

THE FIRST 40 DAYS

A PRAYER JOURNEY BY PARK HILLS CHURCH



"THEREFORE DO NOT THROW AWAY YOUR CONFIDENCE, WHICH HAS A GREAT REWARD. FOR YOU HAVE NEED OF ENDURANCE, SO THAT WHEN YOU HAVE DONE THE WILL OF GOD YOU MAY RECEIVE WHAT IS PROMISED. FOR,

"YET A LITTLE WHILE, AND THE COMING ONE WILL COME AND WILL NOT DELAY; BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH, AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM." BUT WE ARE NOT OF THOSE WHO SHRINK BACK AND ARE DESTROYED, BUT OF THOSE WHO HAVE FAITH AND PRESERVE THEIR SOULS."

THE IMPORTANCE OF 40

The number 40 is mentioned 146 times in the Bible, and often signifies a period of testing:

- Jesus fasted in the desert for 40 days and 40 nights. (Luke 4:1-13; Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 4:12-13)
- There were 40 days between the resurrection and ascension of Christ. (Acts 1:3)
- Moses lived 40 years in Egypt, and 40 years in the desert before God called him, and (twice) spent 40 days and nights on the top of Mt. Sinai. (Exodus 24:18, 34:28, Acts 7:23)
- God flooded the earth by having it rain for 40 days and nights. (Genesis 7:12)

These are just a few examples that show the significance of the number 40 in Scripture, but there are many more! We all know that prayer is crucial to our faith, and we are excited to embark on this intentional 40-day prayer journey together as a church.

To begin, we request that you take a week-long fast from "distractions." Please pick one or more things that grab your attention and thought patterns throughout the day. For some, a distraction might be watching sports, while for others it might be using social media or reading the paper. Whatever your primary distraction is, we'd like you to remove it from your life for a week to create space and prepare your heart for this prayer journey.

Our prayer team has worked hard to put this devotional guide together, and we are so excited for you to use it! Please read one day at a time, using each day's content to focus your prayers. If you're able, keeping a prayer journal during these 40 days could be very helpful to you as well. Our hope is that our church unites in prayer over the next 40 days and seeks personal as well as corporate revival. This begins by removing distractions and putting our focus on God. Lord, we seek revival. Start with me!

-Pastor Mark Balmer and Pastor Chris Stukenberg

WEEK 1: CLEANSE

DETOXIFY YOUR SOUL

A typical cleansing diet involves a period of fasting, followed by adherence to a strict diet. The purpose of a cleanse is to empty the body of toxins and fill it with things that promote good health instead.



As we begin our 40 Days of fasting from our favorite distraction, let's focus on emptying our lives of toxic things that take up energy and space. By cleansing our lives of wasteful practices, we are creating space that's wide open for God. Submit this space to Him and ask Him to work: revitalizing you and creating good spiritual health in you!

NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME

READ EXODUS 20:1-6

I will never forget this demonstration of dedicated commitment to spending daily time with God through the study of His Word. I saw him, a recent high school graduate, from my front porch very early one morning. He stopped by to tell me that he was on his way to Krape Park, saying: *"I am going for my devotions. I go early every morning to make sure that the first words that I read each morning are God's Word."* What a good demonstration of "No god before me" that was!

As you fast from your favorite distraction, are you seeking God and His Word before everything else? How are you going to detox your life so that you seek God first? From what distraction have you decided to fast this week?

OBEDI YOUR FATHER

READ DEUTERONOMY 13:4

Deuteronomy 13:4 "You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him."

This passage tells us to fear God alone. Think about all of your fears: some of those fears have been present in your life for a long time, while others are new. Maybe you fear rejection, personal loss, job loss, illness, or death. Maybe something else?

God's Word tells us to fear only Him. What do we need to fear about Him? Why is fearing God a good thing? What would it look like to let God remove all of your fears except for your fear of Him?

"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."
-Corrie Ten Boom (WWII Holocaust Survivor)

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END TOXIC THOUGHTS

READ ECCLESIASTES 3:11

There are four common categories of toxic thoughts: negative thoughts, fearful thoughts, discontented thoughts, and critical thoughts.

In the privacy of your own mind, can you think about sweeping out these old cobwebs of unhealthy thoughts? Do you still hold a grudge from something that happened long ago? Do you find yourself thinking that you will never be good enough? Was there a time when you heard someone else say that you were inadequate, and you believed it? According to God's Word, you are beautiful. He made you and said, "It is very good." (Gen. 1:31).

Tell God about these thoughts and ask Him to help you sweep them out of your mind. Ask Him to show you some helpful actions to take that will allow you to cleanse your mind of these toxic thought patterns, and write them down!

Instead, think of Job 34:4 "Let us choose what is right; let us know among ourselves what is good."

FORGIVE

READ COLOSSIANS 3:13

Colossians 3:13 "bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

Lewis B. Smedes stated that there is a miracle in forgiveness and power in seeing the former offender with eyes that wish him or her the best that life can offer. *"To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner is you."* (Smedes)

A group of Christians who had been meeting for years finally were transparent enough to talk about their inability to forgive. After discussion, they agreed that non-forgiveness is a major barrier to experiencing God's full grace and peace. If we want to experience the best that God has to offer, let's examine our own hearts. Who do I need to forgive? (Go back in your life as far as you can remember and release the toxic waste of non-forgiveness by surrendering it to the One who makes all things new.)

FOCUS ON JESUS

READ HEBREWS 12:1-2

How is your fast from your favorite distraction going? Take time today to pray for all those who are fasting this week. Pray for endurance to finish this fast (and 40-day prayer journey) well.

In a conversation with a young new pastor, Dallas Willard quieted the room with, *"You're a soul made by God, made for God, and made to need God, which means you were not made to be self-sufficient."* He also said, *"What is running your life at any given moment is your soul."* Our soul has a set number of days. Let us decide to spend our days focused on Jesus and serving Him. He will provide for all our needs.

A hymn by Helen H. Lemmel, a blind woman, beautifully captures the importance of seeking Jesus before all things: *"O soul, are you weary and troubled? No light in the darkness I see? There's light for a look at the Savior, And life more abundant and free! Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace."*

LISTEN FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT

READ PSALM 46:10

Acts 3: 22-23, "Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.'"

We are in desperate need of God's wisdom. This is serious! You've just spent a week cleansing yourself of unspiritual toxins, and you now have so much room to hear God! Seek His direction today, and then consider how this week has helped you create more space to encounter Him!

FOOD FAST: 4 PM TO 4 PM

We encourage you to join us in fasting from food for this upcoming 24-hour period, beginning 4 pm today (Saturday) and lasting until 4 pm tomorrow (Sunday).

PRAISE HIM AND REFLECT ON THE WEEK

READ ISAIAH 58

How has this week been for you? How has intentionally praying each day affected you? Where do you notice differences: your attitude, your ability to control your words or actions, your mood, your focus? Maybe somewhere else?

Prayer and fasting are spiritual disciplines. They take work, but the purpose of practicing these disciplines is not to make yourself better, but to remain close to God.

How has this week of intentional prayer and fasting kept your heart focused on God?

WEEK 2 : SEARCH ME O GOD

Casting Crowns sings a chorus called *"Here's my heart Lord."* It captures the essence of our dependence on God and His Spirit to show us truth. The Bible tells us that our life is but a vapor and soon is gone. Also, that the thoughts of men and women are foolishness to God almighty.

We intuitively know these things are true, but become arrogant or self-absorbed when we compare ourselves to those around us. Although these people may be accomplished, the real standard we should seek to model ourselves after is that of Christ. The only way to understand the example that Christ set is to truly know the mind of God, which is only possible through open and honest conversation with Him (prayer).

Throughout this week, leave the opinions of family, friends and others, and instead cling to Christ through the Holy Spirit, so that you may truly know His will in your life. Pray through the Scripture passage above, and listen.

PRAY FOR THE HUMILITY TO LET GOD SEARCH YOU

READ PSALM 139:23-24

Give God permission to look at everything about you: your goals, your decisions, your job, your future and everything else that is on your heart or filling your mind.

Know that He loves you more than anything and wants the best for you. (Jer. 29:11) The more vulnerable you allow yourself to be, the greater and more clearly you will understand His will.



PRAY FOR THE MIND OF CHRIST

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 2:14-16

We do not naturally understand God's perspective. Although it takes humility and searching to know it, He is not far from us.

"And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being,' as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'"

-Acts 17:26-28.

PRAY FOR GOD'S LEADING IN THE WAY EVERLASTING

READ PSALM 119:105

Our thoughts are so short-sighted and so temporary in nature. Oftentimes, we find it difficult to look past the concerns of today, let alone try to focus on eternity.

Give God permission to show you a path that follows His long-term perspective for what is best for you.

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." (John 10: 27-28)

PRAY FOR THE ABILITY TO LISTEN AND HEAR GOD'S VOICE

READ LUKE 8:8

The parable in Luke 8:8 compares our hearts to "good soil." If we seek and hear His will with an honest heart, we will bear fruit as we are patient. Practically, what would it look like to allow God to till the soil of your heart?

PRAY FOR GLADNESS AND JOY

READ PSALM 51:8-10

There is a distinct connection between a person's closeness to God and the evidence of gladness and joy in their lives. Draw close to God and let His Spirit cleanse you and prepare you to experience gladness and joy.

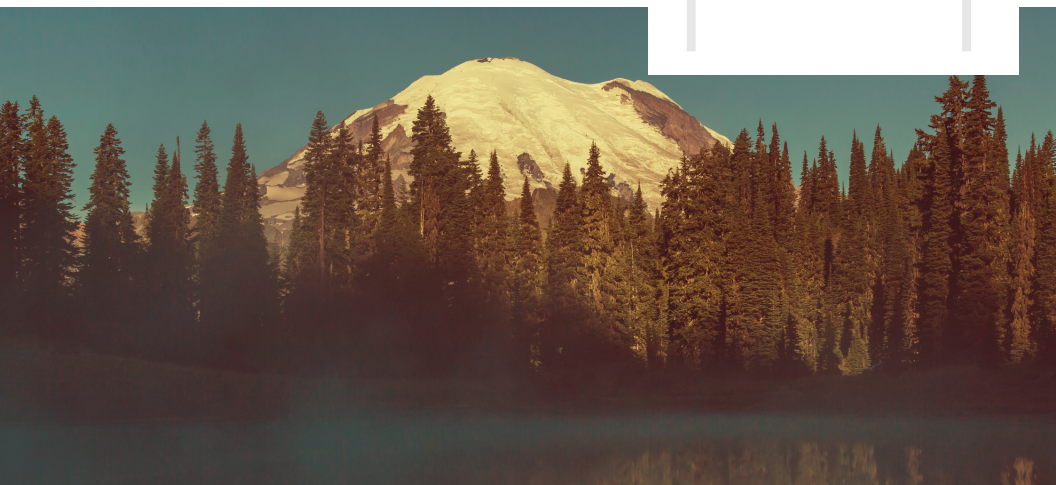
PRAY FOR A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU

READ PSALM 136

Jeremiah 31:3 tells us: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you." He is all that we need. He is sufficient. Pray to know the joy that He brings when we submit to His Spirit.

PRAISE HIM AND REFLECT ON THE WEEK

Spend time praising God for the attributes you meditated on this week: He is loving, He is near, He is our Shepherd and guide.



WEEK 3: WHAT AM I REALLY WORSHIPPING?

Every person is a worshipper. In creation (Gen. 2) man was placed in a safe and bountiful setting where his material needs were provided, his purpose was defined, and his life was an ongoing intimate relationship of dependence and joy with God his creator.

All of that changed after the fall (Gen. 3). Man was cast out of the garden, the ground was cursed, and man was faced with the burden of his own survival. New and threatening things appeared in man's life, things which man was not created to experience. Fear, confusion, shame, pain, disease, fatigue, jealousy, loneliness, pride, anger, and death all became central parts of the human experience and remain so today.

After the fall, mankind became worshippers of anything that would appear to relieve those burdens. We find in the Bible a thorough account of these things playing out in the history of mankind: man struggling and madly seeking solutions and comforts, and God intervening to provide a different direction. The message is clear throughout the Old and New Testaments: worshipping and obeying God brings meaning and clarity to life; pursuing the things of man and the world only increases our trouble.

The Bible calls this idolatry, and we all practice it in different ways. Just as in Old Testament times, it is a major barrier to our relationship with God and our own peace of mind. This week we'll take a look at idolatry and challenge ourselves to see things that we might not have considered.

WHAT IS TRUE WORSHIP AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

READ EXODUS 20:1-4

The first and second commandments tell us more than we often realize. Read these verses carefully and ask yourself some questions:

- What does it mean to worship the Lord your God?
- What other gods might I have placed in my life, knowingly or unknowingly?

Remember, a god can be anything that we value, trust or depend on for our security, comfort and identity. If we are honest with ourselves, this list can become longer than we might ever have thought.

THE BLESSINGS OF TRUE WORSHIP AND THE DANGERS OF FALSE WORSHIP

READ DEUTERONOMY 6:1-19

The challenge in verse 5, to love the Lord with all our heart and soul and strength, can seem burdensome. In the context of the whole passage, it is the foundation of God being able to give us his full protection and blessing. When we depart from worship of God alone and stray to things of man and of the world, we move into dangerous ground.

Continue taking a look at your own life and thoughts. In our society, many false gods clamor for our attention and they can become very appealing and entangled in our thoughts. Ask the Lord to reveal some of these to you and then consider the subtle ways that they may have worked themselves into your thinking, values and attitudes.



EXCHANGING GOD'S TRUTH FOR A LIE

READ ROMANS 1:16-24

This passage in Romans is often used in a self-righteous way to condemn the values and behaviors of certain parts of our society. That may not be incorrect. However, it would be missing the point of the text if we failed to apply it to ourselves.

Ask the Lord to reveal to you places where you might have engaged in this great exchange. What are some things that you cling to in order to feel safe, secure and fulfilled? It might be money, job, reputation, appearance, opinion of others, and the list goes on. This is not an easy project, but it can be very fruitful if you take the time and are honest before the Lord.

MODERN EXAMPLES OF WRONG WORSHIP

READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5

Like the previous passage in Romans 1, this section of 2 Timothy is often used to condemn the direction of society. And that would not be entirely incorrect. But as with Romans 1, there is a treasure of warnings in these five verses, and we would do well to honestly face the question of how these things might have worked themselves into our own lives, in greater or lesser ways.

Remember, “last days” refers to the church age, not merely to the end times. These are issues that have confronted believers from the time of Christ, and we are not exempt today.



IT GETS EVEN MORE SERIOUS

JAMES 4:1-10

If you've become at all uncomfortable from this examination of the heart so far, today will not relieve that discomfort. This passage is a brutal challenge to believers. James goes so far as to refer to wrong worship as spiritual adultery. And he takes it down to the deepest places that we live, such as conflict with others and friendship with the world.

HOW WRONG WORSHIP AFFECTS THE CHURCH

READ REVELATION 2:1-7, 3:14-22

We close week 3 by taking a look at Christ's warnings to His church through letters that He dictated to John for various churches in Asia Minor in the first century. They are warnings as to what pleases the Lord and what troubles Him.

Two issues appear repeatedly. One is loss of first love, which is addressed in the letter to the church at Ephesus. The other is allowing ourselves to be lukewarm, which is addressed in the letter to the church at Laodicea.

These issues are especially challenging to believers in today's materialistic and success-oriented culture. We can measure our church by numbers, dollars, and programs, and along the way lose focus of personal brokenness, humility, and dependence upon Christ alone. Consider ways that these become a danger in our own body of believers here at Park Hills and ways that we can remind ourselves and others to be aware of them and deal with them.

21 PRAISE GOD
AND REFLECT
ON THE WEEK



WEEK 4 : REVIVE AND REFRESH

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DRAW NEAR TO GOD

READ JEREMIAH 29:12-13

There is a consistent theme in Scripture which tells believers that intimacy with God is what sustains a powerful relationship with Him. Oftentimes, when our faith seems dry or boring, we look away from God and search for new things to add to our relationship with Him to try to bring back excitement and refreshment. While this may seem to work for a time, it is not a true solution.

The key to sustaining a powerful relationship with God is being near Him. So, today, focus your prayers on drawing near to God. Remember that prayer is a conversation with Him! Invite the Holy Spirit (which is the Spirit of Truth, according to 1 John 5:6) to open the eyes of your heart. Ask God to give you an understanding of your inner thoughts, motives, and desires so that you are more able to place your focus on Him alone.

Jeremiah 29:12-13, "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

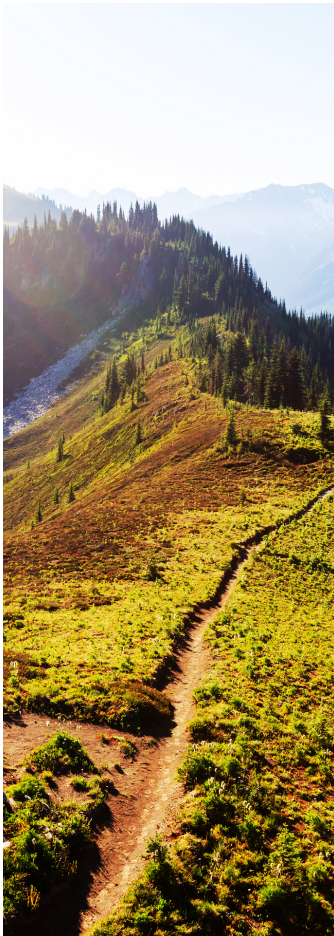
James 4:8, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

SEEING AS GOD SEES

READ HEBREWS 4:12

God alone can show us the thoughts, words, and actions which have grieved His heart, and not been in obedience to His clear teaching. There are times where we have failed to do what would have furthered the ministry of the Gospel that He has entrusted to us. Today, humbly invite God to show you your heart as He sees it and ask Him to help you receive what He shows you.

Hosea 10:12: "Break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you."



GOD CONVICTS US

READ PSALM 51 AND PSALM 32

Psalm 51 and Psalm 32 paint a vivid picture of the enormous burden our sins, when seen through God's perspective, place upon our hearts and minds. We call this burden "conviction." Viewing our sins in the same way God views them should cause us to desire to make things right again, between ourselves and our Holy God. Thankfully, God has shown us how to do this in the gospel!

Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

2 Corinthians 7:10, "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death."

Let your prayers today come from a place of conviction and also thankfulness to God for Jesus' actions, which have made it possible for us to be reconciled with Him..

TURN YOUR FACE TO THE LORD GOD

READ DANIEL 9:3-19

Daniel 9:3-19 contains a detailed and eloquent plea from Daniel to God. In his prayer, Daniel pours out before God his conviction and burden for his sin and the sins of Israel. Daniel expresses his strong desire to turn from his wicked ways, and back to a right relationship with God. We too are commanded to turn away from our sinful paths and return fully to God.

Acts 3:19. "Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out."

Joel 2:12-13, "'Yet even now,' declares the LORD, 'Return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, with weeping and with mourning; and rend your heart and not your garments.' Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster."

O MY GOD, INCLINE YOUR EAR AND HEAR

REREAD DANIEL 9:13-19

In the second half of Daniel's prayer, Daniel spends time meditating on God's mercy. Today as you pray, remember that we don't pray because we are righteous, but because God is merciful! We pray because He has promised to listen to us. He has promised to draw near to those who draw near to Him. He has promised that He will be found by those who earnestly seek Him.

1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Pray today, believing that God is listening to you!



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SCRIPTURAL MEDITATIONS

READ JEREMIAH 29:12-13

Use the Scripture passages listed below to focus your prayers today. Use the particular words and phrases to help you express yourself; ask God to help you live out the truths proclaimed here; explore what it looks like to talk to God about His Word.

Ezekiel 36: 25-27, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it."

Ephesians 3:14-21: "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith - that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

PRAISE HIM AND
REFLECT ON THE WEEK

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WEEK 5: OUR ATTITUDES TOWARD OTHERS CAN REVEAL OUR HEARTS IN WAYS WE MAY NOT LIKE

Get ready for another challenging week. We are going to move into some real-life areas centered around our relationships.

The key is understanding that this is not primarily an exercise in improving our relationships, but rather is a framework to help us honestly examine areas of our hearts with which we may have become very comfortable. On further examination of these areas, we may find that they contain toxic thinking and selfish values which need to be addressed in order for the Lord to bring us to the humility which allows Him to work through us. If it helps your interpersonal relationships, so much the better.

WHAT IF JESUS WERE REALLY SERIOUS IN HIS WARNINGS ABOUT ANGER, JUDGMENT, AND RECONCILIATION?

READ MATTHEW 5:21-23

Ouch. Can this really be taken at face value? Is Jesus really telling us that anger toward a brother in Christ is equivalent to murder? Is He really telling us that reconciliation with our brothers and sisters is more important to Him than our acts of corporate worship? If that is true, we may have found one answer to what has been hindering God's work among us.

This is serious stuff my friends. Reread these three verses as if Jesus were saying them directly to you, which in fact He is! There is a treasure of healing and peace of mind available to us in our own lives and as a church body, if we truly face and accept these words.

YOU MEAN, I MIGHT BE THE PROBLEM?

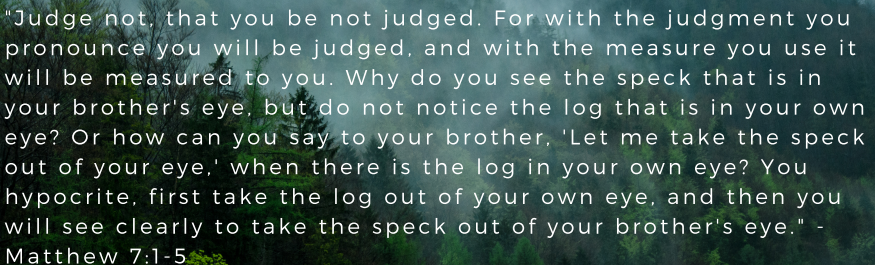
READ MATTHEW 7:1-5

In any difficulty that we have, any disappointment that we feel, or any relationship that we may be struggling with, our first and strongest reaction is to protect ourselves and blame the other person. Even a simple look at ourselves will tell us that this is true. We cling to beliefs about ourselves and our needs that make us comfortable, and we find fault with others when they do not agree with us, or do not do things as we believe they should be done.

Can you see the shadows of idolatry in all of this? Our own view of the world, of our lives, and others, is shaped by our own experience, fears and insecurities. We cling to the things that we feel we need and we demand that others provide them.

As we might expect, Jesus tells us that the solution is the exact opposite of the problem. This is another place where we have to make ourselves realize that Jesus is serious and that these things are true.

Take a serious look at your life and identify several important relationships. In each, where are the points of stress, disagreement or conflict? What have been your demands or expectations of others? How has it been going? Again, we are right in the middle of the subject of idolatry: our self-created images of life and others become the things that we worship, and we demand that others worship us by complying with those things. Be gentle on yourself, but be honest. You will find things that might open your eyes in a uncomfortable but encouraging way.

A photograph of a misty forest landscape. In the foreground, a large, dark log lies horizontally across the frame. In the background, a dense forest of evergreen trees is visible, with a small, bright speck of light or a distant structure on a hillside. The overall atmosphere is hazy and atmospheric.

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." - Matthew 7:1-5

WHAT IS AT STAKE IN THE MATTER OF FORGIVENESS?

READ EPHESIANS 4:29-32

It doesn't get any easier does it? Now we are being told that we are commanded to forgive others, and we must take this seriously because, as the text says, it involves nothing less than the Holy Spirit's ability to minister to us and through us.

There is not enough space here to discuss the topic of forgiveness adequately. Here are a few important things to rest your thinking on. Forgiveness does not excuse an offense or state that it didn't hurt. It releases the offender (and yourself) from the burdens of judgement, the quest for justice, and even punishment. Forgiveness is not forgetting or pretending that it didn't happen, although you probably will never get to the place of forgetting without honest forgiveness. Finally, forgiveness does not mean that you continue to allow yourself to be misused or abused. But, when an offender who is otherwise a valuable and ongoing part of your life needs your forgiveness in order that the relationship prosper, we are told that it is our duty to forgive.

There are two questions that can be of great help in this effort:

- What if God forgave me in the same manner that I feel I am entitled to use in forgiving others?
- If I really understand what I have been forgiven of in Christ, how can I continue to bear bitterness or judgement toward another person?

LOOKING BEYOND OURSELVES

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4

As we might expect, this is another challenging passage, but it is simple in its content. We are being told to step beyond our natural tendency to see every situation by how it affects us. We are being told that the other person has feelings, fears, and needs that are just as real as our own. Often, a large step toward healing can occur when a person believes that he is actually being heard and respected, instead of being overlooked, diminished, or excluded.

If you've come this far with us, you've already allowed the Lord to plow some significant ground in your heart. Take it further as you review how this passage speaks to your way of dealing with others, and what you might want to change.

LOVE IS NOT WHAT WE'VE BEEN TOLD IT IS

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

As you study this passage, you will see quickly that characteristics that God uses to describe love have very little to do with the emotional mush that our culture has defined it to be.

This is another passage that we have to force ourselves to take seriously. Chew on each word or phrase that defines love. Ask yourself if you have ever really thought of it that way, and you will probably find that you haven't. What we are being called to do is challenging, perhaps frightening, and certainly needing effort beyond our normal feelings. This is not easy stuff. But again, it is an opportunity to reveal the idolatries of pride, fear, and self-pursuit that may be hidden in the corners of our hearts. The spotlight of the Holy Spirit will take you there if you allow Him access.

WHAT REALLY IS THE GOOD LIFE?

READ JAMES 3:13-18

As he often does, James exposes here the error and futility of many of our thoughts and actions by addressing our motives. This is another passage that will require time and honest submission to the Holy Spirit in order to understand and put into practice. As you chew upon each word or idea, the Spirit will reveal pockets of envy and selfish ambition in you if you allow Him the time and honesty to do so.



PRAISE HIM AND
REFLECT ON THE WEEK

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WEEK 6 : FORMING HEALTHY HABITS

This is our final week of our First 40 Day prayer and journaling walk with our King. We sincerely hope you have found the first five weeks to be a time of refreshment and revival in your relationship with Christ.

Week 6 is meant to give you time to reflect on the past five weeks and set out on a path towards habituating the practices you've focused on. Good spiritual habits will help you fully realize the gifts and joy that Christ designed for you to experience as a believer. While our culture is obsessed with quick fixes, and there are hundreds of fad-driven detox options available, healthy habits and a consistent walk with Jesus are what revival looks like corporately and individually. Let's continue on and see what He has in store for those of us who have received the abundant life of Christian inheritance.

LOVING GOD & HIS WORD EVERY DAY

READ PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

Commit to a daily practice of having a conversation with our Lord, and develop a deeper relationship with Him by reading His Word.

The Word of God is Truth. Align your heart with the Word of God, and do not let our culture lure you into changing your mind.

It is possible to renew your mind when you commit to daily prayer and spending time in His Word. Think of it as a daily transfusion of God's way to combat the world's way. Enjoy this time and rejoice in the Lord today.



PURSUE WISDOM

READ PROVERBS 2:6

Spiritual wisdom shows us how God wants us to handle the twists and turns of the journey of life. God's Word tells us to pursue spiritual wisdom, not human wisdom, and is also one source of that very spiritual wisdom that it tells us to pursue.

"Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name." -Psalm 86:11

Prayer prompt: *Lord God, help me to look beyond my circumstances to see You. Meet me where I am, keep me focused on You, and teach me exactly what I need to learn today. In Jesus Name, Amen.*

List some practical steps you can take to improve your knowledge of God's wisdom.



SHOW MERCY & WALK HUMBLY WITH HIM

READ EPHESIANS 2:4-6, MICAH 6:8

Are you living for Christ? What is your motivation for being part of God's Kingdom?

Do you show and sow mercy and compassion toward others?

Each of us must wrestle with these questions if we are to grow spiritually. When we show mercy to others, we demonstrate that we've received God's mercy and are aware of it! He is the author of mercy. It is truly an amazing gift to us.

What would it look like to show mercy to some people in your life this week?

APPROACH HIM CONSISTENTLY AND CONFIDENTLY

READ HEBREWS 4:14-16

The lyrics from the chorus of the Christian hymn "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus" are a beautiful reminder of the riches of grace that we have been given in Jesus:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face.
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His Glory and Grace*

God made us for His glory. How can you live today to bring Him glory? How does turning your eyes upon Him impact your ability to glorify Him?

SEEK REAL PEACE & BE A PEACEMAKER

READ JOHN 14:27, PHILIPPIANS 4:7, MATTHEW 5:6-9

Worldly peace is temporary and dependent upon circumstances, but God's peace offers us permanence. His great gift of peace is salvation through Jesus and His constant presence in our lives. Nothing compares to the peace of God that we experience when we are in a relationship with Him.

The world is going to tug and pull at us, and at times we will find ourselves beginning to succumb to the way of the world. Don't worry! Our goal here isn't to never feel this tugging, but rather to understand that it's a normal part of life and **be prepared** to combat it! Healthy habits will enable us to continually seek renewal as we walk through life's peaks and valleys.

The truly healthy person has come to his senses (Luke 15:17) and seeks our Father again and again in this life. While we may hate the peaks and valleys of our faith, God loves us, cares for us, encourages us to repent and seek renewal, and (if we do so) calls us a person "after God's own heart."

Write a prayer to God, telling Him how and why you love His peace in your life.

Write out some healthy habits you want to pursue, and some practical steps that you can take to foster these habits, in order to prepare yourself for life's peaks and valleys.

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