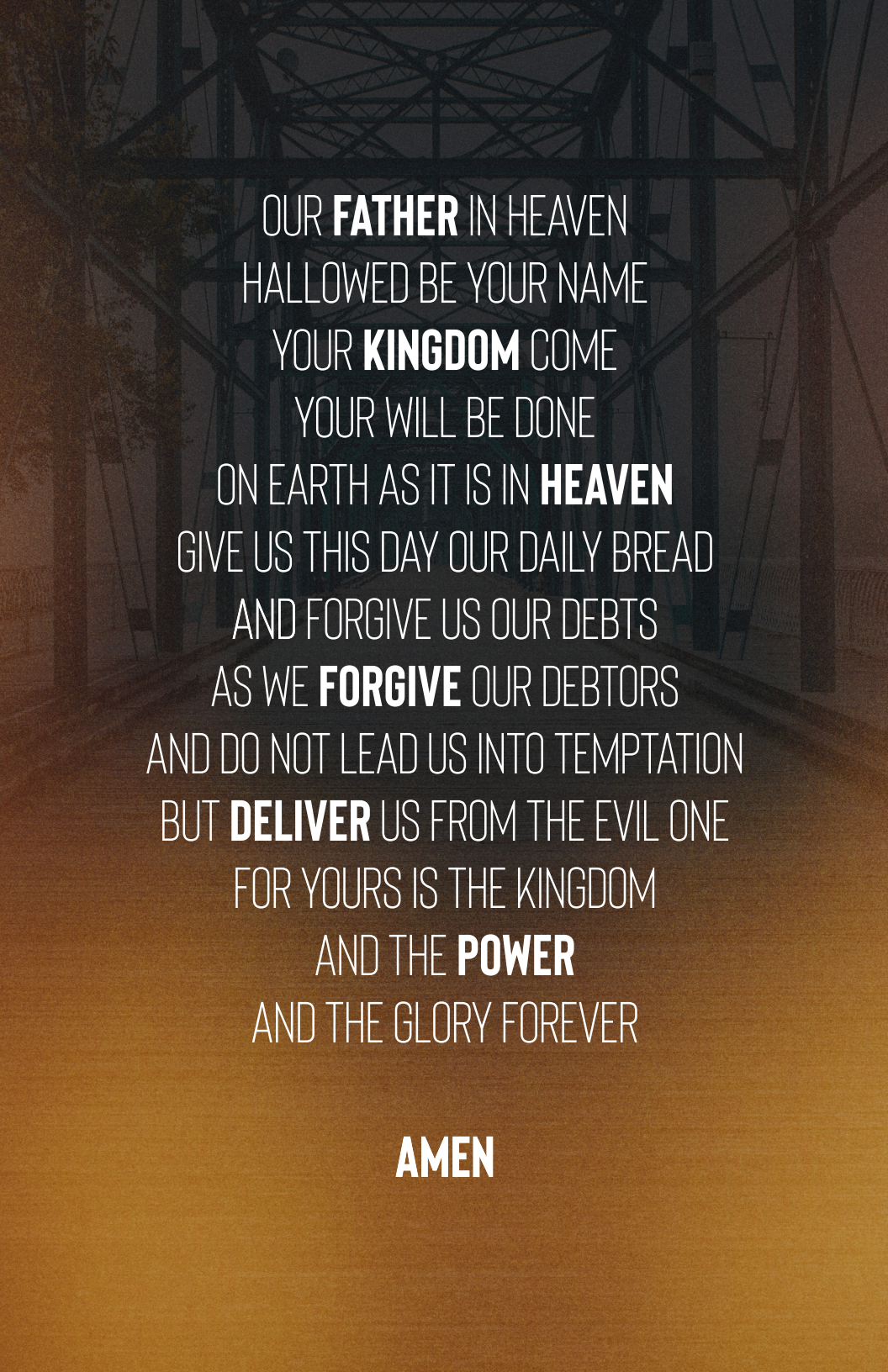


21 DAYS OF PRAYER + FASTING

HIS CHURCH
OUR CITY



OUR **FATHER** IN HEAVEN
HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME
YOUR **KINGDOM** COME
YOUR WILL BE DONE
ON EARTH AS IT IS IN **HEAVEN**
GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD
AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS
AS WE **FORGIVE** OUR DEBTORS
AND DO NOT LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION
BUT **DELIVER** US FROM THE EVIL ONE
FOR YOURS IS THE KINGDOM
AND THE **POWER**
AND THE GLORY FOREVER

AMEN

A CALL TO FAST

"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'"
Isaiah 58:6-9 (NKJV)

Fasting is an important discipline in scripture. In Matthew 6:16, Jesus does not command us to fast but rather speaks about it from the assumption that we are already doing it ("And when you fast...")! Fasting means to willingly abstain or reduce some food or drink (or both) for a period of time with the purpose of seeking and depending on the Lord. There are many different types of fasts held in the Bible including partial fasts, like in Daniel, or absolute fasts (no food or water). Fasting in scripture always included food or meals, but you can include abstaining from things like TV, social media, etc. with the purpose of spending that time with the Lord. When considering how or what to fast remember, if it is important to you, it is important to God! You are not fasting to try and manipulate God into action in your life. You are humbling yourself before him and giving something to Him as a sacrifice with the desire to go deeper in your relationship with Him. The goal is more of Him! God honors that type of sacrifice with the promise that when we seek Him, we WILL find Him!

With that being our intention, look at all the benefits of humbling ourselves in true fasting as recorded in Isaiah 58! Do you want strongholds to be broken? Heaviness to be removed? Greater effectiveness for God's kingdom? Healing? God's protection and rear-guard? Revival within our city and nation? Fasting brings these things because that is what He already desires for us and He honors the heart of His children as they seek after Him. Do not view this time of fasting and prayer as a dread or punishment, but as a time of great expectation! God's heart is for you to draw close to Him.

Ask the Holy Spirit what He is putting on your heart to fast during this period of corporate prayer and fasting. Write it on the provided line below as a vow and commitment before the LORD during this time.

WHAT ARE YOU FASTING?

We are all excited to see God do a powerful work in your life, in our city, and in our nation during this time!

EACH DEVOTIONAL IN THIS GUIDE WAS
WRITTEN BY A DIFFERENT MINISTRY LEADER FROM OUR REGION.

AS YOU BEGIN

If my people....I will.

How many doors have you passed through today?

In the rush of your comings and goings, you probably gave little thought to whether the door would open when you arrived or close when you left. But let's pause for a moment and consider the reliability of that simple mechanism that makes open doors possible — the hinge. Hinges, like church soundmen, are often taken for granted until something goes wrong. You can pass through the same door a thousand times without a hitch, but over time, a neglected hinge can loosen, come out of alignment, rust, or seize up. Then there's the obnoxious squeak. At first, we might ignore it, but the problem only worsens without attention. Whether it needs tightening, replacing, or just a splash of WD-40, a little intentional maintenance can restore it to quiet, smooth operation. **It all hinges on the hinge.** In 2 Chronicles 2: 7-14, we have a hinge. This hinge is a simple two-letter word - IF.

***IF** my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, **THEN** I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

IF we humble ourselves
IF we will pray
IF we will seek His face
IF we will repent

Then... HE WILL.

He will hear.
He will forgive.
He will heal.

It all hinges on the hinge.

There are things that hinge entirely on God's grace, mercy, and goodness—our salvation being chief among them. But as God's beloved people, we also have a role to play in seeing His kingdom come, and His will done, right here, right now. God is ready to fulfill His promises in ways that exceed our imagination and expectations. And we are invited to move with Him, partnering with Him, to see that it is so. Action is needed on our part. We have a responsibility. What does the welfare of our city hinge upon? What opens doors that need to be opened and shuts those that need to close? **Prayer. Praying people are like the hinges of a door, facilitating God's entrance, movement, and healing in the people and places we care about so deeply.**

This is a call to humility through fasting, confession, repentance, and both individual and corporate prayer — all in pursuit of seeking God's face. These practices are the hinges that will hold us together in unity over the next 21 days. Maybe some of these practices are new to you, or perhaps they've been neglected like a squeaky hinge in need of attention, oil, and maintenance.

Over the next 21 days, what might God do in response to your humbling yourself through fasting, confession, and repentance? What deep change could occur as you redirect your hunger and cravings toward seeking His face? What answers hinge upon your prayers—and ours—for our spiritual lives, our families, our churches, and our community? Finally, in 2 Chronicles 7:13, God begins by saying, "If I shut up the heavens..." but then, in His grace, He lovingly provides the solution for the heavens to be opened once more. "If my people...." Oh, how we need the heavens to open over our city.

It all hinges on the hinge. It hinges on the IF. Will you?



**IF YOU'RE HOLDING THIS GUIDE,
YOU'VE BEEN PRAYED FOR.**

An aerial photograph of a river winding through a valley. The river is the central focus, curving from the upper left towards the lower right. The surrounding landscape is densely forested, with dark green and black tones. In the distance, a range of hills or mountains is visible under a hazy, twilight sky. The overall mood is serene and contemplative. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

RELATIONSHIP
WITH GOD

OUR FATHER

Psalm 139

We do not know exactly when David wrote Psalm 139 during his life. It could have been when he was young and facing persecution from Saul. It could have been when he was older and enduring difficulties in the kingdom. Regardless, the progression of prayer applies to us in each season of life. David begins, verses 1-12, by marveling at the greatness of our God. God is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. There is nothing hidden from Him and in Him all things hold together. I specifically like how David notes that the knowledge and understanding of God is too wonderful for him and too high for him to attain (verse 7).

Then David recognizes that this same good Father that cares for the entire universe knit him together in the same fashion. He is overwhelmed by the fact that God's thoughts about him alone are more numerous than the grains of sand on the seashore. David realizes that his life, and we can apply it to our lives, is not just a confluence of events, but rather a beautifully knit tapestry for His glory. Verses 19-22 mark the third section of this Psalm and acknowledge the problem of pain, evil, and suffering that we all experience in life. It is so freeing to me that David just prays like he feels.

For David, there are real, evil people working against him. We do not know his specific situation at the writing of this Psalm, but it does not matter. He just casts his cares to the Father because he knows that God cares about him. He is facing real challenges and has real questions about how it is going to work out...but in all of it... David is confident. He knows that God will not forsake Him. He has not yet and is not planning to in the future. Which leads us to David's prayer in the last two verses. His prayer needs to be our prayer as we begin this fast.

The specific verses are below, but here is my paraphrase; "Lord, you are my Father. You are good and I can see your hand at work throughout my life. I am facing challenges but I submit those to you today and everyday. I submit all that I am to you. My heart and desire is to honor you in all that I do. Amen."

"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"

THE SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

1 Timothy 2:5-6,
1 Peter 1:18-21

There's nothing more affirming when we face accusation or even difficult times to have a friend step up beside you to say "I've got you!" The realization that you're not fighting a battle alone, or facing adversity by yourself is so reassuring. Even if you haven't had to face many situations in your life when you needed someone to advocate or fight for you, we have all faced the huge hurdle of our sin and sinful nature. We know that all of us have sinned (Romans 3:23) and because of our sin we risk eternal separation from God, our Father.

But Jesus.

Jesus steps up beside us, no better yet, in front of us, between us and our sin and says "I've got you." Paul called Jesus our "one Mediator between God and men" (1 Timothy 2:5-6). Peter called Him the "lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-21) implying that Jesus was the perfect sacrifice prescribed from before time to cover our sin.

What blessed assurance we have? Even in our greatest need and struggle against sin - Jesus, our advocate, our friend, our brother - steps forward and says "I'm here, I've got you!"

Let that marinate in your heart today as you seek Him in prayer and fasting.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Acts 1:8

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

What a powerful statement the resurrected Jesus made to those passionate followers. Imagine the scene. After Jesus spoke these words of power and promise, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

According to Scripture, 120 made their way to what was called the Upper Room. For 10 days they prayed, worshipped and waited. I am convinced many fasted.

It was persistent prayer of the disciples and the faithfulness of God that opened the heavens and empowered believers on the Day of Pentecost. (Acts 2) What a promise. What a fulfillment. What an experience. What a new beginning.

Prayer and fasting are powerful spiritual practices that bring numerous benefits, especially when viewed through the lens of Acts 1:8. Be encouraged as you read, pray and declare these benefits.

1. Empowerment For Mission & Ministry

Acts 1:8 specifically addresses the disciples' call to be witnesses in the world. Prayer and fasting enable believers to prepare for spiritually for the work of ministry. By seeking God through these disciplines, we are filled with courage, wisdom, and the supernatural ability to fulfill our God-given mission.

2. Clarity of Purpose

In the context of Acts 1:8, the disciples were waiting for direction to carry out their mission. When combined, prayer and fasting will help believers align their thoughts and priorities with God's will, making His purpose clearer in our lives.

3. Increased Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit

Fasting removes distractions, allowed individuals to become more attuned to the voice of the Holy Spirit. This heightened spiritual sensitivity helps believers recognize His presence and follow His leading in our daily lives and ministry.

4. Boldness in Witnessing

Prayer and fasting strengthen faith, embolden believers and equip us with the courage to share the Gospel with confidence, compassion and expectation.

5. Breakthrough in Challenges

Seasons of prayer and fasting are unique. They lead to spiritual breakthroughs. Believers often experience personal life transformation during times of testing and tribulation. Fasting reminds us... God's got us.

6. Deep Intimacy with God

Acts 1:8 points to a relationship with the Holy Spirit, and prayer and fasting cultivate an atmosphere for communion with Him.

May we continue to forsake all and follow Him passionately. May we grow through adversity. May we lean into God's Presence and experience a reset, restoration, renewal and revival.

GIVING & RECEIVING FORGIVENESS

2 Corinthians 5:21,
John 3:16-17,
1 John 1:8-2:2,
John 8:1-11, Hebrews 4:16

Several years ago I asked my physician this question: “How many of your current patients are suffering from sickness that stems from emotional issues?” He said he estimated that around 70% of his patients were suffering physical illness due to emotional issues, and the great majority of his patients would find physical healing if they simply experienced forgiveness.

Learning to give and receive forgiveness is one of the toughest assignments in life, yet it is one of the most important works God wants for you. Hebrews 4.16, says “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

God wants to help you in your time of need. He wants to give grace to you. He tells us we can have confidence that we’ll receive mercy and grace in our time of need. Each time we ask! However that confidence doesn’t come from your performance, effort or feelings. The bible teaches us that we find confidence through the complete forgiveness of all our sins by trusting in Jesus Christ as the one who makes us right with God. But, if you miss the fact that ALL your sins are forgiven by God—completely—not by anything you’ve done or not done—but through what Jesus has done for you...then it becomes very difficult for you to forgive others.

When you receive the forgiveness God offers you in Jesus Christ, it changes the way you respond to the hurts you’ve endured from others (whether it was intentional or unintentional). Today, read Matthew 18.21-35 and ask these two questions: Have I received the forgiveness Jesus has offered me? If so, then who do I need to forgive today?

BOLDLY APPROACHING THE THRONE AS WE ARE

“O God, listen to my cry! Hear my prayer! From the ends of the earth, I cry to you for help when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the towering rock of safety, for you are my safe refuge, a fortress where my enemies cannot reach me.” Psalms 61:1-3 (NLT)

Sometimes the boldness we need to approach God’s throne comes from the recognition of our need for Him. If we believe wrongly that we have no need for Him and that we have the ability to navigate our life without Him then we simply ignore that He’s available for us. This leads to devastating results and a shallow relationship with a God that loves us so much.

God’s desire is for us to approach Him first with our dreams, ambitions and yes problems. Our faith and belief that God will do something to enhance, make better and grow us is vital to being aware and available for His work and will for our life. We miss so much value in this life by trying to do things solo without God. Seeking him for wisdom and understanding leads to us not carrying the burdens of this life alone.

BOLDLY APPROACHING THE THRONE AS WE ARE

When I was a kid, my dad was a children's pastor. Parents in the church would often make appointments with him and show up to meet with him at the specified times. But every time I was at the church, I never had to make an appointment to see my dad. I never had to ask permission to enter his office. My time with him was never limited. So I walked into his office boldly every time. And I could stay as long as I wanted. Why? Because he's my dad. Because I'm his son.

Perhaps you can relate to that in your own life. With other people, you might hesitate as you approach them. But with your father, you know you are welcome—no permission needed. You won't be intruding because you are always invited. That's how you should approach God in prayer. Not timid, not worried, not filled with doubt... "Will He be there? Will He accept me? Will He respond?" No, Hebrews 4 says that you should approach God's throne with grace and confidence! Not only that, but there's a beautiful promise that God will be there for you and help you in your time of need.

Maybe you cannot relate to your earthly father that way. Perhaps that earthly relationship is marked by pain or absence. If that's you, I want you to know this: God is not limited by the shortcomings of human fathers. Psalm 68:5 says God is 'a father to the fatherless.' He invites you into His presence, not as a distant judge, but as a loving Father who knows your name, your story, and your heart. So, as you pray today, remember this: God is your Father—the best One you could ever have. He's expecting you. He's prepared the way for you. The veil is torn. The door is open. And He is saying, "come on in."

PURSUING HOLINESS

Hebrews 12:14

Hebrews 12:14 encourages us to make every effort to live in peace with others and pursue holiness in our lives. This verse highlights the importance of cultivating a life marked by peaceful relationships and a commitment to growing in our personal relationship with God. As believers, we are called to reflect God's character in our actions and interactions, striving for a life that is both peaceful and holy.

Living in peace with others requires intentionality, patience, and the willingness to forgive and reconcile when conflicts arise. In pursuing holiness, we are seeking to grow in our relationship with God, allowing His transforming power to shape our thoughts, attitudes, and actions. This lifelong journey of pursuing peace and holiness is essential to our faith, as it helps us draw closer to God. This also will encourage others as they see God working in our own lives through his peace and pursuit of Holiness.

Everyone is pursuing something: fame, stardom, a career, a spouse – and more. Some people in other countries are in the pursuit of clean drinking water and food. But for those of us who call ourselves Christians we must ask an important question, "What does God want us to pursue? Paul writes to Timothy, encouraging him to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, endurance, love, gentleness, and more. The Apostle Peter calls on Psalm 34:14 and urges believers to, "...turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:11). This same theme arises in Hebrews 12:14.

Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Genesis 3:8-10,
Exodus 25:1-31:17,
John 20:15,
Revelation 22:1-2

Ever felt like you were hiding, like Adam and Eve did after messing up in the garden? We all mess up, right? But God doesn't give up on us. He's always chasing after us, just like He chased after the Israelites in the book of Exodus. He led them out of slavery and into a deeper relationship with Him.

Imagine how Mary Magdalene must have felt when Jesus first appeared to her after His resurrection. She was overwhelmed, overjoyed, and probably a little scared too. But Jesus, in His love and grace, showed up and met her right where she was.

In the book of Revelation, we get a glimpse of the ultimate goal: a perfect relationship with God. It's a picture of a river of life, flowing from God's throne, and inviting us to drink deeply.

So, what does this mean for us today? It means that God wants a close relationship with us. He wants to know us, love us, and guide us. It's a relationship that's always available, no matter what.

How can we deepen this relationship? Spend time with God daily through prayer and reading His Word. Talk to Him about your joys, your sorrows, and your dreams. And most importantly, listen to what He has to say to you.

Let's strive to live a life that reflects our love for God. Let's be like Mary Magdalene, open and receptive to His presence. And let's look forward to the day when we'll experience the fullness of His love in eternity.

A photograph of a church service. In the foreground, a young man with brown hair, wearing a dark jacket over a white t-shirt, is seated at a piano, playing. His hands are positioned on the keys. Behind him, a group of people, including men and women, are standing with their hands raised in prayer. Some have their eyes closed, and their expressions are of devotion. The background is slightly blurred, showing the interior of a church with wooden paneling and a large, dark wooden structure, possibly an altar or pulpit. The overall lighting is warm and soft, creating a serene and spiritual atmosphere. The text "A HEALTHY, UNIFIED PRAYING CHURCH" is overlaid in the center in a white, sans-serif font.

A HEALTHY, UNIFIED
PRAYING CHURCH

CENTERED ON THE SCRIPTURES

With the dawn of each day comes a sense of uncertainty. Turning the page from etched history to a blank canvas can leave us restless and unsettled. Still, remembering what has been can often lead us to hope for what can be. In Psalm 23, King David must have remembered his early years as a shepherd tending his father's flock as he paralleled his experience with a confident expectation of who God is. He said, "The Lord is my shepherd..." Indeed, our God is a faithful guide. David continues, "I shall not want," boldly declaring his dependency upon God's provision, which is only done by remembering He is the provider. Then, in verse 2, David leaves us a gem of truth! "He makes me to lie down in green pastures."

These "green pastures" have been said to represent scripture – God's Word. Much like acres of grass to a grazing flock of hungry sheep, God's Word is full of life-giving nutrients and nourishment for our souls. Without which we become anemic and starved. Like sheep in the bed of tender grass, in God's Word, we can find rest amid the fast pace of life with its pressures and stresses. When our view is clouded, and we're unsure of what step to take next, we can remember He is a faithful guide (Psalm 119:05). He has provided and will provide again (Philippians 4:19). You can take God at His Word. So, pray it. Declare what He decreed, despite what you currently see. His Word has full authority – accomplishing its purpose – to make healthy believers – well-fed (Jeremiah 15:6) and cared for (Isaiah 46:4). So, whatever this new day holds for you, know with certainty that God desires you to have confidence in His plan for your life. If you let Him lead, it will be for your good. After all, He plans to prosper and not harm you, to give you a future and hope – Jeremiah 29:11.

DISCIPLING ONE ANOTHER

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 27:17,
John 17:21,
Jeremiah 32:39

"...that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (John 17:21, NKJV)

One of the wonders of creation is that no two people are exactly alike. Even if they look alike, there is always something different. We have different hair colors. We have different skin colors. Some are short. Some are tall. Some are fat and some are skinny. Some people are old. Others are young. Some have light eyes while others have dark eyes. Some have ten fingers while others have twelve (it's true). There are people with two legs, one leg, and no legs. The same is true for arms, and hands, and feet, and ears, and eyes. Some people have big noses and others have little noses, still others have paid for noses. No two people are alike.

We are just as diverse in our personalities too. Some are face-paced, or outgoing, or enthusiastic, while others are not. There are as many variations of who we are as a people as there are people. No two people are alike. Diversity is a strength of who we are as humans and as a Church. Diversity makes the Church better, more enjoyable, and more interesting.

Though different, Jesus Christ prayed in John 17:21 that His disciples then and now may be one as He and His Father are one. His prayer is not in vain. True disciples shouldn't isolate themselves; we are all interconnected. The quality of our experiences is influenced by our interactions. Gathering together, discussing God's love and redemption, refreshes and uplifts us. Worship services, church gatherings, and other gatherings are God-given opportunities for spiritual growth, renewal, and discipleship.

God's church will be unified, so this week, when you are at work, make it your business to seek unity. When you are at home with your family, seek unity? In your devotional time, pray for unity. Moreover, as you serve in your church, function together in unity. Remember that as iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend. (Proverbs 27:17, NLT).

FAMILIES

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

What was God doing in eternity past—before He made the heavens and the earth, butterflies and T-Rexes, laughing babies and roaring lions, fireflies and supernovas? The only way to really know, of course, is if someone entirely trustworthy, who was actually there, told us. Enter Jesus; He was there. But then He came, and in the final hours of His life He did in fact tell us what God was doing before Creation when he prayed “you loved me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

Dr. Michael Reeves summarizes the breathtaking revelation in Jesus’ prayer: “Before he ever created, before he ever ruled the world, before anything else, this God was a Father loving his Son.” Take five and let that soak in. God is first and foremost a Father who loves His Son. It is only in the overflow of His love for the Son that he has loved us and made us His own children. We are loved in the Beloved, invited into the family and fellowship of the T-Rex Maker.

There is a reason why reciprocal love and respect is the call of husbands and wives, why children are called “blessings,” and why the ancient serpent hates family: family is a reflection of the unified, loving community in God Himself. Accordingly, is there anything more God-like than to love and be loved by family, whether nuclear or ecclesiological? Indeed, unity and love are the signposts of our faith (John 13:35, 17:21) and the crown of family. Praise be to God for family and dear community. Praise Him who enlarges hearts and empowers the righteous to love well in the likeness of our Father, for His glory. Praise Him who was Love before time.

HEALTHY SHEPHERDS, PASTORS, & LEADERS

Your pastor works harder than you think.

Because God has placed a heart of compassion and sacrifice and service in your leaders, they often pour themselves out until they have nothing left to pour. Oh, but the Lord is faithful to regenerate and renew and refresh!

For those that labor for the kingdom in positions of leadership, the weight of responsibility, though a burden of love and obedience, can be heavy. The hours can be demanding and irregular. Every week, they give of themselves to hours of study, prayer, and preparation to present the Gospel. They give of themselves to visit folks in the hospital and in the nursing homes. They give of themselves to spend time with the lonely and those in crisis. They give of themselves to disciple and mentor and encourage.

For those who God has placed to shepherd and serve and care for you, we need to be very thankful. Not only are the hours demanding and the burden often heavy, but the spiritual battles are intense. The greatest gift you could ever offer your pastors and church leaders is the gift of your heartfelt, authentic prayers.

Heavenly Father, we come to You in the Name of Jesus. And we want to thank you so much for the gift of good leaders and shepherds. Thank you for all their sacrifice and humility and leadership. Please fill their cup with goodness and mercy. Please protect and provide for their families in every way. And please guide the hands and hearts of our church family to support and encourage and lift up our leaders as You have called us to in the Scriptures. Amen.

CASTING YOUR CARES UPON GOD

3 John 1:2, 2 Chronicles 7:14,
1 Peter 5:6-7

When I think about the word casting, I instantly think back to when I was a little boy going fishing with my mom at Harrison Bay State Park. I would say that many people who learn to fish probably learned from their dad or grandfather, but it was my mom who taught me how to fish. Once the hook was baited with a nightcrawler worm, we would cast our line from our fishing pole toward the open water. When I first started fishing as a little boy, two things happened. First, the line didn't go too far from the bank of the lake, and secondly like most children I wasn't patient enough to leave the line in the water long enough to catch a fish. I practiced more casting than I did fishing, but when I finally caught a fish the joy of excitement was upon me.

God's word teaches us to cast our cares upon Him. Often though, we cast our cares like a child who is learning to fish. We don't cast our cares far enough from us, and we don't leave our cares casted out away from us long enough to redeem our joy. In fact, we are to cast our cares upon God and leave it there.

I am reminded of an old hymn titled, Leave it there. Some of the lyrics go "Jesus knows the pain you feel, he can save, and he can heal. Take your burden to the Lord, leave it there." Do you worry about some situation or someone that is out of your control? Are you anxious? Do you have something burdening you and robbing you of joy. I would encourage you to cast your cares upon God and Leave it there.

CASTING YOUR CARES UPON GOD

Proverbs 3:5-6,
Philippians 4:6, Matthew 6:33

I have this thing—I really can't stand making more than one trip if I can avoid it. So, when my family goes grocery shopping and it's time to bring the groceries in from the car, I'll overload myself with bags just to avoid a return trip. It may sound crazy, but I'd sooner risk smashing a loaf of bread or dropping a gallon of milk than go back again. When I finally get the bags inside and release them onto the counter, the relief feels so good.

Carrying burdens can be a lot like that. When we hold onto worries and fears—about our jobs, health, relationships, or future—the weight grows heavier with each step. Eventually, it becomes exhausting, and you feel like you can't keep going. But what if someone offered to carry those bags for you? All you had to do was hand them over, and you could walk freely. This is what God offers when we cast our cares upon Him. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight." Wouldn't it be easier not to carry the load alone? When we stop trying to do it all ourselves and trust in God, He promises to guide us.

When we cast our worries on God through prayer, we release the weight we were never meant to carry. Instead of anxiety, we receive peace that transcends all understanding. (Philippians 4:6)

Matthew 6:33 reminds us that when we prioritize God's will, He takes care of our needs—just like someone coming alongside to carry our bags. Let go of your burdens today. Trust in God, seek His kingdom, and experience the freedom of walking without the weight of worry.

PRIORITIZING WORSHIP

Luke 2:49

If you ever feel like you've lost Jesus, His Father's house is the first place to look. That's where He told us He would be! This truth echoes throughout Scripture. In Revelation, we see Jesus walking among the lamp stands—His Church—so unified with it that His voice seems to come from within. Similarly, in Luke 2:49, when His parents find Him in the temple, Jesus makes it clear: His priority is to be where His Father's presence dwells, fulfilling His mission among His people.

The Church is still that place today—the house of God where Jesus dwells, is worshiped, honored, and revered. It is through the Church that we hear His voice, experience His transforming power, and join in His mission. The Church, as His lamp stand, is where Jesus refines, cleanses, and aligns us with His purposes. When we separate ourselves from His Church, we risk cutting ourselves off from the very presence of Jesus, who walks in the midst of His people.

Our greatest calling as His Church is to be His dwelling place—a light in the darkness, a community where His glory shines and His name is lifted high. Just as He was found in His Father's house then, He is still found there today, walking among His lamp stands. He has promised that when two or three gather in His name, He will be there in their midst. Let us make public worship and community with His people a priority, knowing that where His Church is, His presence will always be.

A CITY PRAYING WITHOUT CEASING

Nehemiah 8:1-18,
2 Kings 23:1-3, Acts 1:14,
2 Chronicles 6:12-14,
2 Chronicles 20:1-12

The beauty of this story lies in the larger context of the story and result. King Jehoshaphat and the Israelites of Judah were being surrounded by three armies that had come to wipe them out. They were trapped and terrified. At this, Jehoshaphat called the people together and prayed to God in earnest. God's answer to their prayers was this, "Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's." Then He instructed them to lay down their weapons and worship Him the next morning. They obeyed the Lord and guess what happened...God turned those three armies against each other!

There is power in united prayer. When the kingdom of Judah united in prayer, their enemies were defeated, and they weren't even involved in the fight! God honors a nation (or city) that humbles itself and unites to worship and glorify Him. Let's unite our hearts in prayer for our great city. Let's humble ourselves and pray in unity that the Lord would make Chattanooga a city that honors and glorifies Him. I can't wait to see what will happen if we do!

A scenic landscape photograph showing two people sitting on a rocky cliff edge, looking out over a wide river valley. The person on the left is wearing a white beanie and a dark t-shirt. The person on the right is wearing a dark jacket. A yellow jacket is draped over the cliff between them. The background features a large river winding through a valley with forested hills under a clear blue sky. Pine branches with cones are visible in the upper left corner.

LOVING OUR NEIGHBORS

PRAY FOR THE WORLD

Matthew 6:10

It's easy to be discouraged by everything going on in our world. Instead of praying, we often resort to worry and fear. As believers, we have a divine call to pray instead of worry, but where do we even begin?

Praying for the world should start with praying for our neighbors, not only the neighbor that looks like you, voted like you, or believes like you. We must pray for those near us at home, at work, and beyond. We pray for others because we recognize this is the world that God created and loves. We simply pray the prayer Jesus taught us to pray... your will be done here on earth as it is in heaven.

Today, as we continue our 21 day journey, stop and ask the Holy Spirit to help you to love your neighbor as you pray for peace in our world, unity among the people of God, and evil to be stopped on all fronts.

PRAY FOR THE NATION

Psalm 33:8, Acts 17:26,
Proverbs 14:34,
Luke 12:48

As we dedicate this day to prayer for our nation, let us approach the throne of grace with humility, reverence, and hope. Scripture reminds us that God is sovereign over all nations and holds them accountable to His standards of righteousness.

Psalm 33:8 calls us to awe: "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him." Begin your prayer by acknowledging God's authority over our nation and expressing gratitude for His blessings and provisions.

Acts 17:26 declares God's sovereignty over nations: "From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands." Reflect on how God has ordained our nation's existence and entrusted us with a unique role in His redemptive plan. Pray for a deeper understanding of this purpose, asking God to guide our nation toward fulfilling its divine calling in ways that honor Him.

Proverbs 14:34 reminds us of the moral foundation of a thriving nation: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people." Intercede for our leaders, communities, and citizens, asking God to bring conviction, repentance, and a renewal of righteousness in every sphere of influence. Pray also that the Church would take charge in setting the example of righteousness in our nation.

Luke 12:48 emphasizes accountability: "To whom much is given, much will be required." Pray for our nation to steward its resources, freedoms, and influence responsibly, honoring God and serving others.

As you pray, ask for God's will to be done, for revival to spark across the land, and for His Church to shine as a beacon of hope and truth. Trust in His promise to hear and answer the prayers of His people.

Together, let us lift up our nation to the Lord, knowing that He alone is sovereign over our nation and hears the prayers of His saints!

PRAY FOR THE CITY PART I

Psalm 125:3,
Ezekiel 34:28-29,
Matthew 6:10

This world is not easy to live in. Sin has spread like a festering infection to all corners of creation, including our city. Wicked people work evil across all strata of our society, and the misery of sin affects all of us. Even in our own city it often seems like Satan has the upper hand. From crime to addiction to the little acts of unkindness that we both enact and receive daily; Chattanooga suffers from the curse of the fall. This world groans for redemption, for peace. Chattanooga groans for redemption, for peace.

This is exactly what the Lord promises to accomplish. Across the scriptures we see a promise that evil will be defeated, that wickedness shall not reign, that Satan will be vanquished, that justice will be wrought. Psalm 125 reminds us that though it seems like wickedness will win, its reign is on borrowed time. Ezekiel 34 echoes this promise and ensures us of something even greater. Not only will evil be extinguished, but shalom will come. Fullness of peace and flourishing in the presence of our God is the inheritance of God's people, of creation itself. No more poverty, no more strife, no more suffering. The deepest sins of our own hearts will be erased like a bad dream. Instead, the Lord will give his people an abundance of joy, and we will no longer know the oppression of sin.

Let us join together to seek the shalom of our city in prayer today. Our Savior taught us to pray that God's Kingdom would come, that His will would be done. Pray this for Chattanooga. Pray that wickedness would be curbed, that suffering would be alleviated, and that righteousness would go forth. Above all else, pray that the glorious, life-changing good news of the gospel would go out and revival would come.

PRAY FOR THE CITY PART II

Psalm 139,
Ephesians 2:10

As believers, we're called to be beacons of hope in a world that often seems dark and uncertain, but it's easy to get caught up in our own lives and forget that there's a world beyond our small corner. In Jeremiah 29:7, God reminds us to "seek the welfare of the city" and pray for its peace and prosperity. This verse was written to the Israelites in exile, but its message is just as relevant today. As we read the Bible, it's pretty clear that God's heart is for His people - all people and that he desires to see those he loves not only to survive but to flourish. To flourish is not just to live a life that is good. To flourish is to live in a way that is as it should be.

God desires for us to flourish, to thrive, to live a life that's full and abundant. But it's not just about us - it's about creating a community where everyone can flourish. What a thrill to know that we, the church, get to be part of God's mission of bringing His new kingdom here! The kingdom of peace, reconciliation, and new life. The kingdom of shalom and flourishing. And we are called to enact it, not simply wait for it to come. We extend mercy to others out of the abundance of mercy extended to us. To do this is to proclaim to someone the image of God within them. Mercy is treating people as the people they can be, not the people they have been. Mercy is a way of telling the whole truth, of looking beyond the wounded, broken, and sometimes vile nature of humanity and seeing also the truth of its goodness as God's creation. Before any of us were called or labeled anything else, we were called good... Part of our seeking the welfare of the city is to extend the mercy and dignity that's been given to us to those who also call this place home. May we be faithful ambassadors of God's love and peace, wherever we may be.

WALKING IN THE BALANCE OF TRUTH & GRACE

John 1:14, 16-17,
Psalms 86:15,
Matthew 22:34-40

John 1:14 tells us that Jesus came “full of grace and truth.” He embodied the perfect balance of these qualities, showing us how to live with deep belief and an equally deep compassion for others. Verse 16 reminds us that from “His fullness we have all received, grace for grace.” As recipients of this amazing grace, we are called to extend it to others while standing firm in the truth of God’s Word.

The psalmist declares, “But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, long suffering and abundant in mercy and truth” (Psalm 86:15). This verse is an amazing picture of a God who does not compromise truth yet still meets us with tender mercy. When we follow this example, we reflect His character to a world in desperate need of both grace and truth. Jesus taught that the greatest commandments are to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). Did you know that love is the bridge that connects truth and grace! Jesus demonstrated this on the cross and when love guides our actions, it is possible to walk in the fullness of both.

As followers of Jesus, our lives should reflect His balance. When faced with difficult conversations or testing circumstances, the challenge to ourselves is to ask: “Am I speaking truth with grace? Am I extending grace without compromising truth?” This balance can only be done with a heart rooted in humility, wisdom, and God’s love. Today, let us seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance to walk as Jesus did—grounded in truth, abounding in grace, and driven by love. In doing so, we will not only honor God but also draw others closer to Him.

SALVATIONS

Matthew 18:12-14

Imagine being one of ninety-nine sheep, safely together in the fold, yet the shepherd's focus shifts to the one who wandered off. The shepherd doesn't weigh the risks or decide that one sheep isn't worth the effort. No — he leaves the ninety-nine behind and goes out searching because that one sheep has incredible value.

This is the heart of the Father for every person. To Him, no one is expendable. Every individual matters, and no one is forgotten. The shepherd's pursuit of the one is driven by love. He knows that sheep's worth. In the Father's eyes, each person carries eternal significance. He was willing to go to great lengths — even leaving the comfort of what is "secure" — to send His Son to find and restore them.

As followers of Christ, we are called to reflect this same love and go after the one. Loving our neighbors means understanding that the one matters just as much as the ninety-nine. Perhaps it's a neighbor who's drifted away, a friend who's struggling, or a family member who feels isolated. We must be willing to leave our comfort zones to reach them, knowing they are deeply valued by the Father.

When we seek out the one who has gone astray, we join in the Father's joy when they are found. The joy that comes when they are found is immeasurable — a celebration that all of heaven participates in. Let's remember: every person is worth the pursuit because of the high price Jesus paid for the one on the cross.

Who is your one today? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal this to you and start your own pursuit.

BECOMING THE ANSWERS TO OUR OWN PRAYERS

Ephesians 2:10,
2 Corinthians 5:20,
Romans 1:16–17,
Luke 4:18

As we pray for our world, our nation, our friends and family, even ourselves, we can become discouraged when we don't see the answer to that prayer. I know for me, I have prayed for the people closest to me to "Be reconciled to God". Our Father pursues us daily and I know He is pursuing those people I prayed for, but I also know He calls us to be His "hands and feet". I think this means to actively live our lives out of the grace and freedom the gospel brings.

It is impossible for me to will myself to actively love the way Jesus does, but because of the strength and power of a life and heart surrendered to Him, the Holy Spirit flows through our works as our faith and trust grows bigger and deeper. Jesus tells us in John 13:14: "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet." As we reach the end of this 21 day journey, stop and ask the Holy Spirit to empower and embolden you to be His hands and feet, mirroring the work He is doing in us to the community around us.

WHAT NEXT?

We've just completed 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, and though this intensive time of prayer to kick off 2025 is completed, our work to continue in prayer isn't finished!

Surely during our times of prayer, the Lord made some sacred deposits to your soul that are meant to be carried throughout the rest of 2025. God entrusted these gifts to you to continue to pray over! As you do this, you will see ongoing answers to prayer!

In Colossians 4:2 we read, "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving." Basically, this means we have a call to continue in prayer, asking God to do a work in our hearts and in our city, and many of the answers to our prayers will not come all at once. Instead, they will come incrementally, but when we see those answers come, we are to be encouraged and thankful! For example, if you are praying for your own growth in holiness, and you see the slightest change in yourself, thank God for His mercy toward you and keep going! If you are praying for loved ones or people to come to Christ, and you see those people taking even the tiniest steps toward the Lord, thank Him for that and keep praying!

Finally, 1 Thessalonians 5:17 calls us to "pray without ceasing." For individuals, this is impossible, but in the original Greek, this verse is in plural form. It actually calls a whole community of believers in one city to pray continuously. The same is true for us! Only as a community united in prayer can we hope to be obedient to this Biblical command to pray unceasingly until we collectively see some real changes to our city, its culture, and our churches. Let's go for it!

HIS CHURCH
OUR CITY

2025