

21 DAYS OF PRAYER + FASTING

PRAYER. SCRIPTURE. FASTING.

LONG ISLAND PRAYS



**20
26**

WHEN

Morning or Evening: Jesus and the psalmists are often found praying in the morning (e.g., Psalm 5:3; Luke 4:42). The evenings less so, but choose a time when you are at your best and most attentive.

Lunch Break: If you have time during your workday to read during your lunch or another break, this might be a perfect way to spend your time.

Anytime: Some of you may have such busy lives that you need to fit it in whenever you can. This is totally normal. Make sure that whatever time you decide to read your Bible that you are in a place where you can focus and reflect on God's Word.

WHAT

Bible Reading Plan: Choose a plan and work the plan. If you miss some days, do not try to catch up. Simply pick up where you left off.

Journal: We recommend using a simple journal that's easy to use. You can find these at just about any store, especially book stores or online.

Pen: Take notes within your Bible or a journal.

HOW

Pray: Ask God to speak to you through his Word. And then expect God to speak. Your approach to God's Word will greatly impact your times of personal worship. Ask God to search your heart and to transform your life.

Read: Take notes as you read. If you have a question or have difficulty understanding something, use the study Bible notes to explore answers.

Journal: (try to limit it to one page per day to start): Start a new page and record the date and Scripture you read on the top line. Write down a verse or two that stood out to you. Stay focused on what God is saying through his Word that intersects with your everyday life. This is not about speculation, private interpretations or manipulating God's Word to say what you want it to say. This is about bringing Christ to your everyday life based on the truth of God's Word rightly interpreted.

FASTING

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT FASTING?

Biblical fasting involves abstaining from eating (and/or drinking) for spiritual purposes. In the Old Testament, Israel celebrated certain annual fasts, the most prominent being the Day of Atonement. There were also occasional fasts tied to specific historical events, sometimes individual and sometimes corporate. Here are a few of the occasions for fasting: at a time of grief (I Samuel 31:13; Nehemiah 1:4), at a time of repentance (I Sam 7:6; I Kings 21:27), as an expression of humility (Ezra 8:21; Psalm 69: 10) and as an expression of a need for God's guidance and help. All of these fasts express a common dependence on God. Several New Testament passages give us insight about fasting.

Fasting teaches us that God's Word nourishes us. Matthew 4: 1-4 records the only example of Jesus fasting, just prior to his being tempted in the wilderness. He faced temptation with these words "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 8:3-5 which talks about the 40 years Israel spent in the wilderness, depending daily on manna to sustain them. He says that God humbled them and let them be hungry in order to teach them to depend on God's Word to sustain them. By His example of fasting, Jesus reminds us that food alone can't sustain us. We need to be nourished by God's Word.

Fasting teaches us that doing God's will sustains us. John 4:31-35 records Jesus encounter with the woman at the well. When the disciples return they encourage Jesus to eat. He responds by saying "I have food to eat that you know not of," then He adds "My food is to do the will of the Father." Again, Jesus reminds us that food alone is not enough. We are sustained by doing God's will.

Fasting teaches us that Jesus Himself sustains us. In John 6:48-50 Jesus says "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die." We see this pictured symbolically in the bread and the cup of the Lord's Supper. Jesus is the source of eternal life. Fasting is feasting on Jesus. Jesus commanded that fasting would be a part of His disciple's spiritual life. In Matthew 6:16-18, He says "when you fast," not "if you fast." He warns us not to fast to impress people, but to be near to the heart of God.

FASTING IS DESIGNED TO INTENSIFY OUR DEPENDENCE ON GOD BY WEAKENING OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOOD AND OTHER THINGS.

THE PURPOSE OF FASTING

Fasting reveals and heals our dependence on food (and other things) to fill the discomfort caused by low self-esteem, unfulfilling work, unloving relationships, uncontrollable circumstances, etc. It removes the false peace derived from the pleasure of eating. Richard Foster, in His Classic Celebration of Discipline, says, “More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us. This is a wonderful benefit to the true disciple who longs to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We cover up what is inside us with food and other good things, but in fast- ing these things surface. If pride controls us, it will be revealed almost immediately. David writes, “I humbled my soul with fasting” (Psalm 69: 10). Anger, bitterness, jealousy, strife, fear – if they are within us, they will surface during fasting.”

Fasting teaches us we can go without getting what we want and survive.

Fasting can free us from having to have what we want. Therefore, fasting can teach moderation or self-control, not only in relation to food, but in other areas as well. It teaches contentment (1 Timothy 6:6).

Fasting expresses and deepens our hunger for God.

Richard Foster says, “Fasting reminds us that we are sustained “by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God: (Matt. 4:4). Food does not sustain us; God sustains us. In Christ, “All things hold together” (Col. 1: 17). Therefore, in experiences of fasting we are not so much abstaining from food as we are feasting on the word of God and on Christ Himself. Fasting is feasting.” Fasting for other reasons, such as a “spiritual disguise” for losing weight, is an aberration to Biblical fasting. Fasting to even appear spiritual to others is more akin to the Pharisees than Jesus’ instructions. Fasting must always, first and foremost, center on God. It must be about Him.

FASTING

Step 1: Clarify the Purpose of Your Fast

Why are you fasting? (For the purpose of the 21 Days, see above.) Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically. Fasting is God-led and God-initiated. That means that He fuels a desire to fast and pray. He loves it when we fast.

Step 2: Specify the Nature of Your Fast

Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake. Jesus implied that all of His followers should fast. (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14, 15) For Him it was a matter of when believers would fast, not if they would do it.

Before you fast, decide the following up front:

- How long you will fast - one meal, one day, one week, several weeks, certain days (Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts)
- The type of fast God wants you to undertake - discussed in the Types of Fasts section below.
- What physical or social activities you will restrict
- How much time each day you will devote to prayer and God's Word

Step 3: Prepare Your Heart, Mind, and Body for Your Fast

Fasting is not a spur-of-the-moment thing. It is planned and we must prepare. The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Un-confessed sin can hinder your prayers. Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:

Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision.

Do not rush into your fast. Prepare your body. Eat smaller meals before starting a fast. Avoid high-fat and sugary foods. Eat raw fruit and vegetables for two days before starting a fast. Physical preparation makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier so that you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer.

Prepare your heart and mind remembering that God is your Father and He loves you and is for you.

Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you. (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3,4) Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you.

Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ. (Romans 12:1,2) Meditate on the attributes of God, His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others (Psalm 48:9, 10; 103:1-8, 11-13).

Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart. (Hebrews 11:6)

Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit. (Galatians 5:16, 17)

Finally, and of deep importance, Jesus instructs us in Matthew to not let others know about your fasting. The strict details of your fast should not be something you constantly talk about to others. It should remain between you and God.

Now that we have explored the Old and New Testament teaching and instruction on fasting, we can proceed to discuss specific kinds of fasts. Let us begin with the helpful words of Richard Foster:

“AS WITH ALL THE DISCIPLINES, A PROGRESSION SHOULD BE OBSERVED; IT IS WISE TO LEARN TO WALK WELL BEFORE WE TRY TO RUN.”

Biblical fasting always concerns food. Since the purpose of fasting, as we saw above, is to focus on God, to humble ourselves and to remind ourselves that we are sustained by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, then the task in fasting is connecting our “going without” to “hungering for God.” This takes time, focus and prayer in itself. Please do not expect to be an “expert” at fasting right away. Fasting is a discipline that can take a very long time to understand well. Also, do not let this fact deter you or intimidate you.

Fasting is not unlike a beautifully written masterpiece of literature. It is simple enough for a youth to understand and enjoy, and yet magnificently rich enough for the scholar to devote his/her entire life to.

ABSTAINING FROM CERTAIN TYPES OF FOOD (MEAT, SWEETS, ETC.) - DANIEL 10:3

This type is a good first step for beginners to fast or those with health needs and special or restrictive diets. Choose to abstain from something like breads, sweets, sodas, collee or even red meat. Perhaps spend some time reading through Daniel’s fast in Daniel chapter 1 and chapter 10. Stick to only fruits and vegetables like Daniel, or try something similar.

Determine the timing and duration of your fast and begin. You may choose to go without this specific type of food on only certain days like Fridays, or you may go without during the weekdays only or perhaps every day. Finally, choose the duration of your fast. This community wide fast is 21 days but that does not mean you must go without for all of the 21 days. Determine the timing and duration ahead of time and pray through it.

ABSTAINING FROM ALL FOOD (ESTHER 4:16; ACTS 9:9)

This kind of fast is more difficult but can be broken up by timing and duration. This seems to be the most prevalent of the fasts we see in the Bible. It is also the most intimidating, but refuse to let it scare you. Fasting from all food is not scary if you determine beforehand when you will do so and for how long.

Here are some ideas:

- Start slowly. Begin with fasting for only a part of a day (lunch, or lunch and dinner). Do this for one day a week, or perhaps three days a week. You determine the timing and duration. Take a step of faith. Fasting is risky and involves our faith.
- Next, try fasting from food but not beverages. This means that according to your timing and duration, you would not eat any solid foods but only water, juices, smoothies or perhaps simple soup broths.
- Do this for the first one or two weeks. Devote the time that you normally would eating to Scripture reading and prayer. Focus on Jesus' statements about food.
- Next try a 24-hour fast. This means that you get up and eat a good breakfast and drink only water or juice until the following breakfast the next day. Set aside specific time, during normal meal times if possible, to pray and seek God. Finally, you may progress to a two or three day fast. For some, progression may lead to a multi- day, even multi-week fast. But remember the purpose of your fast.

ABSTAINING FROM THINGS BESIDES FOOD (DANIEL 6:18)

The king's voluntary "fasting" from entertainment in the time of Daniel helps us further understand yet another type of fast.

Fasting from non-food items like entertainment can be particularly helpful and accessible for everyone.

Think of abstaining from television, social media, video games, all reading except the Bible, music, texting, etc. for the duration of your fast. This can be a very powerful decision even as a supplement to food fasts.

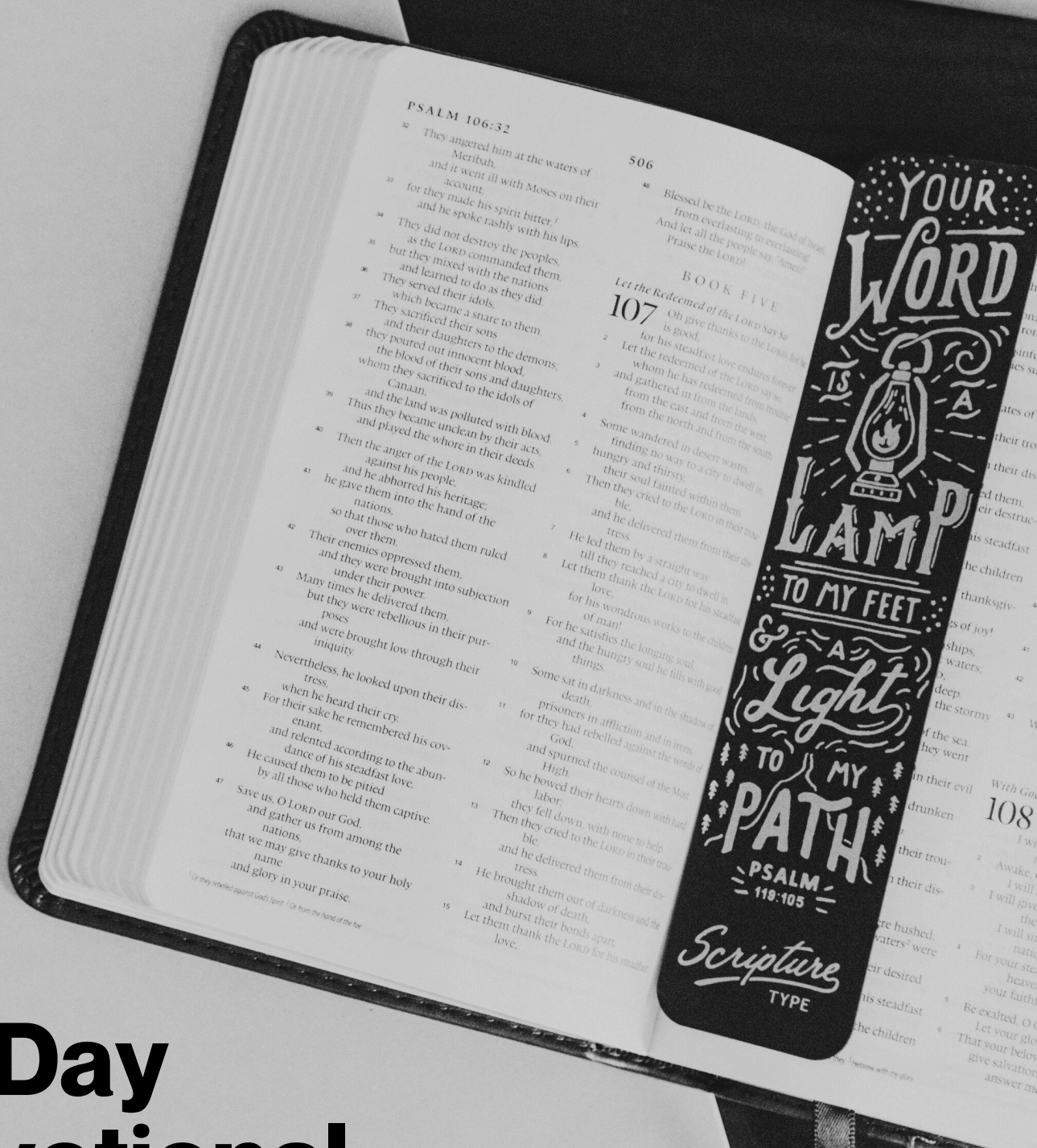
CONCLUSION

Choosing your fasting plan is a very personal decision. We are all at different places in our walk with God and our spirituality should never be a cause for comparison or competition. There is nothing more "inherently spiritual" about one type of fast as opposed to another. Your personal fast should present a level of challenge to it, but know your body, know your options, and most importantly, seek God in prayer about this and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do. It's also important to not let what you eat or do not eat become the focus of your fast. This is a time to disconnect enough with your regular patterns and habits in order to connect more closely to God.

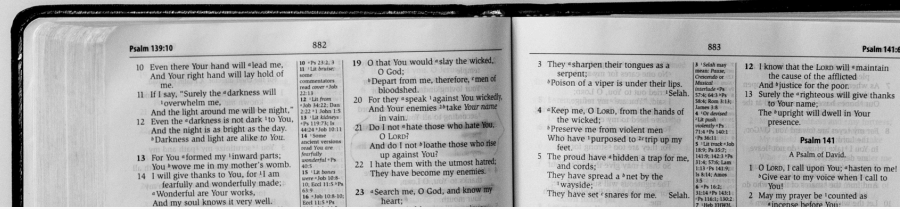
**NO MATTER WHAT KIND OF FAST YOU CHOOSE,
AND EVEN IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO FAST,
PLEASE SEEK GOD IN PRAYER AND READING.**

21-Day Devotional

Verses, prayer focus,
devotionals, reflection questions,
and action steps for 3 weeks.



Week One: All About Jesus



Sunday: The Lord's Day

WEEK
ONE

Exodus 20:8 (NIV) “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Attend church, rest, and reflect on God's goodness.
- **Devotional Thought:** God invites us into the gift of Sabbath—a time to rest and reconnect with Him. Jesus fulfills the Sabbath, offering us rest for our souls (Matthew 11:28). By setting aside this day, we declare that our trust is in God, not in our own efforts. Sabbath rest realigns our hearts to His peace and provision.
- **Reflection:** How can you honor the Sabbath today by focusing on Jesus?
- **Action Step:** Spend time at church, rest, and reflect on how God has provided for you this week.

Monday: Dependence on Him

Zechariah 4:6 (NIV) ‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.

- **Prayer Focus:** Seek and rely on God's Spirit for strength and guidance.
- **Devotional Thought:** Life's challenges cannot be solved by our own strength but by God's Spirit working in and through us. Jesus relied on the Spirit throughout His ministry, modeling perfect dependence. When we trust God's Spirit to guide us, we open ourselves to His wisdom and power. Dependence is not weakness; it's faith in action.
- **Reflection:** What area of your life do you need to surrender to the Holy Spirit's guidance?
- **Action Step:** Pray and invite the Holy Spirit to guide you through a specific situation today.

Tuesday: Surrender to Him

Romans 12:1 (NIV) “Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Surrender all areas of your life to God.
- **Devotional Thought:** Jesus’ ultimate surrender in the Garden of Gethsemane models for us the beauty of trusting God’s will. Surrender means daily laying down our desires and embracing God’s purposes. As we do, we are transformed to reflect Christ more fully, living lives of worship that please Him.
- **Reflection:** What is one area of your life you need to entrust to God today?
- **Action Step:** Write a prayer offering your plans and struggles to Jesus.

Wednesday: Worshiping Him

John 4:23 (NIV) “True worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Worship the Lord for His character and greatness.
- **Devotional Thought:** Worship isn’t limited to songs; it’s an attitude of the heart that exalts God. Jesus invites us to worship in Spirit and truth, acknowledging who He is and surrendering our lives in response. Worship shifts our focus from life’s distractions to His greatness.
- **Reflection:** How can you worship God authentically today?
- **Action Step:** Spend time praising Jesus through a worship song or spoken prayer.

Thursday: Broken Before Him

Psalms 51:17 (NIV) “A broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Confess your sins and experience God’s grace and forgiveness.
- **Devotional Thought:** God meets us in our brokenness with grace and love. Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross ensures forgiveness and restoration for all who come to Him. True repentance brings healing and freedom. Confession isn’t about guilt but about releasing our burdens to Him.
- **Reflection:** What sin or burden do you need to bring to Jesus today?
- **Action Step:** Spend time in prayer, confessing your sins and thanking Jesus for His forgiveness.

- **Prayer Focus:** Quiet yourself to hear God's voice.
- **Devotional Thought:** Hearing Jesus' voice requires stillness in our hearts. As our Good Shepherd, He knows and calls us by name. By spending time in His Word and prayer, we become more attuned to His voice. His guidance leads to peace and purpose.
- **Reflection:** How can you create space to listen to Jesus today?
- **Action Step:** Spend 10 minutes in silence, reflecting on John 10 and asking God to speak to you.

Psalm 37:5 (NLT) “Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Place your trust in God and His care.
- **Devotional Thought:** Jesus invites us to cast our anxieties on Him because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). When we trust Him with our worries, we experience His peace. Trust is an act of faith, knowing He is working for our good.
- **Reflection:** What is one care you need to entrust to Jesus today?
- **Action Step:** Write down your worry, pray over it, and consciously release it to God.

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Week Two:

God's Work in Me



WEEK
TWO

Sunday: The Lord's Day

Exodus 20:8 (NIV) “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Attend church, rest, and reflect on God's goodness.
- **Devotional Thought:** The Sabbath is a reminder of God's covenant with His people. Just as He rested after creation, we rest to focus on His provision and grace. Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath, offering us rest not just for a day, but for eternity in Him. Taking time to rest in Jesus refreshes our hearts and renews our faith.
- **Reflection:** How can you use this day to connect more deeply with God?
- **Action Step:** Attend church and spend time reflecting on God's faithfulness throughout the week.

Monday: My Freedom

Galatians 5:1 (NIV) “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Thank God for the freedom you have in Christ.
- **Devotional Thought:** Jesus paid the ultimate price to set us free from sin and death. This freedom isn't just about what we are saved from but what we are saved for—a life of joy, peace, and purpose in Him. Freedom in Christ empowers us to walk in His grace and to live out His love.
- **Reflection:** How does Jesus' sacrifice give you freedom today?
- **Action Step:** Write a prayer thanking God for specific areas where He has brought freedom into your life.

Tuesday: My Relationships

Nehemiah 4:14 (NIV) “Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Pray for the important people in your life.
- **Devotional Thought:** God calls us to love and care for those closest to us. Healthy relationships are rooted in Christ’s love, patience, and forgiveness. Nehemiah’s example shows us the importance of standing in the gap for our families and loved ones through prayer and intentionality. Jesus transforms our relationships when we seek Him first.
- **Reflection:** Who in your life needs prayer and encouragement today?
- **Action Step:** Reach out to a family member or friend and let them know you are praying for them.

Wednesday: My Growth

Ephesians 4:15 (NIV) “We will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Ask God to help you grow and mature in your faith.
- **Devotional Thought:** Spiritual growth is a journey of becoming more like Jesus. Through His Word, prayer, and the work of the Holy Spirit, we are transformed. Growth isn’t always instant; it requires patience and persistence. As we abide in Jesus, He matures us to reflect His character.
- **Reflection:** What step can you take today to grow in Christ?
- **Action Step:** Spend extra time in God’s Word, focusing on one area where you want to grow.

Thursday: My Calling

1 Peter 2:9 (NIV) “You are a chosen people... that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Thank God for the unique calling He has placed on your life.
- **Devotional Thought:** God calls each of us to shine His light in a dark world. Your gifts, abilities, and passions are designed by Him for a purpose. Jesus empowers us to live out our calling with boldness and faith, knowing that we are chosen and dearly loved.
- **Reflection:** How can you use your gifts to glorify God today?
- **Action Step:** Reflect on one way you can live out your calling and take action.



Week Three: Intercession

Sunday: The Lord's Day

WEEK
THREE

Exodus 20:8 (NIV) “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Attend church, rest, and reflect on God's goodness.
- **Devotional Thought:** The Sabbath is a holy day set apart for worship and rest in God. Jesus invites us to experience spiritual rest in Him, a reminder that our ultimate Sabbath is found in His completed work on the cross. This day renews us as we reflect on His grace and rest in His presence.
- **Reflection:** How can you intentionally make today about Jesus?
- **Action Step:** Attend church and spend 15 minutes meditating on what Jesus has done for you this week.

Monday: Our Leaders

1 Timothy 2:1-2 (NIV) “Prayers... be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Pray for all those in authority—government officials, pastors, teachers, parents, and more.
- **Devotional Thought:** Jesus reminds us that leadership carries responsibility and accountability before God. Praying for our leaders aligns our hearts with God's will for their lives and the people they serve. Whether we agree with them or not, lifting leaders in prayer invites God's wisdom, peace, and guidance into their decisions.
- **Reflection:** Who is one leader God is prompting you to pray for today?
- **Action Step:** Take five minutes to pray specifically for a leader in your community or church.

Tuesday: Our Mission

Acts 1:8 (NIV) “You will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Pray for missionaries, evangelists, and those sharing the Gospel locally and globally.
- **Devotional Thought:** Jesus’ Great Commission calls us to share the Gospel with the world. Whether near or far, every believer is part of God’s mission to bring His love and truth to others. When we pray for missionaries and evangelists, we partner with them in advancing His Kingdom.
- **Reflection:** How can you support God’s mission to spread the Gospel?
- **Action Step:** Pray for a specific missionary or ministry and consider reaching out to encourage or support them.

Wednesday: Our Church

Matthew 16:18 (NIV) “On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Pray for your church, its leaders, and its ministries.
- **Devotional Thought:** Jesus established the church as His body, united in faith to carry out His mission. When we pray for the church, we ask for God’s protection, provision, and power to advance His Kingdom. The church isn’t a building; it’s God’s people shining as light in the world.
- **Reflection:** How can you pray for your church today?
- **Action Step:** Pray for your pastors, church leaders, and ministries, asking God to strengthen and guide them.

Thursday: Our Children

Psalms 127:3 (NIV) “Children are a heritage from the LORD.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Pray for children in your family, community, and church.
- **Devotional Thought:** Children are precious to Jesus, who welcomed and blessed them during His ministry. Praying for the next generation ensures they are covered by God’s protection, wisdom, and love. As we invest in their spiritual growth, we reflect Christ’s heart for them.
- **Reflection:** What can you do today to point children to Jesus?
- **Action Step:** Pray for the children in your life by name, asking God to guide their steps and draw them closer to Him.

Friday: The Lost

2 Peter 3:9 (NIV) “He is patient... not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Pray for those who do not yet know Jesus as their Savior.
- **Devotional Thought:** Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and His heart beats for those far from Him. As we pray for the lost, we partner with God’s desire for everyone to experience His love and salvation. Intercession for unbelievers is an act of faith, trusting God to transform hearts.
- **Reflection:** Who in your life needs to hear about Jesus?
- **Action Step:** Pray for one person who doesn’t know Jesus and ask God to show you how you can share His love with them. Then, do it.

Saturday: Our Victory

1 Corinthians 15:57 (NIV) “Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- **Prayer Focus:** Celebrate and thank God for the victories He has given you during these 21 days!
- **Devotional Thought:** Jesus has already secured victory over sin and death through His resurrection. As we end this 21-day journey, we celebrate His faithfulness and the ways He has worked in our lives. Victory isn’t just about overcoming challenges; it’s about living in the freedom and hope Jesus provides.
- **Reflection:** How has God shown His faithfulness to you during this time?
- **Action Step:** Spend time praising Jesus for specific victories and commit to continuing in prayer and faith.
