

40 Days of Generosity Devotional

We are so happy that you are once again joining us for this 40- day journey! God is a very generous Father! He loves us so much, that while we were still sinners He sent His Son to die for us. The most generous act anyone will ever do for you has already been done! Just as Jesus laid down His life for us, now we are called to lay down our lives for others.

Over the next 40 days ask for the heart of the Father. Ask Him to show you specific ways that you can demonstrate your love; for your family, your friends and for the stranger on the street. Paul told us in Philippians 2: 3-4, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Over the next 40 days let each of us turn our eyes to see the needs around us.

Jesus caused all who encountered Him to have to make a choice, know Him or reject Him. He loved unconditionally and spoke words of life. He met the needs of the people He encountered. Over these next 40 days we challenge you to “love” people so well that they can’t sit in their indifference or complacency, but will have to make a decision in their perspective of who Jesus is in their lives!

Join with us each day for inspiration and encouragement. Let us together turn North Brevard upside down with loving, generous hearts!

HOW TO BEGIN

This devotional will be available daily online on the Facebook page, 40 Days of Generosity and on the website we use during this event... www.lovingnorthbrevard.com.

There will also be some hard copies available that can be picked up at the Chamber of Commerce, or at participating churches.

The devotions fall into four categories: Love, serve, give or celebrate. They will be interweaved together, as we should do all four of these things throughout the 40 days. These devotions have been written by the Pastors of the city of Titusville. Together, we are the ones to love Titusville to Jesus!

Be blessed! Be encouraged! Be filled with His Presence!

The following Pastors contributed to this book of devotions:

Reverend Fred Ball, First United Methodist Church
Minister Mark Boggess, First Christian Church
Pastor David Cox, Christ Central Church
Father Rob Goodrich, St Gabriel’s Episcopal Church
Pastors Steve and Linda Gross, Walkabout Ministries
Pastor Roger Hackenberg, Hope Community Fellowship
Pastor Sharret Henderson, Indian River City Church
Pastor J.B. Kump, Great Outdoors Community Church
Pastor Larry Linkous, New Life Christian Fellowship
Pastor Tim Merwin, Trinity Community Church
Reverend Jody Noble, St Luke’s Presbyterian Church
Pastor Dori Valley, Hope Community Fellowship

DAY 1...BREATHE IN PEACE

We have all had days when things happen to us in the blink of an eye. We may get a diagnosis for something we didn't expect or want to hear, someone we love dies, a fire or car accident turns our lives upside down, or someone does something that hurts us or someone we love. That causes us to feel like waves are crashing so hard around us that we can't catch our breath. But the word of truth in this is that God doesn't blink, and He is with us in every single moment of our lives. Romans 8:38-39 tells us, *“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

As Floridians, most of us know what to do when a rip tide catches us and pulls us out from the shore. The instinct is to try to swim directly back to shore, but that only wears out the swimmer and makes them feel helpless. A swimmer has to push back that instinct! Instead, they need either to swim parallel to the shore until they are out of the rip tide or float on their back until the current strength lessens. Then they can swim parallel to the shore and back in.

In the days when we have really tough stuff going on in our lives, or we see the deep pain and struggles going on in our nation and world, we are called not to give in to our fears. Like the swimmer caught in a rip tide, we need to remember that the power of God is greater than any current that seems to be taking us out away from shore.

Take a breath, breathing in God's peace and breathing out the junk that is floating around causing panic or fear in your mind. Float on your back if you need to, imagining yourself being held on top of the water by the power of the Holy Spirit. Get your bearings! Use prayer as an anchor to stay centered on our Lord and his promise to never leave you or forsake you. Then, swim in the direction that God leads you, remembering that no matter what happens, you are in God's care and protection forever.

Prayer:

Lord, help me to hold on. Thank you for the body of Christ that I can cling to and depend on during my joys and challenges. I praise You for all of the many blessings and challenges I walk through, as they draw me closer to You throughout my days. Lord, bless me and mine with Your hand of protection, healing, care and provision! :-) Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...Remember a testing time when it was only the hand of God that got you through. Write down the highlights.

2...Ask God for a divine appointment where you can share and comfort someone with the same comfort God gave you.

3...Journal about what happened.

DAY 2... OUR GENEROUS GOD

Where does the motivation for generosity come from? How does generosity become a lifestyle beyond a 40-day event? For the Christian, one does not find longstanding motivation that will endure from just the desire to be a good and generous person. Rather, the motivation comes from looking at our generous and giving God! I am convinced that the more we see how generous our God has been the more we will be inclined towards generous living ourselves.

How generous is our God? Consider the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father gave us His Son! *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16 ESV)

Friends, the kind of generosity we want to cultivate must go beyond an event and it must go beyond simple willpower. A generous life comes from a constant reliance on God and His Word. I submit to you that if you want to grow in generosity, study our generous Father!

The Son willingly gave us His life! Amazing! Jesus' very life and words explain to us His radical generosity. *“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* (Mark 10:45 ESV)

Where do we find the heart for generous living? We find it as we see Christ as the most generous man to ever walk the face of the earth. Only Christ, gave up the comforts of heaven to serve us! (Philippians Chapter 2)
The Spirit gives us Himself!

Not only did the Father send, and the Son came, but when Jesus ascended, He promised to send another helper! The Holy Spirit gives Himself to now live in us.

How generous is our God?!?

It is when we see our generous God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) - that we will then truly grasp our role in generosity. Our motivation for generosity comes from looking away from ourselves and looking to our generous God!

Prayer:

Father, I want a heart like yours. You have given so much for me, enable me to give to others. Remind of all that You have done for me and empower me to live a life of gratitude. Out of this place, may I offer grace, love and mercy to everyone you put in my path. Thank you Lord. In Jesus Name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...Read Chapter 2 of Philippians and ask God to make this scripture real in your own life.

2...Ask God to put someone in your path today who you can talk with about Jesus. Write down the results.

3...List at least 5 ways that God has been generous to you.

DAY 3...LOSE YOURSELF IN SERVING

In this world, society teaches us to serve ourselves, to comfort ourselves, to please ourselves! It sends a clear message of selfishness, self-indulgence, and self-absorption! We are always looking for ways to be served! This should not be!

The Lord says, *“Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.”* (Matthew 10:39). When I think about losing myself I am reminded of a verse in the song, “AWARE”, by Salvador. It goes like this... “Make me aware, make me see; everything I am is not all about ME. Take my world turn it around, so that the obvious can finally be found.”

We need to have a paradigm shift! We need to break out of the model, the standard, that our society dictates and become more like Jesus. He set an example in the Gospels of how to put others before Himself. He looked on the crowds with compassion and was moved to help them anyway He could. He changed their worlds!

We can change the world around us by changing how we think and see things. Serving our community causes our land to flourish and brings spiritual prosperity to our people! Everything prospers! It also helps us to be aware of someone else's needs other than our own. It takes our eyes off of ourselves! One of the greatest qualities we can possess is a heart to serve. We are called to serve others as Jesus served. *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* Mark 10:45

What condition is your heart in today?
Are you willing to lose your life for His sake?
Who will you serve today?

Prayer:

Lord, I thank you that you came to serve and you have served me well! Way beyond what I deserve! Thank you for pouring your life into mine. Lord, help me when I get stuck in selfishness! Change my heart to be more like Yours. My desire is to be a giver and not a taker. Change my thinking, my perception, and my selfish ways! Lord help me see others through Your eyes. Teach me how to serve well! In Jesus name ...Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1...How can I serve someone today with a pure heart? Write down what you feel led to do.

2...Examine your heart and list the thinking that needs to be changed in your own thoughts.

3...Pick one thing that you would like to change about how you treat others on a permanent basis.

DAY 4...JOYFUL GIVER

II Corinthians 9:7 ...*“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

Recently I was blessed to be able to witness pure joy.

I was assisting at a back-to-school event held at a local church, a few days before the start of school. A young, soon-to-be 4th grader, watched in amazement as he had his feet washed by a teenaged church volunteer. After that, the volunteer prayed for the young man as another team member went to fetch a pair of new shoes.

The look of pure joy on the face of that young scholar, as the teenage volunteer placed a brand new pair of batman shoes on his feet, was contagious. Everyone within a 20-foot radius joined in the joy, as the flash of teeth, the bright smile of happiness and the wide open eyes lit up his face. Later, I saw one of the other church volunteers sharing his testimony with this young man. At that moment, I witnessed a new kind of joy on his face.

If you have the Holy Spirit within, you are a vessel of joy and you have been called to share your joy with others. Sharing may be as simple as performing an act of kindness, passing along an encouraging word or sharing the reason for your faith and your personal, life-changing experience with Jesus. Sharing your testimony of God's goodness by blessing someone else is beyond words!

The “payback” of pure joy you may be able to witness is more than enough.

Prayer:

“We praise you, Heavenly Father, who makes all joy possible. You are the author of all that is good in our lives. Equip and inspire us to be able to share the joy that is within us, Father God, to your glory and for the salvation of the lost.” In Jesus Name...Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1...There are many ways we can be a cheerful giver – in addition to the money you have placed in the offering, are there other ways you have found joy in giving?

2...Do you remember someone who brought you pure joy because they shared what God had given them? Can you pray for that person?

3...What recent “good news” event have you experienced? Is there someone you could encourage by sharing this news?

4...Is there somewhere in the community you could volunteer that would give you an opportunity to share God's joy?

DAY 5...GIVING BACK

Jesus said in Luke 12:48, “*that to everyone who has been given much, much is required.*” It’s not okay to not give back, when God has so mercifully and richly blessed us. He in turn, expects us to be merciful and to richly bless others.

When we have been given much and don’t give to others, we are in danger of becoming spiritually constipated. We can easily become a society of self-absorbed, self-centered people with a taker mentality.

God is a giver and we are most like Him when we give. We need to make a shift in our own lives and thinking, from being takers to being givers.

To stay spiritually healthy there has to be a continual inflow from God, as well as an outflow to others. The question before you today is; do you have a healthy balance in your own life? Have you become a taker more than a giver? If so, the result will be spiritual constipation. It’s time for some spiritual ex-lax so you can have a good spiritual bowel movement and cleanse yourself of selfish ways.

In 1 Timothy 6:18 Paul instructs Timothy, “*to do good, to be rich in good works.*”

Have you been rich in good works? Rich in giving back?

It’s time to look outside of ourselves today and start looking for opportunities to give back! Let us develop a heart of practicing random acts of kindness.

Prayer:

Lord, forgive me today for being so self-absorbed, for being a taker more than a giver. Help me to think less of myself and more about how to bless others. Give me a heart that wants to give back and become more like you.

In Jesus name...Amen.

May God richly bless you.

Daily Challenge:

1...Define myself in terms of being a taker or a giver.

2...List 5 ways I give of myself to others.

3...List 5 ways I am a taker.

4...What would I like to change about myself in this area?

DAY 6...LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Jesus said, “*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.*” (John 15:12, NIV)

There is no better way to communicate the message of Christ than to visually express Jesus’ command to love one another. The stereotype that many non-Christians carry of the church is that of a bunch of hypocritical, judgmental people who are quick to point an accusing finger outward, not seeing their own shortcomings. But Jesus said it is by the simple expression of love, one for another, that the world would see and know that we are Christians (John 13:34-35).

The early church made an indelible impact on the Roman world by their outward expression of love for one another. For example, when death came to a Christian family in that time, the members of the church would gather together to help console and share the burden of grief. The watching Roman world saw how Christians gathered to embrace and love one another in those difficult times of hardship and pain. It was that act of loving one another that drew them, that tender expression of care and concern. Many in that day saw those in the church loving each other, even in the midst of physical persecutions and proclaimed, “O, how they love one another.”

Jesus gave His disciples a simple command, to express love for one another—Christian and non-Christian alike—then He provided the supreme example. He loved all people to the cross. Christ’s command is simply to show unconditional love to others because He showed unconditional love to us.

How many wars would be averted, how many marriages would be saved, how many more people would be won to Christ, if each Christian would take serious Jesus’ command to love one another? As the old song goes, “What the world needs now is love, sweet love,”—and it’s true. This is not just a physical, warm-fuzzy love. That kind of love is temporary and dependent on fleshly feelings. What the world truly needs now is the love of Christ, displayed in and through and by His people. Though not everyone will buy it, the love effect of God’s people will be contagious as eyes and ears and lives are turned to the greater love of Jesus.

Prayer:

LORD, so often I look around and see the overwhelming evidence of a lost and dying world. Won’t you help me to share the love of Christ to that world today? May that love radiate from me. May my words and actions express the unconditional love that Christ demonstrated to me on the cross. And when I have the opportunity, let me be ready and willing to share the reason for the hope that I have in Jesus. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1... How can you tangibly show the love of Christ to a non-Christian today?

2...List some of the ways God has showed you unconditional love.

DAY 7...LOVE

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”
(1 John 4:10 NIV)

I probably have more reasons than most people to walk away from any potential relationship with God. My parents had me dedicated to God when I was an infant. After that time, things started to go downhill. My father was a heavy drinker. My mother was a bit of a controlling person. Soon they argued so much, that my mother divorced my father and took my brother and me to California.

My mom attended consciousness raising seminars and then attempted to apply them to the hippy generation in the 1960's. So, she moved a bunch of hippies out of Haight-Ashbury, San Francisco to a 150-acre redwood forest, 150 miles North of there. It wasn't too long after that, that my mom ended up owning one of the largest communes in North America!

I was into everything- Zodiac, Buddhism and Confucianism. However, I had no peace. Then one day a traveling Evangelist invited me to accept Jesus into my heart. I knelt and repeated his prayer. I felt nothing at the time. A few days later, I cried out to God and felt a beautiful, warm experience of God's love all over me.

A few months later, I went to live with my father in Miami. A couple of years after that I joined a little church in North Dade County, Florida, where I began a lifetime of discipleship as a Christian. If it wasn't for the love of Jesus Christ, calling to me before I accepted Him, I would have never followed God's lead for me to become and be a Christian. God was in it all.

Prayer:

“Dear God, I pray that I may experience your love in deeper and deeper ways. Lord Jesus, please come into my heart, soul, mind, body and life and remain there forever. In the Name of Jesus. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...Write down when you accepted this loving presence of Jesus into your life:

2...What things have you done (daily quiet time devotionals, prayers, worship experiences) that have kept you in this loving relationship with Jesus?

3...Describe an experience(s) where you have encountered the love of God:

DAY 8...A 21st Century Parable...(Based on Mark 10:17-27)

A billionaire tried to set up a meeting with God, but was handed off to his Son. After a bit of chitchat, the billionaire asked, “What’s it going to cost for me to purchase a ticket to heaven?”

The Son tapped his iPad for the Ten Commandments APP, then read numbers 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 aloud to the man. The billionaire was ecstatic. He never murdered anyone, didn't cheat on his wife, never really stole anything, never intentionally lied, and loved his parents. His response, “So I’m good, right?”

The Son furrowed his brow, and shook his head, “Not quite. Sell all your mansions, your yachts, your limousines and your jewelry. Deposit the money into a foundation, and give it all to the poor. And then, I’ll take you to heaven, in First Class”.

The billionaire winced. “That’s a pretty hefty price. Let’s negotiate!” He offered to sell the beach house, two Ferraris, and the Caribbean sailboat, and the Son said, “No.”

Then he offered to invest a large sum for the poor if he could keep the interest, and the Son said, “No.”

Finally, he offered to do exactly as the Son asked, if he could defer funding until after he died. The Son was silent.

So the billionaire just walked away muttering, “He’s crazy! Give up everything? That’s no way to run a universe.”

And the Son said, “It’s easier for billionaire to fly his jumbo jet through a microchip, than to get into heaven”.

One of the onlookers was really worried, “My stuff is nowhere near as valuable as that billionaire’s. How am I going to get in? My mansion’s a tent. My limo’s a ‘71 Pinto. My jewelry came from a Cracker Jack box. And my yacht is inflatable!

So... the Son laid it out for them. “For people... it is impossible to get to Heaven. But with God, all things are possible”.

For some people, this sounds like bad news, not Good News, especially if we hoard things. Some call it “collecting.” Others “acquire” things. That’s why we have so many Garage Sales and Yard Sales and Estate Sales. Eventually, accumulation of stuff exceeds our ability to keep it and care for it. It becomes a burden.

A woman, not particularly wealthy, passed away a couple years ago. Her children discovered a massive collection of fine antique china. She had seventy sets! Plus she collected boxes of crystal and linens and silver. I wonder if she ever realized the joy she missed by holding on to those things.

What are you hiding in your closets? What do you collect? What do you hoard? How many “yachts” do you really need? What would happen if you let them go, and gave the money to the poor?

We may not be billionaires with fleets of jets and ocean going yachts, but we do have more than we need. And some of it, we hoard. Some things even imprison us.

Prayer:

Father, help me not to cling to the things of this life. I want to store my treasure up in Heaven. Enable me to be able to respond when you call and share what I have with others. Thank you that I have more than enough to give to those in need. You are truly a good Father. In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...In the space below, write down a thing or two you are willing to liquidate or give away.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2...Then pray that God will show you where or to whom you can give that will do some real good.



Oh, I've heard a thousand stories of what they think you're like
But I've heard the tender whispers of love in the dead of night
And you tell me that you're pleased And that I'm never alone

You're a Good, Good Father
It's who you are, it's who you are, it's who you are
And I'm loved by you
It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am

Oh, and I've seen many searching for answers far and wide
But I know we're all searching For answers only you provide
'Cause you know just what we need Before we say a word

You're a Good, Good Father
It's who you are, it's who you are, it's who you are
And I'm loved by you
It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am (*1)

DAY 9...GENEROUS SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 13:3, *"If I give away all I have... but have not love, I gain nothing."*

We can give or be generous in many ways. We can give our time, talents, resources, smiles, and even our friendship. As we look at being generous this month, let's take a moment to reflect on the motivation of our giving.

Some may give out of duty, or feel compelled out of guilt. Others may give because of peer pressure, or even begrudgingly. As followers of Jesus, we know we are supposed to give and be generous, but what drives or compels us to give?

The famous verse found in John 3:16 tells us God's motivation in giving, *"for God so loved that he gave..."*. Our text in I Corinthians 13 reminds us that our giving must be, like our Heavenly Father's, born out of love.

As you give during these '40 Days of Generosity', let God change your heart so that you develop a heart of love that gives, like God, out of your deep love for him and the people he places in your path.

Prayer:

Lord, give me a love for you and others that compels me to be generous and giving. Let that love be seen as I give you my worship and to others my time, talents, and treasure. In Jesus Name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...Am I giving for any other reason than love?

2...How can falling in love with Jesus again, help me in becoming a generous person?

3...Have I been a recipient of the love of God in a real and tangible way?

DAY 10...CELEBRATE

Psalm 145: 3-7, *“Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works, and I will proclaim your great deeds. They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.”*

I am so thankful that my God is relational and personal, with me! I have a lifetime of stories, to remember and reflect on, of the good things He has poured into my life. He has been kind and merciful to me, as He gently showed me the areas of my life that needed to change. He has provided what I needed, when it seemed impossible. He has healed me many times. His heart is toward me and never against me!

My God truly works all things together for my good, because I love Him and He loves me. He is dependable and trustworthy with all areas of my life. He is so worthy of my affection, my worship and my praise.

I simply want to declare to you today that He is worth celebrating! He is a Father who loves His children, and that includes me... and you! He is abundantly good to each one of us, shaping and molding us into vessels of honor, with tender, loving care.

I encourage you today to tell Him of the love you have for Him! He loves it when His children testify of His greatness. Proclaim His great deeds to everyone you meet today so the city of Titusville sees the God we know and love!

Prayer:

Lord, thank you so much for the abundance of your love for me. Help me to never be ashamed of the Gospel, but to shout from the rooftops what a great Father you are. Give me courage today to speak to the people in my life of my love for You. Your Spirit within me is cause to celebrate and proclaim what a good, good Father you are! In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...Ask Holy Spirit to remind you of the wonders God has worked out in your life. List a few to reflect on:

2...Find someone to share your testimony with today. Who did you find? What did you tell them?

DAY 11...SERVE

“And he [God] has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.” (1 John 4:21NIV)

My Uncle Frank was a life-long “Church Man.” He lived a life on the “straight and narrow.” For some reason, I always looked up to him. Uncle Frank was an Elder (an educated leader) in his congregational Church. But when I became a Christian, my Uncle was a valuable resource of information in my life. Uncle Frank used to tell me: “Service is the rent we pay for the space that we occupy on this earth.”

I later read in The Bible: *“Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister”* (1 John 4:21b).

What my Uncle told me was close to God’s spoken truth. However, I came to believe that when we respond to God’s love and accept Jesus into our lives, then the eventual response to this living relationship with the Spirit of Jesus is to serve and love others.

Prayer:

“I want to Serve You, Oh Jesus My King. Here to Your Altar, my whole self, I bring. Melt me and mold me and shape me today. In every walk of life, show me your way. Amen.”

Daily Challenge:

1...How has receiving Jesus into your life resulted in acts of service in your life:

2...What are some of the ways that Jesus would want you to serve others:

3...Describe a time in your life in which you experienced someone serving you (or another person) with excellence:

DAY 12...GIVE

“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.” (1 John 4:9 NIV)

A wise person once said, “You can’t out-give God.” God who is the Creator of this universe “*sent his one and only Son*” so that we may have a fulfilled, abundant and eternal life with Him.

Just think of that greatest act of everlasting love: Jesus left His Heavenly Kingdom, was born of the virgin Mary, taught people how to live by Kingdom principles, died for our wrong doings, was raised from the dead and sent His Holy Spirit (His very own presence) to live within us and show us how to live! If the sending of Jesus to this world is not the greatest gift of all, then what is a better contribution to humanity?

So, what is the natural response to the follower of Jesus to this greatest gift of His life? 1 John 4:7 answers this question best: *“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.”*

Acts of kindness, contributing to the work of God through your local Church and then to a Christian ministry, is a natural response of a living relationship with Jesus Christ – the main Giver of all givers.

Prayer:

“Lord Jesus, I accept the gift of salvation that leads me to a wonderfully abundant, fulfilled and eternal life in You. Help me to give and love others in the same way that You love me. Amen.”

Daily Challenge:

1...What are some of the acts of kindness and generosity that you could do in the name of Jesus through:

Your Family:

Your Church:

Your Work:

Your Community:

Your World:

2...Describe a time when someone was very generous toward you and/or your family:

DAY 13...CELEBRATE

“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” (1 John 4:16-18 NIV)

God loves you!

That is something worthy of a celebration! When you live constantly in that loving presence of the Spirit of Jesus, you have nothing to fear. Life will still have its troubles and challenges, but now you have a way of handling your problems – Jesus. Jesus, His Bible and His Holy Spirit will see you through the difficulties of life.

God is at work in you to make you better and better. The presence of Jesus is molding and changing each one of His followers whether we are aware of it or not. He brings us from “bad to better and better to perfection.” We have a word for this process of God working in our lives. The word is: “sanctification.”

The life of sanctification leads us to eventually become perfect as God improves us each day. Then one day we will enter into God’s presence to live with Him forever. Therefore, *“Perfect love drives out fear.”*

Now that’s something to celebrate in daily praise and prayer and worship with others!

Prayer:

“Dear Jesus, sometimes I don’t know why I should celebrate this life. And then I remember that you told me in your Bible to ‘live in love [and] live in God and God in [me].’ Help me to celebrate you with those whom I now love and those who you are calling to yourself. Amen.”

Daily Challenge:

1...What are some of the ways that I could celebrate my life in Jesus? (worship, praise, etc)

2...Who will I include in my celebration of Jesus?

3...Describe a celebration in Jesus that you have experienced or hope to experience.

DAY 14...A HEART TO SERVE

A special principle I attempt to live by is found in the lines of a verse written by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians: *“Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible”* (I Cor. 9:19, NIV). Did you catch the principle? It is rather hidden. Here it is: If you want it, serve it.

Paul says, “I don’t have to do all this. I’m a Christian saved by grace. I can stay in Antioch and live my life out fully and die here and go to heaven. I am free from all. However, my life is bigger than that. I have made myself a servant to all so I can win those I serve” (author’s paraphrase).

I have found in my life (for the most part) that what I serve, I win. If I want my marriage to be rewarding and fulfilling, I must serve it. If I want a covenant relationship with my son, I must serve him. If I want a great church in my community, I must serve it. If I want a great community in my church, I must serve it.

When we started our church in 1983, it wasn’t long until I realized we had very few people with babies in the church. We didn’t have many people anyway, but hardly any babies. I made a plan to decorate and staff a small nursery for infants and toddlers. Some people looked at me oddly and asked, “Pastor, why are you creating a nursery when we don’t have any babies?” I answered, “the reason we don’t have babies is because we don’t have a nursery.” When we started the nursery, families with babies started showing up! And they stayed.

If you want it, serve it. A few years ago a group of us attended a motivational conference in Orlando at the convention center. One of the speakers was Dick Vitale. He said that if he were young again he would find the corporation that he wanted to work in and invest his life and time into that corporation. He would just show up regularly to volunteer and work excellently in the job assignment. He said he would become so indispensable to the corporation that the powers in charge would have to notice him and realize they couldn’t do without him and would begin to pay him to stay. He said from there he would work his way upward.

I know this works. I have pastors on my staff who showed up as volunteers. One of my pastors retired from the navy and came into the church office and asked what he could do. We gave him the membership list and directed him to call every family on the list and encourage them in the Lord, pray for them, and ask how we could better serve them. He did the job. Day after day, this man was on the job doing excellent ministry. I realized how invaluable an asset he was to the ministry and asked what it would take to keep him on the team. I said we didn’t have the budget for another staff pastor, but we would do whatever we could within our ability. He came back and told me that if we could pay his grocery bill weekly he could stay. We found that much money in the budget and brought him on staff.

Over twenty years later, this man still pastors on our staff. Of course, the greatest example of a servant is our Savior, Jesus Christ. He said *“the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* Matthew 20:28 NAS. There’s a power in serving that attracts success and also attracts God’s approval.

Let’s be sure we humble ourselves before the Lord and before others and serve His purposes in the earth.

Prayer:

Lord, help me to serve in the places where you have placed me. I want to win the lost, the hopeless and the broken, help me to serve them. Give me the same heart that was in Christ Jesus, to consider others better than myself and love them to Jesus. In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...Who would you have me serve today?

DAY 15...CELEBRATE FORGIVENESS

Acts 2:38, *“Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

Forgiveness is worth celebrating!

Every single one of us has a “bent” in our flesh to desire sin. Our Heavenly Father knew that and made a way for every one of us to be restored to relationship with Him! Repent! Repent simply means to see the error of my ways, recognize the things in my life that keep me from knowing God and that hurt His heart. I must acknowledge them and turn 180 degrees and walk in the opposite direction! I must choose to flee from sin!

Jesus blood covers my sins so that now, when the Father looks at me, He sees the blood of Jesus flowing upon me and covering me. The scripture says in Isaiah 1: 18, *“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”* Doesn’t that make you want to yell out, ‘thank you Jesus!’? It should!

The Father not only worked forgiveness in our lives, but He rubbed His life into us by placing His Holy Spirit in us. He gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit, to do for us what we can’t do for ourselves. It’s true. By living inside of me He instructs me how to live like Jesus, empowers me to walk a pure and holy life, gives me boldness to share my faith with others and allows me to be united with the Father and the Son. He pretty much will help me with anything I need help with!

Forgiveness is so freeing! I don’t have to walk in condemnation or shame. My life is now new in Jesus! Thank you Lord!

Prayer:

Father remind me throughout this day of the great gift you have given me. You have freed me to walk through this life as a new creation in you. What a blessing. My heart is overflowing with thanks. You did for me what I could never do for myself. Thank you. In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...For your own celebration, list the areas of your life where Jesus has set you free.

2...Share the good news of forgiveness with at least one other person today. What was their response?

3...Explain one time that the Holy Spirit spoke to you and how it changed your actions.

DAY 16... LIVE TO GIVE

Make this declaration today....” As I go, I will preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ I will heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely I have received, freely I will give. Matthew 10:7-8 I must remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Therefore, I will give what the Holy Spirit speaks to my heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God, my Father, loves a cheerful giver. And He is able to make all grace abound to me, so that in all things at all times, having all that I need, I will abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 I will give to the one who asks me, and I will not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from me. Matthew 5:42 And if anyone takes what belongs to me, I will not demand it back. I will do to others as I would have them do to me. Luke 6:30-31 I will give, knowing it will be given back to me. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into my lap. For with the measure I use, it will be measured to me.” Luke 6:38 And I know that He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase my store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of my righteousness. I will be made rich in every way so that I can be generous on every occasion, and through my generosity, others will offer thanksgiving to God. 2 Corinthians 9:10-11 I will determine to love my enemies, to do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Because I know my reward will be great, and I will be acting as a son/daughter of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. I choose to be merciful, just as my Father is merciful. Luke 6:35-36 I also understand that whoever wants to become great in this world must be the servant of all, and whoever wants to be first must be a slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:43-45

Prayer:

Lord, enable me to be a giver in this life. Help me to pattern my life after you. I want to have a generous heart that responds with compassion to the people you place in my paths. In Jesus name. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1...How can I be generous with somebody today?

2...What has God freely given to me that I can freely give to someone else today?

3...Look for somebody you can pray over today and release the Kingdom of Heaven over. What was the need?

DAY 17...USHER IN REVIVAL

Your pastors are believing God to revive our city, for the glory of God. We want to see the Kingdom of God at work changing our individual lives, so that our city will be healed and renewed.

Pray this prayer with us...As we pray for new wells of revival, we pray for new economic wells in Titusville to be created.

So Lord we ask you for:

Favor for our city with CEO's, Government leaders & Kings.

Manufacturing firms that produce goods for the nations and provide new jobs for our people.

Technology to establish new markets, energy sources, and efficient solutions to grow as a population.

Laws & Courts that measure with the justice and the freedom of our land's Constitution.

Civil servants that encourage entrepreneurs.

Media known for wisdom & truth.

Natural resources released, harvested, sold & reproduced.

Education, books, and Universities that develop mind molders who influence the influential.

Capital to build small businesses that provide services, arts and culture attracting both young and old.

Medical community known for integrity and excellence.

Repentance from poverty, small thinking, and envy.

Courage to recognize opportunities and make wealth.

Abundance to bless the world and the Prudence to save and invest.

Revelation to pass on wealth to our children's children...

So we declare that when the righteous prosper, the city rejoices!

Prayer:

Lord, touch Titusville in ways we have only imagined! You are a God of abundance and we are waiting to see our city transformed by the power of your Spirit. Will you once again hover over our city and birth new life here. Thank you Father. In Jesus name. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1...Ask God to place a business in Titusville on your heart that you will continue to pray for and believe God to prosper them.

2... Commit yourself today to bless a city official, even if it is just to pray blessing over their life.

3...Repent of any word curses you have spoken over our city and speak life over Titusville instead.

DAY 18...I WILL MAKE THE LORD FAMOUS

As you speak these words today, believe that God is serving OUR CITY by choosing to minister life here and now!

Lord, I have heard of Your fame; I stand in awe of Your deeds. Renew them in my day; in my time make them known. Your glory covers the heavens and Your praise fills the earth. Your splendor is like the sunrise; the sunrays flash from Your hand, where Your power is hidden. Walking in Your ways, I wait for You; Your name and renown are the desire of my heart. I am blessed because I acclaim You; I walk in the light of Your presence. I rejoice in Your name all day long; I exult in Your righteousness, for You are my glory and strength, and by Your favor, You exalt my strength. I will tell of Your kindness, the deeds for which You are to be praised, according to all You have done for me...yes, the many good things You have done for all Your people, according to Your compassion and loving kindness. You sit enthroned forever and Your renown endures through all generations. The nations will fear Your name; all the kings of the earth will revere Your glory. I speak this over my generation and the one to come, that Your people may praise Your name. Sovereign Lord, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You. O great and powerful God, whose name is the LORD Almighty, great are Your purposes and mighty are Your deeds. Your eyes are open to all my ways; You reward me according to my conduct and as my deeds deserve. You have performed miraculous signs and wonders from Egypt of old to this very day among all mankind, and have gained renown that is still yours today! May my life represent You upon the earth. You have given me the ministry of reconciliation, committing to me the message to bring peace and harmony to my fellow man. I am therefore Your ambassador; make Your appeal through me. As Your fellow worker I will urge others not to receive Your grace in vain. I will speak that now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

(Habakkuk 3:2–3; Isaiah 26:8; Psalms 89:15–17; Isaiah 63:7; Psalms 102:12, 15, 18–22; Jeremiah 32:17–20; 2 Corinthians 5:18–20, 6:1–2)

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we need you. We need you to pour out your grace and mercy over Titusville every single day. We want you to be famous in our city! Be at home here and make your Presence known on every street, in every home and business. Empower your people to represent you well. In Jesus name. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1...What deed can you do today that will show someone the love of Jesus?

2...Ask Holy Spirit to give you a divine encounter today with someone who needs to be touched by His power. What happened?

3...What are the responsibilities of an ambassador? Am I walking in these?

DAY 19... GOD IS GOOD

I love Psalm 34:8! "*Taste and see that the Lord is good.*" It creates imagery in my mind of my spiritual taste buds working overtime to savor and delight in everything that God does for me! The flavor of life that Father leaves with me is wonderful.

Don't think that I am crazy! I am just fully convinced and persuaded that my Father is good...all the time! So if He is good, where does the bad stuff come from? NOT from Father! We are in a battle every day with our own flesh and its desires; from the world vying for our hearts and attention and from the Prince of this world, Satan. So I can shout from the rooftop with confidence that my God is good! As a matter of fact, James tells us in his letter (chapter 1:17) that "*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father...*" Let that sink into your spirit for a moment! Everything He has stored up for us in Heaven, is available now. We have a tremendous inheritance just waiting for us. After all, we are co-heirs with Jesus. So everything He had and walked in IS ours too!

I actually have a hard time getting my mind around that. More than I have yet asked for or imagined is available to me from God the Father. I am not speaking of worldly wealth (although that is all His too), but about spiritual wealth! My Father wants me to be a daughter to Him, the same way that Jesus was a son to Him. He wants me to walk as Jesus walked. What holds me back from stepping into that anointing, that inheritance?

My own flesh, my thoughts, my choices. Ouch! But it is true.

I am moving toward the place of saying only what the Father is saying, doing only what the Father is doing. But I confess I have a long way to go!

The hope within me is that I press on to KNOW Him. I don't quit. That each day, as I spend time with Him, I understand His heart a little more. I am being conformed into His image. I am making better choices than ten years ago. There is a little more of Him in me than five years ago. I am determined to finish the course and be with Him for eternity. I have had moments when the Spirit of God has used me in tremendous ways...and for that I am grateful! I rejoice when He counts me worthy to touch lives around me!

My Father is a good, good Father. I love that song. It is in my spirit and mind! The bridge is one of my favorite parts, "love so undeniable I can hardly speak, peace so unexplainable I can hardly think, as He calls me deeper still into love." His unconditional love! He will never leave me or forsake me. He will always be there...and He has always been there. I am in covenant with my Father, permanent adoption, and He takes that very seriously. I can count on Him and rely on Him in every part of my life.

All I can say is...THANK YOU FATHER!

Prayer:

Father, thank you for being so good to me. Remind me of all the ways you have touched my life and caused me to love you a little more. Your goodness overwhelms me. Thank you for your unconditional love for me. In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...How about you? Have you been convinced of His goodness in your life?

2... List all the ways God has blessed you with His love:

DAY 20...INTIMIDATION

"God DID NOT give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind!" (2 Timothy 1:7) Paul wrote this word to Timothy, his spiritual son in the Lord. In some translations it says God did not give us a spirit of timidity. To be timid is to be fearful, hesitant and lacking self-confidence. It is someone who is easily intimidated by others. Intimidation persuades me to give up my authority in Christ Jesus. When I do, my spiritual gifts can no longer operate freely. That causes me to act and react out of my flesh, not seeing or responding as Jesus would. Then instead of being offensively ready to walk out my faith, I become defensive and shrink back from any attack. I step into a self-protection mode, choosing to find a place of comfort and safety where I don't have to stand against evil.

That is a mouthful, but that is what the Holy Spirit spoke to me this morning. I never saw it quite as clearly as I do right now.

I remember one of my most intimidating moments was entering the Soviet Republic of Estonia the first time. Three of us were taken into a room with soldiers and their guns! The room was filled with smoke and nude pictures on the walls. They didn't speak to us, but barked at us as to why we were entering their country. I felt like cowering before these men, and running away to hide! Intimidation was one of the prevailing spirits over the Soviet Union. I know because I faced it many times over the next years. It was a tool the Communist Government used to keep the people in line. Everyone lived in fear all the time!

What counteracts intimidation? Knowing who I am in Christ Jesus! I must know who I am and whose I am!

My strength and confidence cannot be in myself, but who I am when the Spirit of the Living God dwells in me! That gives me a boldness and confidence that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me! I must be fully persuaded that He is God and I am not! When I am boldly able to step into the authority I have, the spiritual gifts God has given me once again awaken inside of me! When I declare over myself that timidity has no place in my thought life, heart or spiritual life and step out with His power, His love and a sound mind fixed on Him...I truly can do all things!

I must KNOW my God and be entrenched in His power. God looks on the heart of a person, not our size or our position. As I yield to Him and worship Him, He sees a heart that desires Him. This is the place I want to be.

Prayer:

Lord anoint me with fresh boldness so all chains of intimidation are broken off of me. Infuse my life with your boldness. Like David, I long to be a person after your own heart. I purpose to step into your boldness and power and strength, not to be lulled into inaction because of intimidation. I want to shine with your love. As I walk in Your Spirit of might and boldness, use my giftings and talents to further Your Kingdom. May I fear and love only you. In Jesus name. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

- 1...Are you ready to leave intimidation behind? What gifts has God given you to share with the body of Christ?
- 2...What holds you back from stepping out in your talents?
- 3...Ask God today to break off all fear so that you can freely give to others what God has given to you.

DAY 21... SPIRITUAL TEMPERATURE

"The Love of many will grow cold..."

I would like to challenge you today to take your spiritual temperature. Jesus warned His disciples that in the last days, times would be difficult. Much like our day! Natural disasters, wars and rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes, not to mention political disaster everywhere! In our Christian nation it is becoming less and less popular to actually BE a Christian! We are in the times when many are turning away from the faith. Jesus said in Matthew 24: 12-13, *"Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."*

In our nation we are seeing an increase in immorality, shamelessness, rebellion against God and throwing off of moral restraint. If you try to speak into people's lives they call you old fashion and not hip with the times. They call us intolerant and mean spirited. The problem is there are many Christians who name the name of Jesus, but don't actually know Him or love Him. This "knowing" Him means to experience His Presence in such a way that everything changes. We should be those who have a passion to read the Word, to devour it and to spend time with Jesus. Then we will be filled with Him and His love will flow from us to others!

In the Old Testament God told Moses to teach the priests to keep the fire burning on the altar continuously. Leviticus 6: 12-13, *"The fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must not go out. Every morning the priest is to add firewood and arrange the burnt offering on the fire...The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out."* In 1 Peter 2:9 we are told that we are the "royal priesthood" now! The altar of His Presence is found within our hearts. It is in our hearts where we have communion with Him and know Him! So every morning I must get up and put fire on the altar! I have to keep the flame burning within my heart, keep my passion for God vibrant and burning! Proverbs 4: 23 tells us that, *"above everything else in this world we must guard our hearts"*! In my heart is everything that determines how I will live my life!

How do I do that? By spending time with Him. It can't be said enough! Only I can keep the fire burning in my heart! I must fuel the fire, by worship and prayer, by reading His word, by communion with Him, by yielding myself to His will and His ways. The only thing that can separate me, from the love God has for me, is MYSELF! If I refuse to fuel the fire every day and keep my passion for Him alive, then my heart's love for Him WILL grow cold. Jesus told the church in Laodicea that they were neither hot or cold and he wished they would be one or the other. Because they were lukewarm he was ready to spit them out of his mouth. Ouch!

Time for a reality check! What is the temperature of your heart today?

Prayer:

Lord, I want to be passionate after you. I want to hear one day, 'well done, good and faithful servant'. Please meet me every morning as I read your word and talk to you. I want the altar of my heart to burn brightly as I greet you each and every day to be part of my life. Thank you. In Jesus name. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1...Ask the Lord what temperature your spiritual life is? What did He say?

2...How can you put fresh fire on the altar of your heart every day?

3...List the areas of your life that you still completely control. Ask God how to get Him more involved in your day to day life.

DAY 22...BELIEVE

Jesus answered, "the work of God is this, to believe in the one he has sent." John 6:29. This verse of Scripture should cause us to think!

Our mentality is "it is so much easier to DO something than to just TRUST God". That is why in the present day we find many more workers for God than workers who cooperate with Him. The cooperating part means sitting with Him, knowing His thoughts, determining to act as the Holy Spirit leads us, speaking what the Father would say, etc. To believe in the One He sent is to believe and trust in Jesus; who now uses the Holy Spirit to direct our steps!

Question. Are you totally convinced that God will do what you cannot do?

One of my most favorite stories in the Bible is found in Daniel chapter 3. It has to do with the three Hebrew boys, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Raised as good Jewish boys, they are removed from their homeland and taken to Babylon as prisoners, to serve King Nebuchadnezzar. Even though in the midst of this pagan nation, they, along with Daniel, refuse to defile themselves. They maintain their obedience to the God of their Fathers even as slaves in this foreign land. The King is full of himself and makes a statue 90' high! He makes it a law that all who pass by must bow down and worship his statue.

The locals weren't real happy that these Hebrews had been elevated to ruling positions over them. So they stirred up trouble with the King. They would not bow down to the statue and the Babylonian officials told on them.

Let's pick up the story in verse 12, *"They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up."* Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage and ordered that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought before him. When they were brought in, Nebuchadnezzar said to them, *"Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments. But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?"* Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, *"O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."*

They were so bold! But they also KNEW who they believed in and knew they could trust Him with their very lives! The King was so upset he made the furnace 7 times hotter than normal, so hot his guards who threw in the three boys perished! But not them. They were rescued because of their faith! They were fully persuaded that their God was the only God worth worshipping! In the end of verse 28 the King says, *"They trusted in Him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God."*

Wow! What a confession out of the mouth of this wayward King. I want it to be said of me that "she was fully persuaded her Jesus was the only way, the only truth and the only way of life worth pursuing!" Lord increase my faith to believe you for anything and everything!

Prayer:

Lord Jesus embolden my heart to trust you in all areas of my life. Help me to stand and trust you with all the details of my life. Thank you. In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

- 1...What do you believe God is able to do in your life?
- 2...Ask Holy Spirit to lead you to someone today who you can "give" your testimony of "belief" to.

DAY 23...SERVING

‘If it is God’s will, I will.’

Have you had this experience, ask someone for help to set up, tear down, take a Sunday School class, help with an event and their response is, " I will have to pray and see if this is God's will". What I see in our churches today is people doing nothing because they don't want to be out of God's will. Father has plans and purposes for each one of us. Some of those plans are personal for each one of us...and some are expectations for us all. For instance, it is God's will for each one of us to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. To look more like Jesus, we will have to be willing to let the Holy Spirit point out what isn't Christlike and help form those things within us that need to be.

As I look back over my life, I understand that God used everything I did and was involved in and every person I've known, to shape me and mold me. Some of it was good and fun, while other things were horrible to walk through. I have known great rejection in my life, but so did Jesus. Learning to respond as He would respond is what the Holy Spirit is hoping to form within me. "Father forgive them...".

1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18 says... *"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* There are other scriptures that talk about God's will for our lives but I love this one. I could spend the rest of my life just allowing the Holy Spirit to work this into my life. I don't always rejoice and I have to be reminded often to pray throughout my day and cultivate a grateful heart. I want those things to be second nature to me! How do they get worked into me? By being around people and working together to build the Kingdom of God.

What is my point? Serve, body of Christ! Serve one another and help wherever help is needed. Don't excuse yourself from helping by saying you have to see what God's will is for you. The biggest *"will of God"* for each one of us is to *"love one another"* and that means no excuses, serve God and serve people. Get involved so God can shape and mold you into His image.

God may move some of you to certain places, but He wants us to be involved in things that matter! As my Senior Pastor always says, "the only things we get to take to Heaven are the relationships we have built". We build relationships by being around each other and serving one another. Humble yourself and say "Yes, I would be delighted to help because I know God will use this moment to shape and mold me more into His image and character."

Prayer:

God help me to have a willing heart to serve the people of God. Block my excuses and empower me to serve where I am needed. In Jesus name. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1...What about you? What have you been asked to do in the last year?

2...Did you do it gladly or begrudgingly? Did you refuse to get involved?

3...How can you volunteer to help at your house of worship?

DAY 24...ANOINTING

Luke 4: 18-19, *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

The above scripture is one of my favorites! It was originally prophesied in Isaiah 61: 1. Then Jesus spoke it in Luke 4, after returning from 40 days of temptation in the wilderness, he returned to Galilee in the power of the spirit, entered the synagogue, picked up the scroll and read from Isaiah. The scripture says he handed the scroll back to the attendant and with all eyes on Him, announced this scripture was now fulfilled in Him! Can you imagine how big their eyes must have gotten! He was announcing that He was the fulfillment of the prophecy. That He was the anointed one!

What exactly is the anointing?

Anointing means to "smear or rub in", also to consecrate for office. The Holy Spirit upon Jesus was smearing and rubbing into Him the image of His Father, the character and nature of His Father and that He was now fulfilling the office of a prophet. How do we know that? Hebrews 1: 1-3 says *"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."* Jesus is the exact representation of His Father! That is why he could say to his disciples, *"if you have seen me, you have seen the Father."* John 14:9b

We are called Christians because we are meant to carry the same anointing and represent the Father now in our generation! Christian means *"little anointed one"*. I am meant to have the life of the Spirit rubbed into me so I can be like Him and do what He did. I love the scripture in Acts 10 verse 38 where Luke writes that *"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power to go around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him."* I want to BE a little anointed one! I want to flow with the Spirit of God and have His power released through me to change the world!

How does that happen? By pressing in to know Him. I can't BE anointed if I live like the rest of the world. God is only going to put His power upon those, who like Jesus, commit themselves to KNOW the Father. To walk with the Father, to say what He is saying and do what He is doing. It is NOT dependent upon my actions or behavior, but it is very dependent upon my yielding to the Father and His ways. I can't operate out of my flesh or desires and expect God to do whatever I say. It is me loving Him enough to wait upon Him, sit with Him, develop ears to hear His voice and cooperate with Him. Then He can truly rub His life into mine.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I want your anointing on my life. Rub your life into mine, especially your heart for the people of my city. I want to love them, the same way that you have loved me. Thank you for the power of the spirit upon my life! In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...What about you? Do you want more of God in your life?

2...Describe a time when you know that God's anointing empowered you to minister to someone?

3...Ask yourself, "How much of God do I want in my life?" Then seek Him until He responds to you.

DAY 25...REVELATION OF LOVE

Did you sing this song in Sunday School? "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong, they are weak but He is strong. Yes Jesus loves me, yes Jesus loves me, yes Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so."

There are many who give their lives to Jesus but don't really have a revelation of His love for them. I know, because for a long time I wondered how God could love me. A lot of that comes from how we have related to our earthly parents as kids. If you have had any kind of negative experience in relationships with those who were supposed to love you and protect you, it is harder to accept the idea that Almighty God could love you unconditionally. I had to come to the realization that my parents were not perfect! They too were trying to find their way. Often hurt people will hurt people! We have more understanding today, more openness to talk and be real than the generations behind us. God wants us to have the perfect understanding that His love for us is 100% all the time! He sees us as his sons and daughters and His Father's heart is always toward us.

I had to have a revelation from His heart to mine of that love. It is one thing for someone to tell me that God so loved the world that He gave His only son that the world wouldn't perish. It is quite another thing for me to understand that God loves me! He is a personal God, Father, who wants to have an intimate relationship with each one of us! Read the book of 1 John for a real look into God's love! The verse that God breathed on and brought alive inside of me is 1 John 4:16...*"And so I can know and rely on the love God has for me."* What I mean is that one day, in the middle of questioning if God really loved me, I read this verse and the Holy Spirit in me caused that verse to bring to light, to make plain and real to me that my Father in Heaven loved me, and continues to love me. I am so thankful for His speaking to me!

In a love relationship, you don't want to disappoint! Because I received this understanding of His love for me, I WANT to walk in such a way that I return that love! I want to continue to be worthy of His love, so I keep myself pure and holy, set apart to love Him and walk with Him. The world doesn't have such a hold on me anymore, my desires keep changing and I want to bring pleasure to my God.

You see why a revelation is so important...it takes me to a place spiritually that I can never get to in my own thinking or actions. That is why I want to spend time with my Father, so I will get more and more revelation from His word.

My prayer for you is that you will get this revelation of His love if you have not yet had that encounter! It has to begin with you desiring more. Do you??

Prayer:

Father, I want to know your unconditional love for me deeper every day. Continue to reveal your heart to me. Help me to catch in the spirit how real your love is. If I had been the only sinner on the planet, you would have still died for me. That is love. Help me to be so immersed in your love for me that I am able to love others unconditionally too. Thank you. In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...When did you first know that God loves you? If you haven't had that revelation yet, ask God. He will answer.

2...Was love modeled to you in your home? Do you model love to your family?

3...Pray for someone you know today to receive revelation of God's love. Did they?

DAY 26... HOPE

Hebrews 6: 19 tells me that I have “*hope as an anchor for my soul, firm and secure*”! Have you ever thought much about hope? Let me define it for you...the joyful anticipation of good! It is when my heart is totally convinced that God is good and is looking out for me. It reminds of Romans 8 verse 28 where it says that, ‘*God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose*’. So there is one condition, that we love God. When I live a life that shows my love for Him, I can depend on Him to work everything out for my good.

Hope is complete confidence in God's goodness! It is when I understand that His desire, His commitment, and His abilities are all in my corner saying "all is well, I've got your back". Later in chapter 10 verse 23 Paul wrote, "*Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise.*" Hope is not dependent on me, but my hope is in Him and the promises He has made. That is actually a big part of hope, that I know the promises in His word! That I rehearse them in my mind and read them over and over. Why? Because the hope that exists within me will depend on what I think about, meditate on (rehearse) and fill my heart with. God's promises are fuel for my hope.

As I was thinking about this during my time with God today I asked myself, ‘what promises of God are you clinging to’? Right now I have been thinking a lot about being His child, so as a child, as an heir I have promises of great value! My Father wants to fulfill those things that I am hoping for. Do you remember being a child and knowing a holiday was coming, like Christmas? You were hopeful that at least something you desired was going to be made available. You were exuberant and expectant. You believed that your parents would do whatever they could to give you good gifts. That is our Heavenly Father NOW. He has made so many promises in our favor, saying let yourself desire what I have promised with expectation and joy! I will come through for you!

When that kind of hope exists, it is the soil that my faith grows in. Isn't that what Hebrews 11:1 means... "*Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see.*" So faith is being fully persuaded. Fueled by my hope in the certainty of God's promises, I am fully persuaded that God WILL DO what He says He will do! That is a mouthful!

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, be the anchor of my soul today. Help me to always expect you to work in my heart and life. Show me more promises in the Word of God that you want me to pursue and believe for. You are my God of Hope. Thank you Father. In Jesus name. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1... What about you today...what do set your heart on hoping for?

2...How has God been looking out for you this month?

3...How do you need Him to look out for you right now? Tell Him with expectation of His goodness.

DAY 27... SONS OF GOD

In Romans 8 verses 14-16 it says, "*...those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*"

Immediately my mind and heart cry out Holy Spirit, lead me. Let me hear your voice very clearly. I want to be a son of God. (After all, if men have to be the bride of Christ than women can certainly be sons of God!)

I am a daughter of the living God! How do I know that? Because I have the spirit of God living inside of me and I make every effort to cooperate with him! I desire to follow him, because I know in my flesh I can still make some very bad choices.

There are many benefits to being a son or daughter of the living God! I know that God is a good Father, and I know that He will give me the same things that he gave to his son, Jesus. I am, after all, a co-heir of all of heaven! I believe that God is looking for sons and daughters who look, act and live like Jesus did. He is looking for me to live in the same authority and power that Jesus lived in!

There have been many times in my life that I would have liked for Father God to have just answered my every cry, responded immediately to my prayers. That He would have fixed every problem so my heart wasn't broken and my life went very smoothly on this earth. As I think about that, I understand if things worked that way I would never have grown up! When a baby cries the parents respond, change the diaper, feed the hunger, hold and nurture. Babies know how to get their parents attention! Father God does that in our early walk with him, but then expects us to mature!

That means, as I grow up and mature in my walk with God I MUST CHANGE! I must allow the spirit to move me to the place of asking for the mind of Christ, to see how He sees. That I must respond to situations and people the way Jesus did. I must now exercise the power and authority that He has already given me, for the benefit of those around me. I am to live and think responsibly in ways that represent Jesus on the earth. Father gives us promises and says... "trust me now to work through you! You go and demonstrate my heart for humanity, and become part of the answer by allowing me to flow through you."

I desire to look like Him, smell like Him, walk like Him and talk like Him. Every day I trust the Spirit of God a little more to use me and flow through me. I desire to be as Jesus was to this world. How about you??

Prayer:

Thank you Father for calling me to be a son/daughter. Not only did you call me, but you adopted me and gave me the same access to you that Jesus has. Thank you for giving to me all things. Help me to better understand how to be rightly related to you. I love you. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1...As a son or daughter, what inheritance have you received?

2...Have you asked Father God for revelation of your inheritance? If not, do so.

3...How can you demonstrate God's heart to someone today?

DAY 27...LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

In camp work and in Sunday School, we always sang the song, "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine... let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!" We are supposed to be shining examples of God's love and His kingdom everywhere we go!

I read something this week that triggered the thought of a flaming candle. I believe it was in a Bill Johnson book and I wrote it down in my journal. It said, "Outward manifestations of the Kingdom within, i.e. power, conquest, success, supply, harmony, are all promised. They do not come as a result of urgent prayer or striving to obtain, but come naturally as light results from a lighted candle."

As I pondered that I realized that I am a striver! I am always thinking IF I do this, then that will happen. I always have a plan! I am always at work to earn something. I remember growing up I heard these words a lot..."If you really loved me, you would....". So somehow I equate love with having to earn it through right actions.

What I hear the spirit of God saying in the above quote is that HE is the light inside of me! Jesus said, "*I am the light of the World!*" Now He lives in me, so the light of the world is in me. All I have to do is BELIEVE! Believe He is the Son of God, the only way to the Father and that He died for my sins. As I acknowledge His presence within me every day, worship Him and live to partner with Him, I don't have to strive to produce anything! He will naturally flow through me as I allow Him to live in me.

I must guard the flame within me! Part of the Sunday School song is "Don't let Satan blow it out." There are lots of things trying to snuff out the candle within us! The Word of God portrays darkness as evil, sin, the things that separate us from God. Light is His goodness, the things that are right. The book of Ephesians has a section in chapters 4 and 5 entitled "Living as Children of Light". Verses 8-14 say "*For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true. Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them.*"

When you walk into a very dark room, one in which you can't even see your hand in front of your face and you light a match, that match illuminates the whole room! Darkness always flees in the presence of light! Darkness is trying to overcome the world, but you and I are the secret weapon of the Holy Spirit! We bring the light! I don't have to strive to be light, I am light because of His Presence in me! I give myself to the Holy Spirit so that He can manifest just what is needed for the situation I find myself in. Darkness cannot overcome me! I drive out all darkness!

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, be the light inside of me. May I glow brightly with your Presence burning in my life. I want to be the light of Your Presence to the people around me. Help me during these 40 days to burn for you. Let this city see Jesus in me. Thank you Lord. In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...Ask God to reveal any darkness lurking in your heart or thoughts. Invite the light to come chase it all away.

2...What dark area of our city can you go to and shine for Jesus? Go and write about your experience.

DAY 28... WHO LIVES IN YOU?

Romans 8: 11 says..." *The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.*"

There is power in that statement!

Sometimes I just have to stop and think about this verse. The Father put His Holy Spirit inside of me and that Spirit is ALL POWERFUL, for it is God in me! It is the same Spirit that Jesus depended on while He walked the earth. The Spirit descended from Heaven upon Jesus when He was baptized in the Jordan River. The Spirit led Him, filled Him, empowered Him, taught Him, anointed Him and so much more. That same Spirit now dwells in me! He wants to do exactly for me what He did for Jesus. As He fills me, I have the most dynamic power on the earth living inside of me. I am meant to have the same influence over people's lives that Jesus had!

The problem is that I can't quite see myself the way the Father sees me. I don't really believe that He wants to do the same things through me that He did through Jesus. I want to! But if I really believed that I would see the same things happening that happened in Jesus day. I want to believe that "*nothing is impossible*" when the Spirit of God lives in me. I can pick up where Jesus left off and release Him to the world.

Prayer:

Lord, renew my mind to the point that I have the mind of Christ in me. Help me to see how the Father sees, do what the Father is doing, say what the Father is saying and make Him known to the world around me! Lord, give life to my mortal body today to walk like you walked! May I look on the people around me with your compassion, to see them as sheep without a shepherd because I am meant to shepherd them. Raise me up in my generation to touch the hearts of people with your love and goodness. I need you Lord! Be big and powerful inside of me each and every day! In Jesus name. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1...What do you believe the Father wants to do in Titusville? What is your part?

2...How can you partner with Him to give Him away to others?

3...Ask God to do something through you that you cannot possibly do by yourself. Write about your experience.

DAY 29... YIELDED

I read this question this morning in a book I am reading, "What can I accomplish on His behalf now that I have permission to live as though I'd never sinned?"

What a great thing our Father has gifted us with! He now looks at me, and treats me, as if I've never sinned. A clean slate! Does that mean that I can now live anyway I want and keep on sinning? Absolutely not! What it should say to me is I have received the greatest gift in the world and I need to treat it as the most precious thing in the world. When you love someone, you treat them with love and respect, offering them your best foot forward. So how much more should I want to please Father God, who has given so much for me.

If I continue to deliberately live in sin, keep embracing it and do what I want to do, I need to question if I really stepped into a life changing encounter with God? My relationship with Him should move me to become like Him, look like Him, act like Him, talk like Him, etc. We become similar to what we set our eyes on and come to know.

I love Romans 12: 1-2... *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

The first thing I need to do is offer myself to Him as a sacrifice that is living for Him. In other words, a sacrifice means that it costs me to be His follower. I can't keep doing what I have always done, or nothing changes. I worship Him by living now to please Him. I can't just do what everyone in the world is doing, I have to think differently, see things as God sees them. I have to desire to live in His will for me every day.

If I am truly asking Him to use me, to accomplish His will and purposes through me, He will do just that. But I have to come without my own agenda, asking to please Him. The Father gives me a brand new heart, as I am working to renew my thinking.

God wants to change the world through me, and through you. One person at a time. I can't give anything of importance to anyone else, until I give myself to Him, completely. It doesn't happen overnight, but in a process of setting myself apart for Him and to Him, I change! As I change I touch lives around me with His love for them. I can no longer just live for me, I must release what He is doing in me to give Hope to those around me. So what can I accomplish? Anything and everything as I walk with Him, submitted and yielded to His work in me!!

Prayer:

Thank you Father for a life changing encounter with you. Daily help me to look more like you and act more like you. I really do want to re-present you to my family and my city. Let me be transformed and renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit within me. In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...List some ways that you feel your life pleases God:

2...What are some things that need to change in you to please Him more?

3...How much of my heart trusts God? What should I do to yield more of myself to Him?

DAY 30...LOVE'S LIKE A HURRICANE

Have you heard the song "How He Loves"? I love the imagery painted in the first verse... "He is jealous for me; love's like a hurricane, and I am a tree; bending beneath the weight of His wind and mercy; When all of a sudden, I am unaware of these afflictions eclipsed by glory; and I realize just how beautiful you are and how great your affections are for me. And oh how He loves us, Oh how He loves us, how He loves us so.

I have been through a few hurricanes having lived in Florida for a number of years now. There is tremendous wind that touches everything in its path. It is swirling and twirling, so it gets into every crevice. This song describes God's love for us as a hurricane, touching every place in my soul, heart, mind and spirit. That His love completely touches every part of my life. I love the verse in 1 John 4:16...*"And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them."* I love that verse because God gave me revelation deep within me that He really means this!

There was a time when I didn't think much of myself, so it was hard to imagine that God could really love me. I was serving Him and following Him, but more out of a sense of duty. In my mind, I was very low on the list of those who He really loved. Then out of His great mercy, He led me to this verse and made it real in my heart! I CAN KNOW AND RELY ON THE LOVE GOD HAS FOR ME! I am the tree in the song, that He is completely wrapping around with His love! HE LOVES ME! Do you know He loves you? Do you rely on His love for you?

Unfortunately, many people struggle with this, because we don't have an identity that says I AM A CHILD OF GOD. A good father loves his children abundantly and would do whatever is within his power to love and provide for his kids. As a child of God I have the greatest FATHER on earth, in the whole universe! And so do you...if you know Him. Embrace the fact that you are His child. And live like you are His child! As in any family, if I separate myself from my Father and live in rebellion, I am alienated from true love and acceptance. It is my own doing. Every father's heart is just waiting for the moment when their child climbs up in their lap, lays their head on his shoulder and says Daddy, I love you. God is no different.

What do you believe today? Do you know and rely on His love for you?
(By the way, Jesus loves you, BUT I am his favorite!)

Prayer:

Lord, I want to love you in this intimate way. I want to know you for real and walk with you as a child does with their natural father. Draw me spiritually to know you deeper than I now do, so I am free to share that love with others. Thank you Lord. In Jesus name. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1...Share with somebody today how you love God and why. What did that feel like?

2...Describe how God's love has touched you in every area of your life? Has His hurricane like winds touched you?

3...How can you love somebody today with this deep love of God?

DAY 31...FALLING IN LOVE WITH JESUS

I have been questioning my walk with God lately, in a good way. I know that I am devoted to God and have disciplined myself to do what I should do each and every day. Devoted means that I am loyal to Him, faithful to follow His ways, committed to be a Christian with no turning back and constant in reading His word. I have disciplines in my life, to spend the first hour, or more, of each day reading His word, some worship, some prayer. I know HOW to be a Christian and am walking forward to be conformed into His image.

And yet, something is still lacking. Even in my devotion and disciplines I can get into a rut. Doing the right things, but no passion. Passion is defined as having strong and barely controllable emotions; feelings of unusual excitement and enthusiasm. I have moments during a worship service, at times, where I have a somewhat passionate encounter. But I am seeing, that daily passion to follow Jesus, is lacking in me. Remember in Revelation 2:6 Jesus wrote to the church in Ephesus...*"Yet I hold this against you, you have forsaken your first love."* As I examine my heart and life, I too have forsaken my first love. The same enthusiasm of those first encounters with the Holy Spirit are lacking or few and far between.

I have been asking the Holy Spirit to help me fall in love with Jesus all over again! The funny thing is...I am not entirely sure what that should look like. (Just being truthful.) I want to be in love with Jesus. I confess it with my mouth. But for it to be a reality in my life, I have to hunger and thirst to KNOW him. I have got to make some changes in my life.

The problem is not with Him. His love is sure and steadfast! As John 4:16 says *"I can know and rely on the love God has for me"*. The problem is my love for Him. The romance is lacking on my side.

I am pursuing the Holy Spirit right now to take me deeper in the Spirit realm. To restore a passion in me to want to spend time and energy in His presence more than anything else. So many distractions! I must change. His desire is for me...I want more of my desire to be for Him.

How about you? How is your passion for God shaping your life??

Prayer:

Lord, help me to develop daily passion to be with you. Lead me into encounters that capture my heart and mind. I want to be like the deer that pants for the water, to have that same strong desire to be in Your Presence. Draw me to your side and let me experience the heart of a lover beside you. In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...Set aside an hour today to put on worship music in a place where it is just you and God. Closet yourself with Him and focus on loving Him.

2...Break the rut of your life today. Go somewhere in our city and love someone so well that they see passion in you that points to Jesus. Write down how it made you feel.

DAY 32...ASK, SEEK, KNOCK

I was reading in the Old Testament this morning, in Zephaniah, and this verse jumped out at me (1:6) ... *"And I will destroy those who used to worship me but now no longer do. They no longer ask for the LORD's guidance or seek my blessings."* I immediately wrote in my journal, Lord remind me to ask for your guidance every day and seek your blessings! I want to be one who always gives my worship to my God. And I understand that part of my worship is being dependent on my Father in Heaven. That He wants me to ASK of Him, He wants me to seek His blessings in my life.

Jesus reminded us of this in the New Testament too. In Matthew 7: 7-11 he told his followers, *"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. "You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you, sinful people, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him."*

Most of the time we come before God with a shopping list. Lord I need...I want...my family needs...my friends need. We are a needy people and sometimes we think God is our personal Genie. Most of our asking is very self-centered. We wonder why God doesn't come through for our every request, but usually it is because our motives are wrong. What Father really wants from us is our worship. Our devotion. Our hearts. When we begin with the place of worship, then our asking becomes aligned with His hearts desires for us. Then we ask Father, "what would you have me do today to bless you and fulfill your purposes? Please Lord I am seeking your blessing and favor to follow me this day. Multiply your blessing on everything I set my heart to do."

We want everything to be about us, when in actuality we are here to extend Father's Kingdom and reign throughout the earth. So my asking, my seeking, my knocking needs to be about how I can cooperate with Him and see Him move in the lives of those around me. I need to be reminded about this often as I continue to move away from my self-centeredness and become interested in what Father is interested in.

Prayer:

Lord, align my heart with yours. I want to be one who asks for what you already want to give me. Help me to know your heart well, even as I am known by you. In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...What are you asking and seeking for lately?? Is it to expend on yourself or for the sake of others?

2...What does it look like to seek God? What does it look like to knock until the door is opened?

3...List what you will pray for concerning Titusville that you know to be the Father's heart for the city:

DAY 33...LISTENING TO GOD

Here is thought for you...God is always speaking, how much of what He says do I hear? Isaiah 55: 2-3 says, *“Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the riches of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.”* Listening and hearing Him speak is something we all need to practice and develop in our lives. Life is in hearing His voice and reacting to it.

I remember when I was on the mission field and organizing a nation-wide outreach. I was traveling around the nation, with my translator Agnes, visiting pastors to see if they would host a group from abroad. One young Pastor named Pavel, listened to my request and then said he needed to go upstairs and talk with God. About 10 minutes later he came back and said God had said yes, they were to participate. Agnes and I joked that Pavel must have had a direct phone line to God upstairs to hear and respond so quickly.

In actuality, all of us have a direct phone line! We have His ear anytime we want, to talk to Him. He is looking throughout the earth for anyone who is seeking Him. He always wants to spend time with us, the question is how much of my time and my heart lean toward wanting to be with Him and listen to Him?

How about you today? Do you take enough time each day to lean in and listen to what the Spirit is saying? I hope so.

Prayer:

Help me Lord to cultivate a listening heart. It is not just my ears that need to hear you, but a heart that is willing to respond. You are ALWAYS speaking, so how much do I miss because I have my own agenda and plans. Help me Holy Spirit to develop and cultivate sensitivity to your nudges and urges, to fulfill the Father's heart. I don't want to be hard-hearted. Take out my heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh, that beats with you in mind. Thank you Lord. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1...What is the last thing you heard God speak to you?

2...Were you obedient to what you heard?

3...How can you encourage someone you meet today to hear the voice of God? What would you tell them?

DAY 34...LOVE

A member of the church, who previously had been attending services regularly, stopped going. After a few weeks, the pastor decided to visit him. It was a chilly evening. The pastor found the man at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for his pastor's visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a comfortable chair near the fireplace and waited.

The pastor made himself at home but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the dance of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the pastor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone then he sat back in his chair, still silent. The host watched all this in quiet contemplation. As the one lone ember's flame flickered and diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and dead.

Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. The pastor glanced at his watch and realized it was time to leave. He slowly stood up, picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow, once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it.

As the pastor reached the door to leave, his host said with a tear running down his cheek, 'Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I will be back in church next Sunday.'

We live in a world today, which tries to say too much with too little. Consequently, few listen. Sometimes the best sermons are the ones left unspoken.

As Christians, we tend to make things way too complicated. In a world dying for answers, let's keep it simple. God is the Judge; Holy Spirit convicts; We are called to Love.

Prayer:

Father, I get the message. Help me to be a burning coal of your love, who sticks close to the fire of fellowship with you and with the body of Christ. I don't want to be a lone ranger, but a friend to many. I know I grow with others, as we love and encourage each other. Let me also love others to Your Presence. In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...How can I show love to someone today without using words?

2...What was their response?

3...Brother Lawrence said, "Preach to everyone you meet, if necessary use words." Make it a practice to share the gospel every day through loving actions.

DAY 35...SANCTIFICATION

That is a BIG word. To be sanctified basically means to be set apart from something to something else.

In Christianity, every church has a doctrine about what this means. I am not familiar with them all, but I am familiar my denomination's beliefs. They view sanctification as a two-part process that happens in our lives. First, when I initially ask Jesus into my life, the Holy Spirit comes in and I am beginning to walk with God. At that point I am set apart from who I was, into who I am becoming in relationship with my Heavenly Father. (2 Corinthians 5:17 ... *Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation, old things are passed away, behold all things become new.*)

The second part is that sanctification is a process. In God's mind and heart, I have been set apart for His family and Kingdom, but now I have to walk that out. I have to make daily choices to no longer live just for myself, but to do those things that keep me in relationship with the Father.

This morning in my devotions I was challenged to an even deeper level of sanctification by Oswald Chambers (My Utmost for His Highest). He asked some pretty challenging questions. He says that sanctification means being made one with Jesus so that the disposition that ruled Him will rule me. That is a big challenge! I heard the Holy Spirit asking me..."Are you prepared to move to this place in your walk with me?"

It will be costly! Am I prepared to say "Lord begin this work in me. Make me holy as you are holy." Am I prepared to set myself apart for the Holy Spirit to move through me whenever He desires to? It will mean more change in my life and in my spirit. A further narrowing of earthly interests. More intense concentration of knowing God's mind in everything. Not being conformed to this world that we live in, but developing a transformed mind. It means surrendering more of me until the one and only characteristic of the Holy Spirit in me IS a strong family likeness to Jesus, and freedom from everything that is unlike Him!

That is a mouthful. My heart wants to be in this place. So every day I just keep saying..."Help Holy Spirit. Make me more like Jesus today than yesterday."

Prayer:

Lord, I know the ultimate goal of this life is to be transformed into the image of Jesus. You are chipping and molding me every day to be more like Him. I recognize the work you have done, and I am thankful. I also know I have a long way to go before I can step into the shoes of Jesus and carry on His work. Help me Holy Spirit to daily take steps closer to the Father's heart for me. In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...Ask the Holy Spirit to open a door today to share what Jesus is doing in your life with somebody who needs encouragement.

2...Write down where you believe you are in your walk of being set apart for God's use. What needs to happen next in your life?

DAY 36...DELIGHT IN THE LORD

To delight in something means to take great pleasure in it, to find satisfaction in something you choose. Psalm 37:4 says, *“Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.”*

The scripture tells us in many verses that the Lord God delights in us. For example, Psalm 18:19 says, *“He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.”* In Psalm 35:27 the word says, *“The Lord be exalted, who delights in the well-being of his servant.”* There are more. God uniquely forms each one of us in our mother’s wombs to be one of his children. Every one of us is different in looks and personality, in soul and spirit. We are created for two purposes, to be in relationship with Him and to bring Him glory.

So how do we fulfill these two purposes?

It is not enough to ask him for forgiveness one time, and then keep doing what we have always done. It is not even enough to attend church on a regular basis. (Although I must add that we need to be around other believers regularly) Because it is not about what we do, but who we are becoming. God’s Father heart wants us to choose Him! To see all the world around us, and want Him to be the center of our lives. To find all of our pleasure, satisfaction and contentment in walking with Him.

I want to delight myself in the Lord. It is not a one-time commitment for me, but it is a day by day choice to walk with God. Some days it is work to grab myself by the lapels and say, "You will walk after God today. You will spend time in the Word and in His Presence." Other days I awake with His praises on my lips, ready to push back the darkness and be a child, full of His light. Most of the time I simply do what I know is right to do, read the Word and ask for His Presence to be with me. But I am in this lifestyle for the long haul! There is no option for me besides following him. He is the answer for every situation I find myself in, and therefore there is nowhere else I would rather be!

Listen to these verses in Job 22: 21-28, *“Submit to God, and you will have peace; then things will go well for you. Listen to His instructions, and store them in your heart. If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored—so clean up your life. If you give up your lust for money and throw your precious gold into the river, the Almighty Himself will be your treasure. He will be your precious silver! “Then you will take delight in the Almighty and look up to God. You will pray to Him, and He will hear you, and you will fulfill your vows to Him. You will succeed in whatever you choose to do, and light will shine on the road ahead of you.”*

I will make the decision today...and tomorrow...and the next day to submit to Him, listen to Him, hide His words in my heart, to make him the treasure of my heart. Yes, I choose to delight myself in the Lord. How about you?

Prayer:

Dear God, I want you to be the delight of my heart. I have chosen you and don’t want to ever walk away. Help me to bring you glory by the way I walk after you. That others may see my actions and know that I am your disciple. In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...Joyfully walk through this day. Smile at everybody. Laugh often. Then record how your life affected others today.

2...Put your testimony on paper and pass it out to people you meet. Let your joy of being a son or daughter shine through in your words.

DAY 37...WHAT DO YOU TREASURE?

Matthew 6:21 says, "*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*"

My question to you today is "what do you treasure?" The right answer, of course, is that you treasure your relationship with God above all else! But for the majority of people that is not a true answer. There are many, many things that occupy our hearts. From husband/wife relationships, money, kids, sports, TV, hobbies, etc. The things we put most of our time, energy and money into tells the tale!

The scary part is that Paul wrote to Timothy in his second letter an exact description of our day in verses 1-5, *"You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!"*

I want to have a heart that loves and follows Jesus!

I want Him to be first in my thoughts and in my decisions.

I am so happy for the Holy Spirit, who lives in me AND anoints me with His Presence to guide me into right choices. You see, I don't want to do anything that grieves my Father's heart. I don't want to live close to the edge of evil, I want to be fully in the light as my Father is fully in the light. Nothing good ever takes place in the darkness! I want to be able to say that my greatest treasure is to know Him and walk with Him.

Facebook recently told me that my scripture for the year is Proverbs 4: 18, *"The way of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, which shines ever brighter until the full light of day."* This is one of my favorite verses...and the path I choose. I want every corner of my heart to pursue my Lord. How about you?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, be the treasure of my heart. I don't want to live entrenched in this world, or pleasing only my flesh. Give me discernment and wisdom to follow the paths you have laid out for me. In Jesus name. Amen

Daily Challenge:

1...In the 2 Timothy scripture, list what still has a hold on you. Ask God to set you free to pursue Him.

2...Make a list of the things you treasure most in this world:

3...Do any of those things occupy more of your time or affections than your spiritual life?

DAY 38...I AM A TREE

Colossians 2: 6-7 says, *"And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness."* I love the imagery this paints in my mind, let your roots grow down into Him. What has the greatest roots? Trees of course. The scripture paints the picture of us being trees, whose roots are firmly set in Him.

These are some of my favorite scriptures because my heart is set on being one of these trees, who are planted by streams of living water. That my source and my strength is found in Jesus, and I drink from His throne. That I am tall and stately, filled up with his goodness. My leaves are always green and bring healing to people's lives. I want to bear fruit twelve months of the year, for the feeding of the people. Where do I get this idea from?

Psalms 1: 1-3 says, *"Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do."*

Then in Jeremiah 17: 7-8, *"But blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit."*

Also we find in Ezekiel 47:12, *"Fruit trees of all kinds will grow along both sides of the river. The leaves of these trees will never turn brown and fall, and there will always be fruit on their branches. There will be a new crop every month, for they are watered by the river flowing from the Temple. The fruit will be for food and the leaves for healing."*

Trees are some of the oldest living things on the planet! The deeper their roots go, the more stable they are, able to withstand the storms of life. They are full of life! They have obtained depths in secret places that sustain them and prosper them. Many bear fruit of some kind that people enjoy and thrive upon. Many have healing properties found in their leaves or bark, that have cured and help many diseases. This is the picture of who I AM in Christ. You too!!

Prayer:

God, help me to be like a tree with deep roots in you! May I always be green and prosperous, flourishing in you. May I produce fruit that others can taste and see your goodness. Let me be planted in my family, in my church and in my city as one who draws my life source from you. In Jesus name. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1...List the fruit you would like to produce to be shared with others:

2...Do others come to you for healing? Do they come to eat from what you produce? (Remember Jesus said He is the bread of life)

3...How do you react in the storms of life? Are you stable? Or blown about? What needs to change in your root system?

DAY 39...WHAT COMES OUT OF YOUR MOUTH?

Have you ever really listened to yourself in the course of a day?

Do you see the glass as half empty or half full?

Do you build others up or tear them down?

Do you believe that there is power in the words that come of your mouth?

Proverbs 18: 21 says, "*The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*" If I have to eat the words that I speak, I want them to be sweet and full of good things!

There is a lot of responsibility that is handed over to us by our Heavenly Father. He left us in charge of this earth! We are supposed to take dominion and rule. Unfortunately, most of can't even rule our own lives.

James says in chapter 3 verses 5-10, "*Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.*"

This should not be! Is there hope for us? Yes! When we ask Jesus into our lives we receive the Holy Spirit, who comes in and dwells within us. If I ignore Him and just run my own life, fulfilling my own desires, my tongue will be out of control. But if I am willing to say Holy Spirit, I want you to be my guide, help me to control what comes out of my mouth, He will do that! Holy Spirit wants me to succeed and to overcome! He will empower me to take control in areas where I can't by myself.

So I encourage you today...guard your mouth! The Holy Spirit will be very happy to help you if you will only ask Him. Otherwise the fruit of your mouth may not taste very good!!

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I want to speak words of love and encouragement to the people around me. Help me to pause and think, before I just say whatever comes to my mind. Help me to be known as one who loves because of the words that come out of my mouth. In Jesus name. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1...Listen to yourself carefully today. Record 2 categories of comments:

Positive/ Encouraging

Negative/Discouraging

2...How did you do? What needs to change in your own heart?

DAY 40...WHAT CONDITION IS YOUR HEART IN?

The heart plays a big part in our lives being lived out. I am not talking about the physical heart, but the seat of our affections, our soul decisions, the part of us that responds to God...or not. Jesus talked about the heart, a lot. Proverbs tells us that we are to guard our hearts above everything else for it is the center of our lives. In the Old Testament the prophet Ezekiel spoke that God would one day take out our hearts of stone and give us a heart of flesh. What does that mean? Simply, that life's hurts and problems can cause us to harden our hearts so we don't let anybody in who could hurt us again. When our hearts are hard, we don't respond to God or the Holy Spirit. God's desire is for us to keep our hearts soft, so they respond to love, His love.

Jesus told a parable that was repeated in at least three of the Gospels, the Parable of the Sower. Because it was told over and over we can assume that it is very important.

"One day Jesus told a story in the form of a parable to a large crowd that had gathered from many towns to hear him: "A farmer went out to plant his seed. As he scattered it across his field, some seed fell on a footpath, where it was stepped on, and the birds ate it. Other seed fell among rocks. It began to grow, but the plant soon wilted and died for lack of moisture. Other seed fell among thorns that grew up with it and choked out the tender plants. Still other seed fell on fertile soil. This seed grew and produced a crop that was a hundred times as much as had been planted!" When he had said this, he called out, "Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand." Luke 8:4-8

The disciples were perplexed, as were others. What was Jesus trying to say? Some were a little put out that He didn't talk straight to them. But He spoke in parables to cause us to seek out the answers. You see, if we are really interested in the things of God, we will find out what He is talking about. There comes a hunger to know what is going on. If we are not interested, we don't bother. Jesus did this to protect us! Once we know the truth, we are accountable for what we know!

The disciples wanted to know what He was talking about, so He did explain it to them in verses 11-15, *"This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is God's word. The seeds that fell on the footpath represent those who hear the message, only to have the devil come and take it away from their hearts and prevent them from believing and being saved. The seeds on the rocky soil represent those who hear the message and receive it with joy. But since they don't have deep roots, they believe for a while, then they fall away when they face temptation. The seeds that fell among the thorns represent those who hear the message, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. And so they never grow into maturity. And the seeds that fell on the good soil represent honest, good-hearted people who hear God's word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest."*

Our hearts are the soil! What condition is your heart in? I pray that you are a person who cultivates your heart and keeps it soft to accommodate the seed, the Word of God. There are so many things in this life that would try to distract us and put off relationship with God. Don't let anything separate you from having a soft heart that responds to the living God!

Prayer:

Father, I want to hear your voice very clearly and receive it. Rather that voice comes from reading your Word or listening to you in prayer, let my heart be soft to implant it within. I want to mature and have a good heart that clings to your Word. In Jesus name. Amen.

Daily Challenge:

1...What soil best describes your heart presently? How will you change that soil to be soft and productive?

Thank you for joining us on this 40 Day journey! As we become more like Jesus every day, we will see our families transformed and our city.

Press on to know the Lord!

