew 8:10

Prayer Focus: Receiving the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:1-8

Do you expect a miracle? Or do you wish for one? There is a big difference between expecting and wishing for those of us in the Kingdom of God. In this text Jesus is approached by a Centurion Soldier in Capernaum. Even though the soldier was not Jewish, his servant was and therefore entitled to be healed. Jesus quickly agreed to come to his house and heal his servant. It is at this point where we see Amazing Faith in action. Although the Centurion acknowledged that he was not worthy of having Jesus come under his roof, he knew with certainty that if Jesus would only speak the word, his servant WOULD be healed. He then gave Jesus an illustration of how Authority operates, thereby showing a great understanding of spiritual matters. Jesus marveled at the words of the soldier. As we analyze the text further, we find that the word marveled derives from the Greek word Thaumazo. It means to wonder at and to admire. The English word amazing comes from this same word. In essence Jesus admired this Roman Soldier's Faith. The word Great is the Greek word Tosontos. It means for so long and having so much. The Centurion Soldier had so much faith, for such a long time, that when he got to Jesus, he EXPECTED a Miracle. There was absolutely no doubt in his mind that a miracle was about to happen and his servant was about to be healed. So again, the question remains, do we really EXPECT a miracle? Do we really know that God can change our situation, or are we just wishing? I have found that we can become so enamored with the ways of the world, that we begin to accept what reports say or what the expert analysis is, that we forget about the Supernatural power of God. The report of the doctor only tells us what we need to bind or loose. Every believer is capable of having Amazing Faith. When we have amazing faith, the sound is sweet to the ears of God and the benefit to us is great. What Jesus did for this centurion soldier, He is still doing now. Jesus Christ the same Yesterday, Today and Forever. Expect a Miracle. Make it a great Day.

DAY 17 - 1/26/10

BEWARE OF LIONS

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 5:8

Prayer Focus: Being sensitive to the Holy Spirit Acts 16:6-10

We all have seen the sign “Beware of Dog.” This is a stark warning from someone who is familiar with the threat and potential harm that this dog may do to us. The sign alerts us to the danger that is behind the warning. The word beware derives from two Middle English words, been and war. It literally means “to be on one’s guard.” It amazes me the number of people who are believers who totally ignore this warning from Peter in this passage of scripture. This is a huge warning sign to the believer. There is not a dog on the other side of Peter’s warning but a lion. A lion can do far more damage to you than a dog. This is a stark warning to believers to be on guard. In this scripture the Lord uses the lion as a natural example of how the devil operates. If we take heed to His example we can learn what to look for and how to be on guard against this adversary. There are many things we can learn. I will only point out three. First of all He says a roaring lion. This is a lion that means business. He is not a cub. This lion is not to be played with or taken lightly. You cannot pet the devil. Lions have been known to stalk and kill humans. The devil is on the prowl looking for prey. Jesus reminds us that the thief comes to kill, steal and destroy. This is not a wrestling match where you get to go home when it’s over. He is trying to kill you. Secondly, lions attempt to scare their prey and cause them to flee from their place of safety. They frequently hunt at night and are opportunist, looking for the old, young, sick, weak or distracted. Believers should be careful the hours and the places they frequent. I know many believers who stop going to church or seeking God when they are going through difficult times? This move away from the safe place is exactly what they devil wants you to do. Stay in the safe place. Finally, the lion kills by suffocating its prey. The lion will grab its prey by the neck and strangle it until it dies. There have been so many times in my life when I didn’t feel like praising the Lord. The pain was so deep I just didn’t feel it. What I didn’t realize was, I had been caught by the neck and life was being sucked out of me. I remained silent and said nothing. If I would have continued to be quiet, I would not be able to encourage you today. I had to get past the pain and praise Him despite it. Then I was set free. Today, I make myself praise regardless of the feeling because the devil will never have me by the neck again. It would have been so easy for Paul and Silas to remain silent in the Philippian jail. He realized that he was not going to give this lion a victory. They began to sing praises to the Lord and the enemy HAD to release them. Glory to God! Today Beware of Lions. Make is a great day.

DAY 18 - 1/27/10

ENCOURAGE YOURSELF

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 30:3

Prayer Focus: Living out of the Overflow John 10:1-18

Can things possibly get any worse than this? This is probably the question that David and his men pondered as they marched home from the battlefield in sheer exhaustion. I can imagine that their only comfort was in knowing that they were going home to reunite with their families. However, when they arrived home, their worst fears had come to pass. Their families had been taken captive and all of their possessions were gone. They wept, they were grieved and finally they wanted to blame somebody for their calamity. There was talk of stoning the leader that caused this to happen, after all someone had to pay for this. We have all faced lows in life. The question posed today is not how did you respond, but how will you respond in the future? If you are reading this, praise God that He has given you another opportunity to get it right. Let's examine David's actions and follow the pattern that led to his success.

First, David realized that despite his circumstance, he could not remain with those who grieved without hope. He had to get away from those who were grieving, bitter and had no hope. We have to draw the line and declare, no more, it's time to get up from this despair.

Secondly, David did not call the pastor, friends, or relatives first. David called on the name of the Lord. He knew Who he needed to consult first. The first counsel you seek should be between you and The Lord. Don't make the mistake of getting this out of order.

Thirdly, David encouraged himself, in the Lord his God. He realized that he could not give what he did not have. He needed this as much as he needed air. The word encouraged used here is the Hebrew word *chazaq* it means to strengthen, to make strong, to grow strong, to make firm. When we read the text we can understand and see that initially David was caught off guard when he came home. He was not expecting things to be the way they were. But after he gathered himself, he made himself strong and grew stronger and was able to pick himself up, gather his thoughts and clearly hear from God. He needed to do this, because of what was left in front of him to accomplish. There is always more ahead of you than behind you.

Finally, David was able to strengthen his army. David led the same men that wanted to stone him into battle. The same men risked their lives for David, what a great lesson in leadership. David had a choice, he could have remained in a state of grief and despair or he could have encouraged himself. We will often times be faced with the same choice. Encourage yourself in the Lord your God. Make it a great day.

DAY 19 - 1/28/10

DID YOU REALLY PRAY TODAY?

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 6:18

Prayer Focus: Prescribed Living, Deuteronomy 28:1-14

I believe this is an area that can be improved in almost every Christian life. We talk about prayer and we know we need to pray but how many people really pray following the biblical examples in scripture? As a young boy I would just repeat the words and not really believe that anything would happen. I hoped a lot but really had no faith that what I would pray would actually happen. I prayed because I was supposed to pray. So did I really pray? As my relationship grew with the Lord and I began to get into much trouble, I began to seek God and solicit His help to get me out of various situations. It was through suffering, pain, sorrow and bad choices that I began to seek knowledge in this area. By receiving correct biblical teaching I finally learned how to really pray. First I prayed from my heart. We must be real with God about what's in our heart. We must make sure that we have nothing against another person in our heart when we pray.

Mark 11:24-25...Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them....And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

No act that a person has committed against you is worth you losing favor with God. Let it go and truly forgive them in your heart. If you still get a negative emotion when you think about them, you haven't forgiven them. It's like being delivered. The things you have been delivered from, you can testify about. Those things that you haven't let go of; you still carry the guilt and shame and don't want to talk about it. Let it go today. It's a form of bondage.

Secondly, I believe what I am praying for will manifest at the right time. This belief produces an image in my mind that I can see. I see my prayer going to the throne of God and I see it not returning void. I pray until I see it return. It is this kind of praying that has produced results in my life. This is the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous that avails much. **James 5:16**

Finally, I make sure that my prayer is not selfish. Remember Hannah's prayer for a male child did not manifest until she was willing to give him to God. The blessing of God always benefits more than a single person. Take time out today to REALLY Pray! Make it a great day.

DAY 20 - 1/29/10

HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELF?

Scripture Reading: Zechariah 2:3-4

Prayer Focus: Supernatural Increase Proverbs 3:9-10; Psalm 35:27

In today's society we see many of our most fundamental institutions, ideals and beliefs in crisis. The financial industry is in crisis. The stock market and trade industry are in crisis. Our schools and families are in crisis. Crisis is clearly rampant and ever present. In the midst of all of these, I believe one of the most significant and often overlooked crisis that we face today, is an identity crisis. We have simply forgotten who we are and have assumed a mistaken identity manufactured by the cares of this world and influences outside of God's word.

In the above scripture, Joshua the high priest had been cleansed by the Lord. Yet, Satan did not want him to know who he was. He stood to resist him and wanted Joshua to be constantly reminded of the filthy clothes that once covered him. Satan's job is to accuse us before God. He does not want God's people to know who they truly are. In essence, if you are a believer, then he, Satan, is out to steal your identity. When a thief is on the loose, wise men will guard their valuables and protect them. Likewise, we must guard and value the identity that God has given us.

In Luke's gospel, Satan came to Jesus and tempted Him three times. He offered Jesus a Kingdom if He would fall down and worship him. I've always thought that it was very bold of the devil to offer Jesus what already belonged to Him. Jesus defeated Satan and rebuked him with the word of God. The devil is still doing this today. He will tempt us with things that we already have. How many of us have fallen prey to this age-old trick? For example, if you are a man who has a wife at home, there is no reason for you to go and look for another woman. We must not be ignorant of Satan's devices.

When we do not know who we are, devastating consequences can be produced in our lives. We cannot afford to fall asleep or be passive about securing our identity. Just as the Lord had to intervene and remind Joshua of his identity and how he is viewed in the heavens, He continues to remind us of the same thing today through the Word. How we are viewed in the heavens is far more significant than how we are viewed on earth. How we are viewed by God oftentimes differs greatly from how we feel about ourselves and how we ultimately view ourselves.

There are countless people all over the world who do not know who they are. When people do not know who they are, they begin to imitate the wrong things and follow patterns that are not true. Following a lie is a certain path to destruction. Turn on any television news program and we can clearly see the result. We see men who are out of position, led astray by the abuse of drugs, alcohol, greed and violence. We see women who are void of proper direction which leads to depression, compromise, and a lowering of standards because of desperation. Furthermore, we witness young people who have no pattern of truth to follow, which causes them to look for their identity and value through various mediums that do not glorify God.

As believers we must be sensitive enough to realize that this is not just a secular problem, this is a human problem. God sent Jesus to resolve human problems. Jesus established the church to deal with human problems by applying the word of God and developing meaningful relationships with

Him. In my walk with Christ, I have found that there are just as many people inside the church that suffer from an identity crisis as in the world. Jesus would often remind the disciples who they were, Matthew 5:13-14 “Ye are the salt of the earth... Ye are the light of the world...”. These words were a reminder of their true identity. In 1 Peter Chapter 2, we are called a royal priesthood and a peculiar people. Paul reiterates that we are joint heirs with Jesus and are more than conquerors. These men were moved by the Spirit of God to constantly and consistently reinforce the words of Jesus.

Today it is up to us to be the vessels, which are moved by the Spirit of God, to remind others of their true identity. There are many cases in our world that involve people with mistaken identities. They were never told who they really are. Somehow we have managed to mistake what we do for a living as who we are. As I shared this teaching with a group of people, I would randomly ask the question, “Who are you?” The most common response was, “I am Bob, a police officer,” or “I am Joe, a fireman,” or “Jack, an Attorney” or even “Sam, a Pastor.” They would tell me either where they were from or what they did. Obviously, the problem with these responses is that they do not accurately answer the original question. What you do and who you are not the same things. The correct response from a believer is, “I am a Child of the Most High God.” That is who you are and who you will always be. Everything else is secondary. Everything you do should be based on who you are. Who you are affects all of your actions. All of our actions should reflect that we are children of God. The positions we hold and the titles we possess may change, but who we are will always remain the same. Your identity must not be confined to what you do. If Joe the professional football player has his identity tied to being a professional football player, what happens to Joe when he can no longer play the game? Unfortunately, all too often there is a tremendous letdown when Joe is no longer a professional football player, he begins to feel useless and the downward spiral begins. This is a common problem not just in sports but in most professions. This is an example of an identity crisis.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up.

God never intended for us to suffer from an identity crisis. In fact, he wanted there to be no doubt about our identity. In addition he wanted our children to be taught the truth. As mature believers we have a responsibility to recite these words in the ears of our children on an ongoing basis. Daniel is a great example of a young man who knew who he was and Who he belonged to. The world wanted to steal his identity, but Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. God honored Daniel’s commitment and brought him into tremendous favor with Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon despite him being a captive slave. Daniel was able to take this position first, because he was taught by others who knew who they were and they were able to pass that on to him. Secondly, he made up his mind to not allow the temptations of the world to cause him to give up his identity. He guarded his identity and refused to sell it or compromise it. ***Daniel 1: 8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: Therefore he requested of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.***

Needless to say, today many people suffer because they have never been taught. A lack of knowledge concerning the identity of God’s children is not the will of God. We must always be open to receive illumination from His word and seek knowledge on a consistent basis. If we do not know who we are according to the Word of God, we most certainly will suffer from an identity crisis. ***Hosea 4:6 My People are destroyed for a lack of knowledge...***

Here is a story that illustrates what the Spirit of God wants to say to us in this message:

There was an eagle's egg that fell from its nest and found its way into a barnyard with chickens. When the egg hatched, the baby eagle was raised as a chicken. When the eagle got older, he noticed that he looked different than the other chickens. However, he disregarded it because he was raised as a chicken and therefore had a chicken's mentality. One day he was walking with his head down with all the other chickens scratching for food when he saw this huge shadow whisk by overhead. He looked up and saw this huge beautiful eagle with outstretched wings soaring in the sky. He longed to soar and fly like the eagle he saw, but he knew he was just a chicken so he continued to peck and scratch for food. He could not get the image out of his mind and the next day, he saw the eagle flying again. He called to him so that he could ask him a question. The big eagle landed and asked what he could do for the young eagle. The young eagle told him how much he enjoyed watching him soar and how he wished he could do the same thing and how he admired what he did and that he could never do anything so great. The big eagle looked at the young eagle and said. "Look at my wings; now look at your wings. Do you see a difference?" "No," said the young eagle. "Look at my beak; now look at your beak. Do you see a difference?" "No," said the young eagle. "Look at my talons; now look at your talons. Do you see a difference?" "No," said the young eagle. The big eagle looked at the young eagle and said. "The only difference in us is that I know who I am and you don't." The big eagle smiled at the young eagle and flew away. The little eagle began to look at all the chickens in the barnyard. They were being chickens and doing the same things they've always done. They were confined to the barnyard. Then he looked up at the big eagle soaring in the sky, beautiful and free to go wherever he wished. The young eagle looked at himself and suddenly he began to shake off his old chicken behavior, conversation, and mentality. He started flapping his wings and all of a sudden he was soaring like the big eagle. He left the chickens in the barnyard, never to return again.

Jesus came to earth in a human body, just as we have. He looked no different than we look today. The only difference is that Jesus knew Who He was. *1John 4:7 declares that as He is so are we in this world.* God has called us to soar. It is only when we do not know who we are, that we remain in the barnyard with the chickens. How do you see yourself?

DAY 21 - 1/30/10

WINNING THE BATTLE OVER SELF

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:26-27

Prayer Focus: Winning in Every Season 1 Corinthians 15:57-58

The Apostle Paul here addresses a vital area in the life of the believer in order to ensure success with God. In essence, Paul is saying before I can put demons to flight and minister to others, I must first win the battle over myself. He let's us know that it is critical to win this battle first. The battle over self encompasses the mind and the flesh. Once the spirit of man has been born again, it is eternally secure and at rest. The mind and the flesh however, were not born again. Therefore, these two areas are responsible for the problems that hinder us from having success with God. We must know how to deal effectively with these two parts of our trinity. A failure to win this battle is a guarantee of defeat, even before our day begins. This battle must be won daily. Today, let's deal with the flesh. Our flesh is at constant war against our spirit. The bible tells us that in our flesh dwells no good thing (Romans 7:18). The flesh constantly and continuously wants to sin. Sin dwells in the flesh; therefore it must always be controlled. Paul states that he keeps his body under and brings it into subjection. He knows that a failure to do this will result in disaster not only for him personally, but for the ministry that has been entrusted to him as well. There is a great example in the bible of this type of control over the flesh in Genesis 39. Joseph is approached by Potipher's wife to commit adultery with her. She is the boss's wife, the boss has his trust, he is a slave, and nobody is around. I am sure that his flesh wanted to yield to her desires and I am sure the devil was really working on his mind. When you have these two things tugging at you, it is very difficult to resist. How easy would it have been for him to cave in to the desires of his flesh? Instead he refused to allow his flesh to lead him to destruction, despite the consequences of rejecting the boss's wife. Her scorn placed Joseph in prison. Long before Potipher's wife approached him, Joseph had won the battle over self. We see how great an example Joseph is for all of us who are trapped in this body of sin. No matter the obstacle, every one of them must be overcome in order to win this battle. This is not done passively but aggressively. No battle is won against a strong enemy without force. I will often deprive my flesh of certain foods or drinks that I really enjoy, just to remind the flesh who is in control. If my flesh rises up in protest, I will extend the depravity even farther, just to let the flesh know who is in charge. This is not a fast; it is an exercise or practice of control over my flesh. Here are 3 keys to winning the battle over self.

1. Rise up before the flesh does. Never allow the flesh to lead in anything or lead you anywhere. It is a trap. It will always take you in the opposite direction of God.
2. Spend quality time in the presence of the Lord. This goes beyond a ritual of prayer. This is time based on a personal knowledge of God and a relationship with God. Talk to the Lord about your weaknesses and your struggles. He is not going to judge you, He is going to help you and cause you to succeed. He desires truth in our inward parts.
3. Submit to God. Allow Him to lead and guide you to the place where you belong. Don't rush this point. Total submission may take some time, but this is what is ultimately required. It is only when we submit to God that we can resist the devil. Submission precedes resistance.

This is the one battle that is not the Lord's; this battle is ours. He has given us everything that we need to win it. Make it a Great day.

Congratulations!

You made it through. You spent 21 days disciplining your flesh and strengthening your spirit and growing in your relationship with the Lord. Now continue! Do not go back, press forward and move higher in Him. When you are faced with trials, temptations, tests - go back and read your journal pages, your daily devotional pages and encourage yourself with the victory you experienced. You can win in 2010, make a decision to put God first and His Word promises that He will add all these things unto you (Matthew 6:33).