

Saint John Baptist Church

21-Day Corporate Fast

Devotional



2022

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Greetings from the Pastor for 21 Day Fast

A Call to Discipleship: To Master Life Through Christ

Greetings, to all the Saints that are in Christ Jesus, I greet you with Jesus Joy and Strong Faith in what God is about to do for us in 2022 through “Mastering Life Through Christ.” I pray that as we journey together this year, in the call to discipleship, while we commune with Christ, we will develop a deeper relationship with God The Father, Jesus Christ our Savior, and The Holy Spirit, our Comfort and our Guide. Moreover, I pray that we deepen and strengthen our relationship with each other as a congregation.

As we walk by faith to become more like Jesus in 2022, I believe it is appropriate for us to begin our journey with a 21-day prayer and fast. This book is a guide to fasting that includes a 21-day devotion to help you get in tune with God to access a closer walk with Him. During the fast, I’m asking while you draw closer to God and pray for your individual plans and goals, to please pray for your ministry goals, and Saint John’s Vision, Mission, and Goals for 2022. Remember that the purpose of fasting is to work on our flesh so that God’s Spirit may move in our lives, transforming us into what He has called us to become. When you are fasting, your main source of “food” is God and His Word. Therefore, it is very important that you spend time with God daily and that you remove as many distractions as possible during the fast. This will allow you to clearly hear from God. My prayer for you over the next (21 days) is that your passion for God and His Word will be ignited and that you will develop a hunger for His presence that is greater than ever before! As you read this devotional and the scriptures, keep in mind the following three things: 1.) *Read daily* 2.) *Read prayerfully* 3.) *Read with expectation*. God is prepared to reveal Himself to you in new and refreshing ways. Let us move forward and consecrate ourselves corporately and individually. I look forward to our collective transformation in God. May this special time with Him bring you clarity, peace, and divine blessings as we seek to establish order in our lives. Furthermore, we encourage you to take advantage of this book during your daily prayer times with the Lord.

Peace and Blessings,

Dr. Jamey O. Graham, Sr.

Jamey O. Graham, Sr.
Senior Pastor

DISCLAIMER

PLEASE NOTE:

Pastor Jamey O. Graham and the Saint John Baptist Church advise all members and participants of this consecration to consider their personal health needs and to consult their personal health physician prior to beginning this fast.

Therefore, we specifically disclaim any responsibility from any physical reaction from this fast.

Answering the Call to Discipleship: Mastering Life In Christ Jesus

Christian Discipleship *Defined-*

Developing a personal, lifelong, obedient relationship with Jesus Christ in which He transforms Your Character into Christlikeness; changes your values into Kingdom values; and involves you in His mission in the home, the church, and the world.

Reference

Willis Jr, A. T., & Moore, K. (1996). *The Disciples Cross Masterlife Book I*. Nashville: Lifeway Press.



The Disciple Maker's Prayer

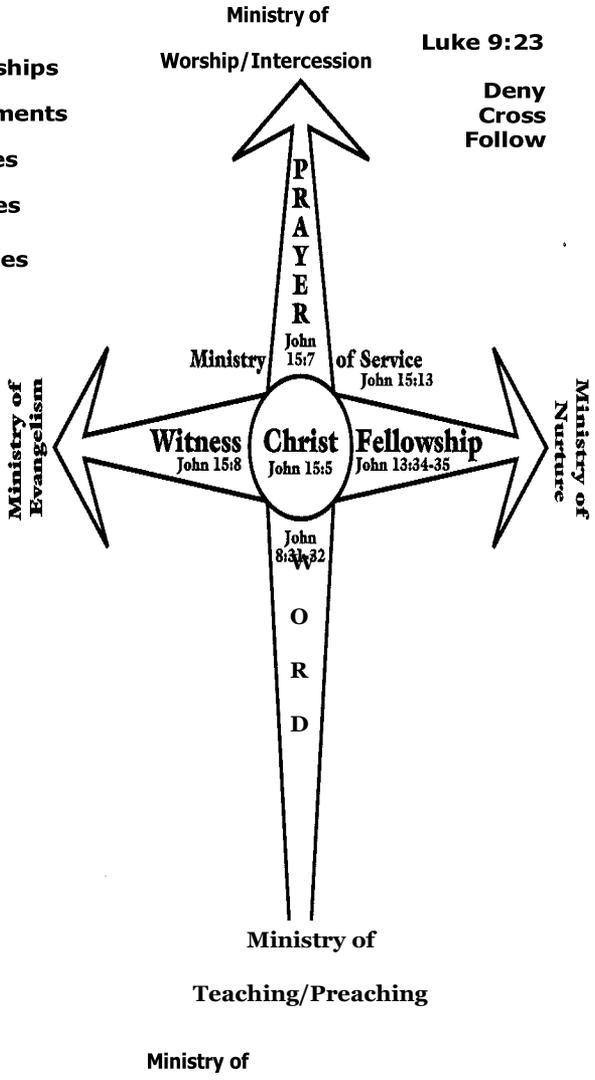


Lord, you have commanded me in the Great Commission, to go and make disciples of all nations. You have commanded me to occupy, to invest your Word, the Gospel of the Kingdom of God into the people of the world. This occupying, is to make disciples, produce disciples, to be fruitful, to bear the fruit of discipleship, to multiply disciples, to replenish the earth with disciples to the point where I am subduing the earth with disciples of Jesus Christ until Jesus Christ comes again.

It is my prayer, Lord, to obey your command and Evangelize (*Be fruitful*) and Make Disciples (*Multiply*) to the point where the church increases in membership and the number of abundant life discipleship groups increase and spread across the City of Columbia, South Carolina. In Jesus name, I decree and declare this increase of Disciples, in the church and in the community, Amen.

DISCIPLE'S CROSS

- 1 Lord
- 2 relationships
- 3 commitments
- 4 resources
- 5 ministries
- 6 disciplines



Reference

Willis Jr, A. T., & Moore, K. (1996). *The Disciples Cross Masterlife Book 1*. Nashville: Lifeway Press.

FASTING GUIDE

January 9th - January 30th 2022

Note: **This is a 24 hour a day Fast starting 12:00 AM Sunday January 9th and ending 12:00 AM Sunday, January 30th**

Like prayer and Bible reading, fasting is one of the spiritual disciplines of followers of Jesus. The next few paragraphs are here to help you get your mind around fasting, and help you get started in this powerful Christian habit! **BTW: if you want to know more, hit up some of the online resources at www.awake21.org.**

[What is fasting?](#)

Biblical fasting is, very simply, denying oneself food for the sake of seeking and honoring God. Prayer is connecting with God; fasting is disconnecting ourselves from the world. That's a great way to describe the feeling. You can fast from other things that keep you connected to the world, too. Things like TV, video games, social networking, snap chat, and more.

[Why should I fast?](#)

Over time, it's very easy for our souls to get "gunked up". Fasting is a way to give our bodies and our souls a deep cleaning. When we do, we find that not only do we feel better, but as we draw closer to God, we are more in tune with His voice.

[How do I fast?](#)

There are several different types of fasts. In this guide and over the next (21) twenty one days, we have laid out a plan that will help you detach from some of the distractions of everyday life. This twenty-one day plan involves cutting out some food items, and has a few days where you only drink liquids (like juices, smoothies and such). Other days you will eat just fruits and vegetables.

The plan provided in this guide is just that– don't make this time thinking about what you eat, or don't eat. This is all about drawing closer to God and replacing some of our common distractions with time to pray, read our Bibles and seek God like never before.

[How should I prepare to fast?](#)

For a 1-day fast, it doesn't take much preparation. It's best to slow down your eating before the fast, then pick it back up slowly by eating small, simple foods. For a longer fast, **DEFINITELY** prepare this way. It's smart to plan ahead and make sure you'll have plenty of the fruits, vegetables, juices, etc.

What should I do while fasting?

Drink lots of water



Pray



Read your Bible.



Listen to worship music.



Think



Write your thoughts



Drink lots of water.

Pray.

Read your Bible.

Listen to worship music.

Think and Meditate.

Grab your Bible, this devotional, and perhaps a journal to capture your thoughts and what God shows you.

Get Ready!

This experience is going to be like no other!

FASTING GUIDE

January 9th - January 30th

Note: *This is a 24 hour a day Fast starting 12:00 AM Sunday, January 9th and ending 12:00 AM Sunday, January 30, 2022*

(Choose one)

Daniel Fast (Option #1) For all 21 Days

Week One: Fruits and Vegetables (Lots of Water)

Week Two: Fruits and Vegetables (Lots of Water)

Week Three: Liquids (Lots of Water)

While everyone is encouraged to seek the Lord on how they are to fast, please consider the suggested model of fasting by eating only fruits and vegetables (weeks one and two) and all liquids, meaning 100% fruit and/or vegetable juices (Store bought or by juicing through blender and so forth) and water. (week three). Remember to limit or avoid television, electronics, or any other distraction that may dampen your spiritual focus. For maximum spiritual benefit, set aside ample time to be alone with the Lord and write your thoughts from the daily devotions. Listen for His leading. The more time you spend with Him, the more meaningful your fast will be.

Modified Fast (Option #2) For all 21 Days

No fried foods

No meats (No Red Meat, Pork, Turkey) *(Only Chicken and Fish)*

No BREAD

No soda, soft drink, power aide, caffeine *(WATER AND NATURAL JUICES ONLY)*

No sugar or sugar additives

No fast foods

No more than 2-hours of media entertainment per week -

(includes television, movies, newspaper, texting, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Twitter, Hulu, etc.)

You may watch Christian media

Wednesday SALAD only—(lettuce, tomato, cucumber, onion, carrots, beets, peppers)

***Drinks Lots of Water**

For more information on Fasting Suggestions and Tips please visit:

Saint John Baptist Church – <http://saintjohnbaptistchurch1900.com>

Jamey O Graham Ministries - <http://jameyograhamministries.org>

Fasting Begins with Confession

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

-1 John 1:9

Day 1

Sunday
01/09/2022

Today is an exciting start on a journey of a 21-day fast. Since the purpose of fasting is to seek God through prayer, it only fitting that we begin by looking at how Daniel approached the Lord. One day when Daniel was studying the words of Jeremiah the prophet, he was greatly troubled by what he read. He understood from the Scriptures that the Israelites were going to suffer for many years to atone for their rebellion against the Lord. Daniel's immediate response was to fast and pray. His words are recorded in Daniel 9 and lay the foundation for how we should begin this Daniel fast.

Daniel's first words acknowledged his sin and the sin of his people. In verses 4-10, we see phrases such as "we have sinned and done wrong," "we have been wicked," "we have turned away from your commands," "we have not listened." and "we have not obeyed" Daniel knew it was necessary for the Lord to purify him from the unrighteous behaviors on his life before his time of prayer and fasting could be effective.

Why start with confession? Our God is a holy God, and when we live in willful disobedience, our sins prevent us from enjoying sweet fellowship with him. Confession breaks down the barriers that stand in the way of his full blessing in our lives.

As you spend time in prayer today, ask God to reveal your attitudes and behaviors that do not line up with his Word. As he brings those sins to your mind, confess them. Agree with the Lord that you have been wrong. Once that has been done, receive his forgiveness and mercy. Then, thank him for cleansing you and purifying you from all unrighteousness.

You are now ready to move forward. God has led you to do this Daniel Fast, and he has much to do in and through your life over the next three weeks. Expect great things, because our God is a great God!

Prayer: Lord show me any areas in my life that are not pleasing to you. I turn away from my sins and turn to you, O God, so that I can begin this fast with a clean conscience and a pure heart. I'm excited about what you are going to do over the next three weeks!

CONFESS.

IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS
FAITHFUL AND RIGHTeous TO
FORGIVE US THE SINS, AND TO
CLEANSE US FROM ALL
UNRIGHTeousNESS.

1 JOHN 1:9

Go to Mount Moriah

You shall have no other gods before me.

- Exodus 20:3

I'm being stalked by a guy named Abraham. He follows me everywhere, my Bible study lesson, the Wednesday-night prayer service, the book I'm reading. What is it with this guy, and what does he want with me? Okay, maybe I'm a little slow, but I'm starting to think God is trying to get my attention, and he is using the story of Abraham to do it.

Perhaps you're familiar with the account. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. However, at age ninety-nine, Abraham and his wife, Sarah, were still waiting for a baby. When he turned one hundred, though, the most incredible thing happened. They had a son! Abraham's greatest longing was fulfilled, and Isaac was his joy.

Years later, God told Abraham to take his beloved Isaac to a mountain to sacrifice him as a burnt offering. Why would God ask Abraham to do such a horrific thing? The Lord was testing Abraham to see whether the love he had for his son was greater than the love he had for his Lord. Although Abraham's heart was broken at the thought of harming Isaac, he got up early the next morning to set out for Mount Moriah. Abraham knew that to obey God, he had to place Isaac on the altar.

Just as Abraham raised the knife to take his son's life, an angel of the Lord spoke to him and told him not to lay a hand on the boy. God provided a ram caught in a nearby thicket to be the burnt offering instead.

It wasn't wrong for Abraham to love Isaac. The problem was that Abraham loved him a little too much. In the book *Counterfeit Gods*, author Timothy Keller makes this observation: If God had not intervened, Abraham would have certainly come to love his son more than anything in the world, if he did not already do so. That would have been idolatry, and all idolatry is destructive. Are there any idols in your life? God calls us to surrender our "Isaacs" to him.

Prayer: Dear God, show me if I have any "Isaacs" in my life. Give me the strength and courage to dethrone things that I have placed before you. You are my Master. I serve you and you alone.

His Glorious Name

Praise be to his glorious name forever, may the whole earth be filled with his glory.

- Psalm 72:19

Day 3

Tuesday
01/11/2022

When I was pregnant, I spent hours flipping through books of baby names trying to find just the right name for our little ones. We finally decided on Isabelle for our firstborn, which means “consecrated to God,” and Jocelyn for our second daughter, which translates “joyful spirit.” It was important to us that our children have names that not only sound nice but also are rich in meaning.

The Bible gives several examples of how people’s names often describe their character or behavior. For example, for the first part of his life Jacob lived up to his name of “trickster” by deceiving his brother, Esau, and his father in order to obtain Esau’s birthright. Later in Jacob’s life, he wrestled with the Lord and finally submitted to him, God changed his name to Israel, meaning “straightened by God.”

When you choose to follow the Lord and receive his gift of salvation, you're also given a new name. You become a Christian, which means “follower of Christ.” However you don’t earn the right to bear his name because of your righteousness. Your good works don’t give you the privilege of identifying with the Lord. No, the only reason you carry his glorious name is because of Jesus and what he did for you.

Jesus paid a high price to call you his own. He loved you so much that he was willing to die to give you life. Spend a few moments now thanking God for sending Jesus so that you could be set free from sin. Praise the Lord for his infinite mercy and love!

Prayer: Father God, I praise you! My mind cannot fathom the depths of your love. Thank you for sending Jesus for me so I could be a part of your family and live with you for eternity.



Day 4

Wednesday
01/12/2022

Drink Up!

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Rivers of living water will brim and spill out of the depths of anyone who believes in me this way, just as the Scripture says.

- John 7:37-38 MSG

As soon I got out of bed and my feet hit the floor this morning, I headed straight for the kitchen to get a drink of water. I woke up feeling parched, and satisfying my thirst was all I could think about. I didn't just sip the water, either. I gulped it down as quickly as I could, and I felt so much better after I did.

Water is essential to life, and our bodies must have adequate amounts of it to thrive. All you have to do is type in "benefits of water" on any internet search engine, and you'll find hundreds of reasons why it's important to drink the water your body needs. One way water helps us as we fast is by removing toxins. Toxins are poisonous substances that cause damage to the body, resulting in all kinds of illness and health problems.

Our souls also need hydration, refreshing streams of living water that only Jesus can bring to our thirsty lives. Jesus promises that "whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:14 ESV). Only the Lord can satisfy our deepest longings. Only he can flush out the toxins of anger, bitterness, jealousy, unforgiveness, and rebellion. Only Jesus, our Savior, can cleanse us from the inside out.

Every time you drink a glass of water during your fast, let it be a reminder that Jesus is your Living Water. He has unlimited stores of blessing, peace, power, and wisdom to pour into your life. Drink deeply of the Lord today. Find delight in the truth of his Word. Thirst for him alone.

Prayer: Lord, I'm thirsty for you and your Word. Nothing satisfies but you. Fill me up today so that my life overflows with your love.

The Breath of Life

*The Spirit of God has made me; the breath
of the Almighty gives me life.*

- Job 33:4

Day 5

Thursday
01/13/2022

One day I found myself struggling to explain to my daughters that even though we can't see Jesus and feel his arms around us, he is a real person. After discussing this concept for a few minutes, my six-year-old, Isabelle, finally said, "Mommy, I get it. Jesus is an air person."

Isabelle was simply stating what is obvious to her: she can't see Jesus with her eyes, but she knows he's there. And she's exactly right. Jesus *is* a real person, not some imaginary friend or a fictional character in a story. He's as real as the air we breathe. Just as our bodies are not able to survive without oxygen, we cannot live apart from Christ. Oh, we can exist just fine, but without him our lives are meaningless and empty.

I don't ever want to forget what my life was like before Jesus saved me. I was dead in my sins, without hope and without God. I was headed down a path to destruction. But one summer day more than thirty years ago, God rescued me from the kingdom of darkness and made me alive in Christ. He also implanted his Holy Spirit into my heart so that I would never be away from his presence.

If you know the Lord, his Spirit lives in you. Your eyes may not see him, but he is there. This precious gift, who is also your Comforter, Counselor, Intercessor, Teacher, and Friend, is always with you, breathing his life into you so you can truly live.

Prayer: God, thank you for giving me life, both physically and spiritually, and for sending your Holy Spirit to live in me so I would never be alone.

Day 6

Friday
01/14/ 2022

Cries in the Night

*The Lord is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love. - Psalm 145:8*

Last night was a very long night. My daughter ran into the bathroom nearly every hour to get sick, and I got up with her. Each time I was awakened, though, it became harder to get out of bed. As I pulled the covers off to get up for the fifth or sixth time, I reminded myself, "Compassion, Kristen. Be patient and compassionate."

At 4:30 a.m., I decided to just stay up and try to do some work on the computer. Almost as soon as I started writing, I heard Isabelle dry-heaving, so I went into the bathroom. In a shaky voice, she said, "I just want you with me." She was scared and wanted the comfort of having me close. I gave her a kiss on the top of her head and put my arms around her while she threw up. After she finished, I washed her face, tucked her back into bed, and prayed for her.

As I was cleaning up the bathroom, I couldn't help thinking about how the Lord responds to us in our time of need. Isaiah 30:18 says, "The Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion." Our loving Father doesn't hesitate when we call out to him. He is always ready to come to our rescue.

No matter what you're going through, whether you're sick or lonely or scared, your gracious God is listening. As soon as your desperate cries reach his ears, he will surround you with his unconditional love and mercy. You can find comfort in God's promise that he will never leave you nor forsake you, which means you won't ever have to go through anything alone.

Prayer: Father, thank-you for being a God of compassion and for always being there when I pray. Open my eyes to practical ways I can show your compassion to others.

A Good Work

He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

- Philippians 1:6

Nehemiah had a successful career as cupbearer to the king, yet deep within him, he sensed the Lord calling him toward something different. Something radical. Something only God could do.

The task seemed monumental and impossible. The walls of Jerusalem were broken down, leaving the people defenseless against attack. Nehemiah knew that God wanted him to leave the comfort of palace life to lead his people in rebuilding the city walls.

Nehemiah responded in faith and obedience. He fasted and prayed. He boldly requested permission from the king and for his help in getting supplies. From day one Nehemiah and God's people endured intense persecution. Their enemies ridiculed and mocked them, hoping that they would give up. But the Israelites kept working day after day with all of their hearts, believing that the Lord would give them success. As a result, the massive city walls of Jerusalem were completed in record time - fifty-two days. God was with them.

God calls each of us to a great work. Like Nehemiah and the Israelites, we undoubtedly will face fierce opposition. When the enemy hurls accusations our way and tries to defeat us, we can stand our ground on the truth of God's Word. We must remember that just as God was faithful in helping his people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, he will also complete the good work he began in our lives.

Prayer: God, you have a plan for my life, and I am confident that you will bring it to completion as I surrender to you. I refuse to be distracted by the enemy and thrown off course by his wicked schemes. My eyes are on you, Sovereign Lord, to finish the good work you have started in me.

When Affliction is Good

*It was good for me to be afflicted so that I
might learn your decrees.*

- Psalm 119:71

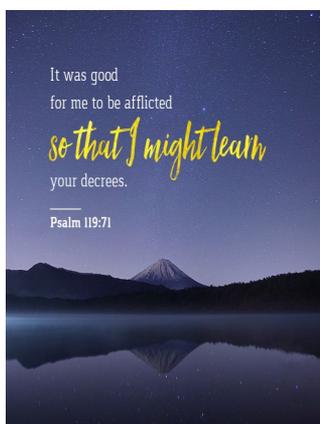
A few years ago, I experienced major problems with my skin when the eczema I'd dealt with since childhood became increasingly worse. I tried everything - topical creams, oral and topical steroids, anti-inflammatory medications, and even light therapy. Most days I walked around in a zombie-like state, exhausted from the itching and scratching that kept me awake at night. I was irritable, depressed, and didn't feel like myself at all. I was so miserable in my own skin that I knew I'd have a breakdown if I didn't experience some relief.

During this dark season, the Lord led me to Psalm 119:71, which says, "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees." I thought, "Good? There's nothing good about this Lord! I look and feel horrible. I'm tired of dealing with this problem and I don't understand how anything about it could be good." However, instead of continuing the pity party, I began to meditate on the verses in that same chapter that reminded me of God's goodness and faithfulness, which remain unchanged despite any trials he may allow into my life.

Slowly, my mind and heart were transformed as I viewed my situation from God's perspective. I learned to lean on the Lord for strength. I developed a passion for his Word. I prayed more often and with greater fervency. I realized that my skin problems weren't a punishment from the Lord but a way to learn how to focus on him as my source of strength and comfort. He allowed me to experience those physical challenges not because he was upset with me but because he loved me. He redeemed that particular trial, painful as it was, by drawing me closer to him.

Are you going through a difficult time in your life that you don't understand? Are you weary from the struggle, and do you wonder what God's purpose might be? Good news: you don't have to understand why it's happening: you only need to trust him. The Lord is working this problem out for the good, even if you can't see it right now, and he will use whatever it takes to transform you into the image of Christ. Embrace his precious promises, and ask him to give you a special verse that will strengthen your faith. Someday soon you'll look back in this trail, reflect on all that God has done, and be able to say, "It was good for me to be afflicted."

Prayer: God I know that there is purpose in the pain of affliction. Keep me from sinking into despair when trials come. I want to bring honor and glory to you, no matter what the circumstances are in my life.



Day 9

Monday,
01/17/2022

Be Patient and Don't Grumble

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Having my garbage disposal explode all over the kitchen isn't exactly an example of enduring suffering, but it certainly was a test of patience. The remnants of apples, beets, and oranges blanketed my hardwood floor. It was a mess ... a chunky, bright-red mess.

As I cleaned up the kitchen, I felt anxious and stressed. I thought about all the things I had to do and how this wasn't the way I wanted to start my day. I was angry. I silently chastised my husband for not making the seal tighter when he put the sink back together a few weeks ago. I was irritated that my daughters kept asking when I was going to make them breakfast. Wasn't it obvious I had a disaster on my hands?

In that moment, two verses came to mind: "Be patient" (James 5:7) and "Don't grumble" (James 5:9). Uh oh. I was clearly guilty on both counts. I was certainly complaining in my spirit, and I didn't have a single ounce of patience in me. Determined not to let this unexpected incident ruin my day, I stopped, took a deep breath, and asked God to give me strength. Not only did he help me clean up the food flung all over my kitchen but also he gave me what I needed the most - his perspective. God reminded me that trials of every shape and size, even the most unpleasant ones, are often heaven sent opportunities to mature as a follower of Christ. I realized that the garbage disposal fiasco that morning was an opportunity to put my faith into action by being thankful, despite the inconvenience of it all.

As you go about your day today, view any challenging situations you face as ways to be more like Jesus. When you see the circumstances in your life through God's eyes you won't be rattled when your plans are interrupted. You won't grumble and complain. You will respond with a thankful heart.

Prayer: Lord God, I know trials are part of life and that you use them to help me grow. Help me to give thanks in all circumstances.

Tunnel Vision

Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

- 1 John 4:11-12

Day 10

Tuesday,
01/18/2022

I recently had one of those mornings when I woke up feeling irritable and groggy. I had a massive headache and felt like I'd been hit by a train. All morning long, I carried around a "woe is me" attitude. After a few hours of this self-inflicted misery, I finally sat down and opened my Bible to 1 John 4:7-16, the passage in which apostle John writes so eloquently about God's love for us and how we are to love one another.

My whole outlook changes within a matter of minutes. I no longer felt sorry felt sorry for myself. In fact, I wasn't even thinking about myself at all. Instead, my heart was lifted and encouraged as I thought about God and his amazing love.

God's love is mind-boggling. It's hard to understand why he chooses to pour out his grace and mercy upon such imperfect, stubborn, and rebellious people. But, thankfully, he does! God loved us so much that he sent his Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus' death on the cross made it possible for us to experience the full extent of God's love. However, this love isn't given to us for our enjoyment alone. God pours his love into our lives so that we might share it with others.

I closed my Bible and realized what my real problem was. I had a severe case of tunnel vision. Tunnel vision, from a medical standpoint, is the loss of peripheral vision - or side vision - which means we see only what is directly in front of us. Just because I didn't feel well, I'd lost all ability to see anyone else's needs. My gaze was limited to me, myself and I. Even though my headache didn't go away for several hours, my vision improved immediately after reading the truth of God's Word. He showed me that it's impossible to love people when I can't see them. And to see them, I have to stop focusing on myself.

When life gets you down and you feel your vision narrowing, spend a few minutes with God. Turn your attention to him. Your peripheral vision will return, and you'll be free to share God's love with those around you.

Prayer: Father, it's easy to get so wrapped up in my own life that I become oblivious to the needs of the people around me. Help me to humble myself so that I can share your life-changing love.

Day 11

Wednesday
01/19/2022

Dry Bones

I am the Lord, the God of all mankind.

Is anything too hard for me? - Jeremiah 32:27

A few years ago, I took an anatomy class. I guess I should clarify that it wasn't a regular anatomy class. It was *gross* anatomy, which means we worked on human cadavers.

One particular memory from that class will always stay with me. As I stood over a cadaver, I thought about the fact that the only difference between the body of the woman lying there and me was life. All of the parts were there- her muscles, tissues, and bones - but her spirit was gone. In that moment, I was struck by the fact that God is the one who breathes life into us, and without His Spirit indwelling our hearts, we are dead inside.

The prophet Ezekiel also had an unforgettable encounter with a set of bones. The Lord led him to a valley that was covered with them and asked, "Son of man, can these bones live?" (Ezekiel 37:3). Notice that the Lord doesn't say, "Are these bones alive?" It is quite obvious they aren't. They are dead. All dried up. Useless.

Ezekiel isn't too sure where the Lord is going with his line of questioning, so he plays it safe and says, "O Sovereign Lord, you alone know" (v.3) Ezekiel doesn't answer the Lord's question with a bold and confident yes because he can't see beyond the natural process of death so clearly evident before him. His perspective is limited. However, the Lord doesn't condemn Ezekiel for his lack of faith. Instead, in his love and mercy, he gives Ezekiel a vision of what can happen when God enters a seemingly hopeless situation.

The Lord tells Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones, to command them to come to life. As Ezekiel speaks, he hears a rattling sound. The bones are moving! They come together, one by one. Flesh and tendons appear; skin covers them. However, the bodies are still dead.

Again the Lord tells Ezekiel to prophesy and to call forth the breath of life. When Ezekiel commands the breath to enter into the bodies, a vast army stands before him- hundreds of living, breathing human beings. Now Ezekiel can answer God's question with complete confidence: "Yes! These bones can live!"

Like Ezekiel, you may find yourself standing in the middle of a valley of dry bones. You can't see beyond what is right in front of you. God wants to change your viewpoint. Whatever you are facing may seem hopeless, but it's not. Whether it's a lifeless marriage, a dead-end job, or an uncertain future, the Lord wants to speak life into your situation. Put your trust in his Word, and watch the God of the universe do amazing things.

Prayer: God, I put my trust in you today. Even when situations in my life seem hopeless, I know that nothing is too difficult for you!

The Right Tool

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. - Psalm 119: 105 NLT

My husband is a tool man through and through. If something around the house is broken and needs repairing, he feels giddy, rather than inconvenienced. He immediately drops what he's doing, bolts to the man cave, and digs through his arsenal of contraptions, gadgets, and thingamajigs in search of just the right tool for the job.

He relishes the process of restoration, making whatever has been damaged whole again. Focused on the task at hand, he refuses to give up if problems occur along the way. However, there are moments when he emerges from the toolshed feeling frustrated and incompetent because he can't find what he needs to finish the work. Progress is halted until the tool is located.

How do you respond when something in your life breaks and needs to be repaired? Do problems prompt anger, or are you able to receive them with a sense of anticipation? James 1:2-4 shows us how trials can benefit us: "When troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing" (NLT).

When struggle comes our way, we don't ever lack the right tool for the job. We have a multipurpose tool - the Word of God - which is capable of guiding us through every repair job we encounter. If we embrace this powerful tool God has given us, we will experience peace and hope, even during the most difficult challenges of life. Because, in the words of my handyman husband, "Having the right tool makes all the difference."

Prayer: Lord God, your powerful Word holds the answers for every problem or situation in my life. Help me to discipline myself to read it daily. I want to saturate my mind with your truth so I can be strong in you.

Nothing To Fear

Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

- Isaiah 41:10

Isabelle wasn't coming down without a fight. Our six-year old had just climbed a thirty-five foot rock face like a seasoned pro. She had no problem navigating the various rock formations, easily finding a handhold here, a foothold there. Avid rock climbers, my husband and I were beaming with pride when she did it all by herself. Once she got to the top, her dad talked her through what she needed to do to come back down to the ground. She had done it at least a dozen times in the past, so we were confident she would descend easily without a problem.

Suddenly, though, her foot slipped. She spun around, slammed her elbow against the rock, and ended up dangling in the air. All I heard was her bloodcurdling scream. Actually, it was a series of screams. I don't think I've ever seen her so panicked.

We tried to calm her down, but it was no use. Nothing we said got through to her. Between sobs, she cried out, "I'm scared! I can't do it! My elbow hurts! I don't know what to do!" She was paralyzed with fear and determined to stay right where she was until her father came to her rescue.

It was very frustrating for me to see my daughter struggle, especially when she didn't have to. I tried to remain patient and loving, but after several unsuccessful attempts to coax her down, I began to get angry. Why wouldn't she let us help her? Didn't she trust us? Couldn't she see we weren't going to let her fall?

Eventually, my husband climbed up to her. At first, Isabelle didn't even want his help and refused to move toward him. Stubborn girl.

Eventually, though, she took her father's hand and slowly made her way to the ground. She cried the whole way down.

God loves us and wants the best for us. All we have to do is trust him. Our Father has a tight grip and won't ever let us go. Therefore, with God there is no need to fear.

Prayer: Lord, because you are with me, I have nothing to fear. Thank you for giving me strength when I am weak. You are my Rock, and I put my trust in you.



Run

Day 14

Saturday
01/22/2022

Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.
- Hebrews 12:1

Running doesn't come naturally to me. I definitely wouldn't call myself a runner, although I did compete in a few races as part of a track team way back in junior high. As soon as the starting gun was fired, I ran as fast as my little legs would take me. In shorter races, my all-out sprint worked great. However, when it came to the longer distances, I couldn't maintain that explosive pace and often fizzled out before crossing the finish line. I didn't know anything about running skills or technique and didn't know that I needed to pace myself. I just gave 100 percent every time.

Doing the Daniel fast is like running a long-distance race. On day 1, you jumped out of the starting blocks, full of energy and determination. It's now day fourteen. How is your race going? Are you making strides, or are you losing steam?

If you are feeling strong, then keep up the good pace. However, if you're wondering why you signed up for this event, don't slow down! Now is not the time for to let up. Now is the time to refuel, refocus, and recharge!

The Lord has called you to do this fast, and he will sustain you. Do whatever you need to do to spend more time with him in prayer. Adjust your schedule to make it happen, and don't make excuses or allow yourself to become distracted. This race is far too important. Then in a week when you cross the finish line, you will be able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). That's the kind of running that pleases the Lord. That's the kind of running that wins.

Prayer: Lord God, I will keep praying, reading your Word, adhering to the food guidelines, and trusting in you each day of the fast. Thank you for helping me to persevere, even when it gets tough. Your strength will carry me so that I can finish strong.

Day 15

Sunday
01/23/2022

Follow the Cloud

At the Lord's command they encamped, and at the Lord's command they set-out. - Numbers 9:23

I love to go camping with my family, but what I don't like is getting everything together - the sleeping bags, the air mattress (yes, we're all about comfort), the food, the clothes, and everything else necessary to survive a few nights in a tent. By the time our car is loaded up, my neck muscles are so tight it usually takes me several miles to relax. Although all the stress of going camping is worth it once we get out in nature, I could easily do without the packing part.

The Israelites knew all about the challenges of camping. Their forty-year expedition in the wilderness was certainly no vacation. As nomads, they were without permanent homes and lived in tents in the desert.

In addition to their personal belongings, the Israelites also traveled with the tabernacle, which was the portable dwelling place for God's presence. During this time, the Lord provided a sign to the Israelites - a cloud - to assure them that he was with them. Whenever the cloud lifted above the tabernacle, the people knew it was time to move on. However, when the cloud stood still, they set up camp and remained there until the cloud lifted again. Sometimes the cloud hovered over the tabernacle from evening until the next morning. Other times it stayed for a month or longer. The Israelites didn't know when they would go or where they would be going. They had absolutely no control or say in the matter. They lived day by day in complete dependence on the guidance of the Lord. And yet, despite the uncertainty and inconvenience of this lifestyle, they obeyed.

Where are you on your journey with the Lord? Are you camping out and waiting for the Lord's instructions? Are you on the move, following in the direction God is leading you? Wherever you are, know that the Lord is with you. Listen to his voice. If God says wait, then sit tight. If he says go, then start packing. Be like the Israelites. Follow where God leads.

Prayer: Dear God, I know you have a plan for my life. You have work for me to do and places for me to go. As I spend time in prayer and in your Word, speak to my heart. Show me if now is a time to move, or a time to wait on you.

Stop Being Stubborn!

*Do not be stubborn...but submit yourselves to the Lord
- 2 Chronicles 30:8 NLT*

As our two girls were getting ready for school one day, I overheard my six-year old, Isabelle, say in frustration, "This backpack is being so stubborn!" Jocelyn, my four-year-old daughter, was puzzled and asked, "What does stubborn mean?" I couldn't wait to hear the perspective of my six-year-old, who has a bit of a stubborn streak herself. After a few seconds, Isabelle replied, "It's wanting to do things your own way." I was so taken aback by her answer and the fact that she had that amount of insight at such a young age.

Even though people sometimes make jokes about being hardheaded, stubbornness is not a trait to be proud of. Many verses in the Bible warn of the danger of being arrogant or stiff-necked. The Bible makes it clear that refusing to listen to God and following our own inclinations has serious consequences: "But my people would not listen to me. They kept doing whatever they wanted, following the stubborn desires of their evil hearts. They went backward instead of forward" (Jeremiah 7:24 NLT). Being stubborn not only stunts spiritual growth; it moves our lives in the wrong direction!

The first step to softening a stubborn, arrogant heart is to submit- to release your desire for control and say to the Lord, "Whatever you want is what I want." That requires throwing pride out of the window and humbling yourself.

Prayer: Father, there are times when my need for control causes me to be prideful, arrogant, and downright stubborn. Help me to learn to submit instead of insisting on having my own way. I follow after you, for you are my Good Shepherd, and I know I am safe in your care.

Day 17

Tuesday
01/25/2022

Above, Not Below

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

- Colossians 3:2

As I tucked my daughter into bed the other night, I noticed her Bible lying on top of her comforter near her feet. When I asked her why she put it there, she said she needed to keep it close so she could read it as soon as she woke up in the morning.

No wonder the Lord said that we need to have the faith of a little child when it comes to the kingdom of heaven! I want to be like my daughter, so excited about being with the Lord that I can't wait to spend time with him as soon as I get up. Too often, though, my mind is swarming with all the things that need to get done that day. Instead of resting in the Lord, I get stressed. Before I even walk out the door, I'm overwhelmed. Even though I read the Bible and pray, I'm unable to receive what God wants to show me because I'm distracted. But on those mornings when my eyes are on the Lord, I'm filled with peace. My first waking thoughts are on the Lord, and I can't wait to sit at his feet. As I open the Word and read about God's love for me, my heart is full. My worries are all forgotten as I spend time in the Lord's presence.

First Corinthians 2:16 says that we have the mind of Christ, which means that the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual understanding and the ability to obey God's command. We set our minds on the things above - spiritual, eternal matters - by spending time meditating on truth. Each verse we read or memorize works to transform our thoughts to keep them from being consumed with earthly, temporal concerns.

What is your mindset today? Be determined to maintain an upward focus by being consistent in your study of God's Word. If you find yourself feeling weighed down with matter of things below, open up the Bible to direct your thoughts upward once again.

Prayer: Lord God, I set my mind on your truth and refuse to let anxiety invade my thoughts. I will rest in your perfect peace today as I remember your promises to me.

Desire the Prize

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

- Philippians 3:14

It was early in the morning, still dark outside, and rain was pelting my windshield. Trucks were staggered along the side of the highway like mile markers. Even though the weather was nasty and cold, I could easily see the bright orange parkas in the distance as two men walked toward the woods. "Those guys are nuts!" I thought. Only one thing could lead them to go deer hunting in that kind of weather when it would have been much easier to stay in bed. They were motivated by desire. Pure desire.

I had to admit, I admired their commitment. Those hunters had their eyes on the prize of bringing home a deer, a reward they considered to be worth every minute of discomfort they might have to endure.

As I drove along, I thought about what it takes to seek the Lord with that kind of passion. It requires persevering through the storms of life and remaining committed to the Lord. It could mean getting up early in the morning to do your Bible study, maybe even before the sun comes up. It might involve an illness that causes you to depend upon the Lord in a way you've never known before. What I realized is that strong affection for the Lord begins with a desire to do whatever it takes to grow closer to him.

Are you seeking the Lord with that kind of passion? If not, why not? Refuse to let apathy and laziness set in. Don't hit the snooze button on life and crawl back under the covers. Your time on earth is short, so make the most of every day you're given. Press on, my friend. Desire Jesus more than anything or anyone else. He is your prize. There is no greater reward.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you truly are my reason for living. I desire you more than anything else. Give me a greater passion for you and your Word. I long to know you more.

The Aroma of Christ

Live in love as Christ also loved us. He gave his life for us as an offering and sacrifice, a soothing aroma to God.
- Ephesians 5:2 GW

You've probably heard the saying, "You are what you eat." Here's one though, that may be new to you: "You smell like what you eat."

Garlic is one of my favorite herbs because it adds a unique, distinctive zip to any dish. Just think of what pesto would be without garlic. Bland and boring. Spaghetti sauce? I can't imagine it without a clove or two. Garlic not only tastes good, but it's also a natural antibiotic and is beneficial to the body. Regular intake of garlic may be effective in lowering cholesterol levels, fighting the common cold, and reducing the risk of certain cancers. It can also be used as a mosquito repellent!

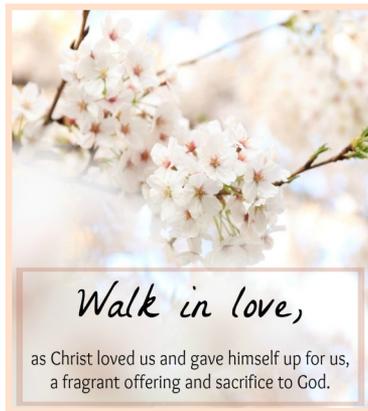
However, too much garlic can cause mild stomach distress, such as indigestion and bloating. The worst side effects, though, are what others around you are forced to endure - your bad breath and foul body odor. The sulfuric compounds of garlic contribute to its sharp taste and strong smell, which remain in your system and hang around with you for days after eating it.

On a positive note, there are some foods that help to decrease natural body odors, leaving us with a more pleasant scent: cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, fresh produce, and fresh, pure citrus juices.

As believers in Jesus, we carry a fragrance with us wherever we go, and it's up to us whether that fragrance is pleasant or repulsive. Just as some foods cause us to smell a particular way, our thoughts do as well. If we feed on lies, negative attitudes and behaviors come out, much like how garlic seeps through our pores when we sweat. Others are nauseated by our presence, and our aroma drives them away. People who don't know the Lord may be put off by your offensive odor that they turn away from God and never get a taste of his salvation.

To carry a pleasant scent, we must ingest the truth of the Word. As people inhale the sweet-smelling scents of God's love in us, they are drawn to the Lord. When people take a whiff of you, do they smell something sweet or stinky? You are the aroma of Christ to the world around you. Share his exquisite fragrance with someone today.

Prayer: Lord God, as I feed on your Word each day, fill me with your love so that my life is an attractive aroma that brings people closer to you.



Content

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have. - Hebrews 13:5

My two-week obsession with moving began after reading an article about how every serious writer should have a dedicated work space. Suddenly my laptop on the kitchen table seemed unprofessional and inadequate. The more I thought about it, the more convinced I was that I needed an office. I drove neighborhoods, looked up houses online, called and met with our realtor, and made plans to put our house on the market. It was exciting at first. However, it wasn't long before I felt overwhelmed.

One day when I was vacuuming, I realized how much I really do love where I live. Even though there are moments when I wish we had more space, when it would be great to have a basement so the kids could run around and play, or to be able to write in my own office, I'm thankful for our home.

As believers in Jesus, we have many reasons to be satisfied because of what God has given us. After all, we have eternal life! Yet we struggle with feelings of discontentment, especially when we're bombarded with messages that tell us we need bigger, better, and more! Suddenly what we have isn't enough. Although there is nothing wrong with having nice worldly possessions, we shouldn't set our hearts on acquiring wealth. When we look to things to bring satisfaction and joy to our lives, we come up empty-handed every time.

God has provided everything you need for life and godliness through your knowledge of him. Your life is complete in the Lord. Be content. You don't lack anything if you know Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, all that I truly need is found in you. Thank you for the countless ways you have blessed my life. Help me to remember that nothing in this world brings lasting contentment. Your love is the only source of true satisfaction and joy.

Remember

Remember the wonders he has done.

- Psalm 105:5

Day 21

Saturday
01/29/2022

CONGRATULATIONS! You made it to the final day of your Daniel Fast. I pray that your time with the Lord through prayer and fasting has truly surpassed anything you could have imagined.

As you finish your commitment, it's good to look back and remember how faithful the Lord has been. Reflect on all he has done - answered your prayers, given you strength, encouraged you through his Word, and sustained you through the power of his Holy Spirit. He has also given you a wonderful testimony. You have a unique story to tell about how God has worked in your life over the past three weeks.

One way you can record God's blessings is to journal about them. Write these things down while they are still fresh in your mind. Another way is to share with someone how God answered a specific request that you prayed for during your fast. Also, I would love to hear your fasting testimony so I can post it on my blog (www.ultimatedanielfast.com) to encourage others who are doing the Daniel Fast.

My prayer is that you will continue to pursue the Lord with the same frequency and fervency that you have known on your Daniel Fast. The Lord doesn't want your desire for him to wane just because your fast is completed. Now that you have tasted and seen the Lord is good, aren't you hungry for more? May the Lord pour out his richest blessings on your life as you continue to hunger and thirst for him!

Prayer: Lord God, I thank you for how you've blessed my life during this fast. You have been so good to me! Fill me with your power, Lord, and fan the flame you have begun in my heart. May my life shine so brightly for you that others are drawn to your great mercy and love. Great is your faithfulness, Lord God. I praise your holy name!

Thoughts & Reflections

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12 Expectations From the Fast

We Expect God:

1. To increase our FAITH, eliminate our fears and override every curse.
2. To give us Divine Favor and Protection.
3. To Anoint us to supernaturally increase, multiply, prosper, take dominion over every area of our lives and to cancel every debt.
4. To empower our membership to expand the Kingdom through Evangelism.
5. To Bless our family, marriage, and our children.
6. To give us clear directions to his Masterplan for our lives.
7. To give us total healing in our mind, body, and soul.
8. To give us deliverance from every form of bondage.
9. To make us reign as champions and winners in life.
10. To give us a testimony of the GREAT things He has done.
11. To make our witness stronger for God.
12. To hear and answer our prayers.

This book has been compiled from the following sources:

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