

BUT

GOD....

A word from Pastor Mike

I'm so excited that you've decided to join us for **21 Days of Prayer!** There's something powerful that happens when God's people come together and seek His face! Prayer changes things...but even more than that, prayer changes us! It draws us closer to God, strengthens our faith, and reminds us that we don't have to face life's challenges with our own strength.

Our theme this fall is "But God!"

Throughout Scripture, we see moments when the situation looked impossible, the circumstances looked hopeless, or the enemy seemed to have the upper hand. **But God.** Those two words remind us that **God always has the final word!**

Over these 21 days, we are going to pray for more than just ourselves. We will pray for **our families, our church, our city, our nation, and our world.** We will pray for salvation, revival, healing, restoration, wisdom, provision, protection, and for the Gospel of Jesus to reach people everywhere.

My challenge to you is simple:

Don't be a spectator...be a participator!

Set aside a few minutes each day. Find a quiet place. Gather your family. Come to one of our daily prayer meetings. Write down what you're believing God for...And most importantly, **expect God to move!**

You may begin these 21 days with a burden, a question, a need, or a situation that seems impossible. That's okay...Because that's where **"But God"** begins.

I believe these 21 days can be a significant time of spiritual renewal for our church. Let's seek God together. Let's believe together. Let's stand together. And let's see what God will do when His people pray. **21 Days. One Church. One Prayer. One Powerful God.**

I can't wait to see what God does in you, in your family, in Newsong Church, and throughout our city. Let's pray!

Love ya!
~Pastor Mike

P.S.

Don't forget that if you want a word *FROM* God you have to pick up the word *OF* God! Don't forget to make daily Bible reading a priority!

Creating A Lifestyle of Prayer by Chris Hodges -

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed. MARK 1:35

Prayer is most effective when it isn't something we do every now and then, but when it's a lifestyle we cultivate. To understand how to have a lifestyle of prayer, we can look at the example Jesus gave during His life on earth.

HAVE A CERTAIN TIME

Jesus got up early in the morning to spend time with His Heavenly Father. Make a daily appointment with God — whether it's first thing in the morning, at lunch, or in the evening — and faithfully keep it.

HAVE A CERTAIN PLACE

Jesus had a specific place He went to pray. Having a designated place to pray helps us remove distractions and frees us to worship and pray out loud.

HAVE A CERTAIN PLAN

When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He gave them a prayer outline. We call it "The Lord's Prayer." This outline, along with several other tools, is available in this guide. As we pray every day, our plans for our prayer time can vary, maybe including worship music, Bible reading, and quiet time to listen to God. It doesn't always have to look the same; it just helps when we have a plan for connecting regularly with God.

Every Day Prayer Focus

- **Humble ourselves.** Asking for forgiveness for our sins and the sins of our land.
- **Seeking God.** Declaring our dependence on God in every area of our lives.
- **His Kingdom Come.** Praying for the completion of the Great Commission and for revival in our generation.
- **Hear from Heaven.** Inviting the Presence of God in our church and our lives (souls saved, signs, wonders, miracles, and transformed lives.)
- **Next Steps.** Praying for all people in their journey of faith to Know God, Find Freedom, Discover Purpose, and Make a Difference.
- **Believing God** for answered prayer to our specific needs (Connection Cards, Pastoral Care Update Cards, and prayer requests).

Fasting Guide

<https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/spiritual-growth/fasting/personal-guide-to-fasting.1.html>

Daily prayer focus to assist you in your personal prayer time

Oct 4 – Pray for God to move powerfully over the next 21 days

Oct 5 – Pray for our leaders – Nation, State, and City (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

Oct 6 – Pray for our Executive Team, Stewardship Team, Oversight Team, Ministry Leaders

Oct 7 – Pray for revival in our city – The Bronx, NYC, Spiritual Awakening

Oct 8 – Pray for our nation – outpouring of the Holy Spirit, revival in America, national missions New York Ministry Network, Church Multiplication Network, leadership training and church planting. Our US Missionaries: Jasmin Santos (Yale Chi Alpha) Charles & Kehinde Moodie (Chicago City Life Center), Reggie & Ibelsa Stutzman (The Prodigal Center), John & Caity Ginnan (Youth Alive NY), Expect Hope, Love Life NYC, Dream Center NYC (Stephen & Priscilla Perumalla)

Oct 9 – Pray for our world – World missions (for safety reasons we cannot name our missionaries however they are located in Africa, India, Jordan, Scotland and Central & South America.) Please pray for God's protection for them and their families, pray for God's favor & growth in their ministries.

Oct 10 – Pray for the persecuted church in our country and around the world (Gal 6:2)

Oct 11 – Pray for Healing, Signs, & Wonders

Oct 12 – Pray that We Reach The Lost – outreach, family members, friends

Oct 13 – Discipleship & Growth Track – That God would give our church a hunger for His Word

Oct 14 – Dream Team – leadership development, covering over every leader, fresh vision and volunteers for Set-up/Break-down, Usher/Greeter, Audio/Visual, Connect & Next Step, Kidsong, Worship Team, NS Deaf Church

Oct 15 – Children and Students (Kidsong & A.T.F.)

Oct 16 – 9941 (Young Adults Ministry)

Oct 17 – Pray for a Building of our own

Oct 18 – Pray for upcoming Encounter weekend

Oct 19 – Pray for strong families and marriages

Oct 20 – Our Church's vision for 2027 – outreach projects, heart for the house, campus launches, leadership development, finances, leaders

Oct 21 – Your personal vision for 2027 – freedom from habits, debt, relationships, ministry, reaching my full potential

Oct 22 – Personal freedom and deliverance – breakthrough in every area!

Oct 23 – ***Encounter Night 1*** Pray for your specific needs (finances, health, family members to be saved and other personal needs.) Pray for the sick – anoint with oil.

Oct 24 – **Encounter Night 2*** Pray for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit

Oct 25 – Give thanks with a joyful heart for all God has done over the past 21 days!

PRAYER MEETINGS

All prayer meetings will be held at Newsong Church
135 Einstein Loop, Bronx RM 42
Discounted parking is available. All are welcome to attend.

Prayer Times

Sunday Mornings @ 9:30-10:00 am

Monday-Friday @ 7-8pm

Saturday Mornings @ 10am

Have a prayer request? Text Prayer to 877-899-7323 or simply scan the QR Code with your phone!



ENCOUNTER

Oct 23rd at 7pm
Oct 24th at 6pm

Guest speaker: Pastor/Evangelist Derrick West



135 Einstein loop, Bronx NY, 10475

“But God!”

A 21 Day Devotional by Newsong Church

Dear Church Family,

All through Scripture we see two simple words that change everything: **But God**. These two words are like sunshine on a rainy day. They mark the moment when fear gives way to faith, sorrow becomes joy, defeat turns into victory, and death is overcome by life.

This 21-day devotional created by members of our church, is designed to help you seek God in prayer while discovering His power to intervene in every circumstance.

Each day includes:

- Scripture
- Devotional Thought
- Prayer Focus
- Reflection Question

I don't know what kind of season you are in right now. **But God** does. I don't know what needs you have, or the circumstances you're facing. **But God** does. I don't have the answers to the questions you are asking. **But God** does. I don't have the power to move that mountain, calm that storm, provide for that need, or heal that hurt...**But God** does! My prayer is that over the next 21 days you will not only draw closer to the God who is more than able to do above and beyond anything that we can think, ask or imagine...But through this season of prayer you will experience your own **BUT GOD** story!

Love ya!

-Pastor Mike

Week One

Day 1- “But God Remembers Me” by Pastor Mike

But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and livestock with him in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the earth, and the floodwaters began to recede.
-Ge 8:1 (NLT)

I don't know about you, but I have a tendency to “forget” things every now and then. I can walk into a room, set my keys down and forget where I placed them. I can meet someone and in the middle of the conversation forget their name. I can walk into a room to get something and then forget what it was I was doing, because I actually started doing something else...If you haven't figured it out by now, yes, I have A.D.D. So the next time that I forget to text you back, please know that I meant too. It's just that more than likely something else snatched my immediate attention...But no worries...I will get back to you!

Our God is all powerful, all knowing and everywhere present. There's nothing He can't do, there's nothing He doesn't know, and there's no place He's not. So when we read that God remembered Noah it doesn't mean that He forgot about him...it means that it was now the right time for God to intervene.

I'm sure from Noah's perspective it felt like God had forgotten about him, after all by this time it had been at least a year since they boarded the ark. All those animals...no shower...no all you can eat buffet...I'm sure Noah was thinking, “God what about everything You promised me?”

Maybe you're going through something, and it's been a particularly long season. Maybe you feel like you're aimlessly drifting in an ocean of fear or doubt. The good news is that God hasn't forgotten about you! All of His promises are yes and amen! At the right time, (His time) He will send that refreshing wind to bring you back to shore!

Prayer Focus

Begin to thank God for all of His promises in your life

Reflection

Where do you need to trust God's timing instead of your own?

Day 2: "But God Loves Me" By Adrienne Dunkley

*7 Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. 8 **But God** showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. -Rom 5:7-8 (NLT)*

I can recall the time in April of 2020 when the world was on lockdown because of a global covid 19 pandemic. More than 3.9 billion people across more than 90 countries were placed under government ordered stay at home restrictions. I had become very sick with a high fever, a horrible cough, shortness of breath, loss of appetite, weakness and fatigue, nausea and dizziness among other symptoms. I wasn't even sure of exactly what had caused the illness. All of the above were symptoms of either a bad cold, a bad case of the flu, or the known to be potentially deadly covid 19 virus.

I had been experiencing these symptoms before the lockdown while there were so many hurdles that had to be overcome for just the availability of testing. Vaccines were not yet available. But when the last set of symptoms of covid were added to the weekly news update of covid symptoms, the loss of sense of taste and smell, I suffered from the reality that I had been infected by the potentially deadly virus covid!

Doctors offices were closed, but I received a call from my doctor of instructions to follow to get better hoping I wouldn't end up in the emergency room. I isolated myself in my room with no contact with anyone. My husband was well and I didn't want him to catch any of the symptoms. I felt very alone and afraid. I called my mentor who advised me to follow my doctor's instructions, find one life giving scripture to focus on, and to get under a set of worship songs that would minister to me. Listening to worship songs, I heard the song "How He Loves" come piping out of my cellphone. These were the words of the verses that ministered to me:

*"When all of the sudden,
I am unaware of these afflictions eclipsed by glory.
And I realize just how beautiful You are,
and how Your affections are for me."*

God's presence filled my bedroom and surrounded me, as I sensed tidal waves of His love washing over me. Pure agape love like I had never before experienced to this degree.

It drove out all fear of death, to the place of being able to sense in my heart, that if I died that next morning, I would have died knowing God's perfect love for me, trusting Him until the end. It was a great encounter! 2 days later the fever broke and the healing process continued.

I had experienced the weight of God's glory realizing that His perfect love casts out fear. (1 John 4:18) God sent Christ to die for me while I was still a sinner because of His unconditional love for me.

Perhaps you have at some point in your life, or even on your faith walk, questioned God's love for you. A circumstance that left you stunted, a trial that took you to a lonely place, a difficult childhood, or an unfair mistreatment from others that tainted your understanding of God's love for you. Know that God couldn't love you any more or less than He loves you right now. God's own initiative showed His love for humanity FIRST, through the sending of His son Jesus.

Prayer Focus:

Pray thanking God for His unconditional love towards you, which encompasses His grace for you to walk in all His forgiveness that He has made completely available to you as His child.

Reflection:

Allow the love of God that he has for you to overflow to others you come in contact with.

1 John 4:19 says, "We love each other because he loved us first." (NLT)

I had to learn during the covid 19 pandemic, where social distancing was being enforced, that God was never distanced from me in any way, shape, or form. His presence remained close at hand because of His LOVE. ❤️

Day 3: “But God Made Me Part of The Body” By Vivian Ortiz

Some of you may know that I work for New York City Transit. But I'm not a Train Conductor or Bus Operator. I work in the bus maintenance department specifically with the department that buys new buses. I had no idea how much goes into purchasing a singular bus. There are teams for the design of the body of the bus which includes the doors, wheels, engine, brakes, computer mechanisms like GPS internal tracking systems, and even a team that chooses the colors of the bus and every sticker that goes on the outside. Every aspect that makes the bus what it is.

After the bus is finally built according to the plans and specs from all the departments who work together to design it, it must be inspected and tested. The bus is put to a road test, a shake test to make sure nothing falls off, a water test where it is drenched with thousands of gallons of water to make sure that there are no leaks or damages. And after all of that, the bus is shipped to a NYC bus depot for inspection by the mechanics to make sure all the parts of the bus are functioning properly and the bus can be put into service. But if just one thing is not working the way it should be, the bus gets rejected, the order is put on hold, and no further buses can be shipped until they fix the issue.

You see, all the parts of the bus have their own importance, and they all have to be working together for the bus to be in service. The same thing goes for God's Church. God gives us all different gifts so that we can come together to encourage and help each other. Show God's love to each other and those that don't know God.

There are many different teams across the church like Pastors, Greeters, the Kidsong team, the worship team, and so many others that come together to set up a Sunday service with one similar purpose, to serve the Lord. When you welcome a first time visitor, you're showing them the love of Christ. When you're helping a child learn about Jesus, you're planting a seed of faith. And when you're setting up the room, you're creating a safe environment where people can encounter God. He gave everyone different gifts so that we could serve together.

1 Corinthians 12:21-27 says *“The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” and the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment.*

But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers every part suffers with it, if one part is honored every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

So whether you are already serving, or just coming to hear the word, remember that we are all part of the body of Christ, and every person has a purpose in God's church. A church is not just worshiping in a building. It is a place where we are all united with one another through Jesus. Jesus is the head and we are the body. When we use the gifts God has given us, we help strengthen each other and the entire church. In Mark 10:45 Jesus said, *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve”*.

The Church needs you! There is a place for you in the body of Christ! You might be wondering “What can I do this Sunday to become a part of the body?”. If you don’t know where you fit in, get connected and find out where there is a need and what you can do to get involved. Ask yourself what gifts has God given you. And where can those gifts be used? I started out by just inviting family, friends and co-workers. That led to me wanting to get more involved in serving the church. 10 years in Newsong Church and I found my purpose in serving as the Director of Kidsong.

Whether you're inviting someone to the next Sunday service, or serving as a leader on a team, there is no part of the body of Christ that is too big or too small in God's Kingdom.

Romans: 12:4-5 reminds us that although we are many, we are one body in Christ, and we belong to one another.

Prayer Focus:

Take a few minutes and thank God for allowing us to be part of the body of Christ, and using us in His local church!

Reflection:

How can God begin to use you in a deeper way for His glory?

Day 4: “But God Sees Me” By Nordia Chambers

*42 If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would surely have sent me away empty-handed. **But God** has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands, and last night he rebuked you.”*

-Genesis 31:42 (NIV)

Have you ever felt unseen, as though no one truly noticed what you were carrying? A couple of days after my dad was discharged from the hospital following a major stroke, we decided to take a walk together around our neighborhood.

As we were walking, I stopped for a second to admire a beautiful flower garden that my neighbor was tending to in his front yard. I love flowers; in fact, I buy flowers for myself almost every week. As I continued my walk with my dad, my neighbor chased after me and said, “Excuse me, miss, this flower is for you.” He gave me this beautiful peony that he had cut from his flower garden.

In that moment, I felt joy, peace, but most of all, I felt seen. I thanked him, and my dad smiled and responded, “The color of the flower is your favorite color.”

I could not stop staring at the peony. I mean, this flower was perfect. The color was a vibrant pink, perfectly shaped, and not one blemish or imperfection on the petals.

In that moment, I realized that God had encountered me on the path I was walking with my dad. He encountered me with these words: “I know you, daughter, and I see you.” Our God is so personal and intimate. He knows you, and His eyes have never left you. He sees what you are carrying—the hardship, the struggles, the pain—and yet He chooses to remain with you. God doesn’t simply notice you; He is aware of what you have endured, what you have done, and what has been done to you.

Sometimes we become so blinded by affliction that we miss the God-wink moments along the path. Jacob didn’t only say, “God saw me,” but also, “God has been with me.” What a powerful truth about our God.

Prayer Focus:

Ask God to help you recognize His presence and His reminders that He sees you, even in difficult seasons.

Reflection:

Where have you seen God’s sweet reminders that He sees you, knows you and is with you?

Day 5-"But God Meant It For Good" By JoMaris Tolone

*20 As for you, you meant evil against me, **but God** meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.-Genesis 50:20 (ESV)*

Have you ever dealt with an inconvenience that somehow allowed you to be in the right place at the right time?

I remember one morning in high school, I overslept and caught a late train to school. It was rush hour and absolutely packed that morning, but as I stood in the crowded train car, I noticed a woman near me crying to herself. Compelled to talk to her, I asked her if she was okay and started a conversation with her. I don't remember what she told me, but I do remember asking her if I could pray for her. She said yes. After I prayed, she seemed genuinely grateful for the encounter. And later when I walked through my school's front doors (late), I realized that not only was I able to show love to someone who was hurting, but I had also been able to testify about God to all the people who were crammed onto the train with me and overheard our conversation.

Now, Joseph, the speaker in *Genesis 50:20*, was way more than inconvenienced. His own brothers literally sold him into slavery because they were jealous of him. They absolutely intended evil toward him. Joseph went from being a favorite son to being a slave in a foreign land. He had no way of knowing whether he would live or die, much less see his father again.

But, despite his circumstances, one thing had not changed: the Lord was with Joseph (*Genesis 39:2*). Through Joseph's faithfulness and the favor of the Lord, Joseph went from prisoner to second-most powerful man in the land, right under Pharaoh. Not only did God provide a miraculous repentance and reconciliation with his family, but Joseph even helped Egypt survive and flourish through an incredibly difficult famine because of the insight the Lord gave him.

God is capable of using even the most harrowing experiences in our lives for good. Though someone may act unfairly toward you, or you may be struggling with a situation you've been handed, trust in God and know that He is capable of changing the outcome. As Romans 8:28 says, *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."*

I'm not sure what you're handling right now. Perhaps you're in a difficult situation now because God is setting you up to be in the right place at just the right time. Perhaps you've been inconvenienced because God is protecting you from a dangerous path. Or perhaps the pressure you're facing is meant to refine and strengthen your character so you can bless many others down the line.

I don't know, but I do know that under pressure, olives produce oil, carbon becomes diamonds, and clay is shaped into art. How might God be transforming you?

Whatever you may be dealing with, believe that you have a loving Father who sees you. Under His careful gaze and caring hands, you can trust that what the world intends for evil, God intends for good.

Prayer Focus:

Ask God to help you trust His goodness. Pray for peace, trust, and faithfulness in the midst of difficult circumstances.

Reflection:

Where do you need to trust that God is working for good, even when your situation doesn't feel good?

Day 6-"But God Is With Me" By Pastor Mike

*21 Then Jacob said to Joseph, "Look, I am about to die, **but God** will be with you and will take you back to Canaan, the land of your ancestors.-Genesis 48:21 (NLT)*

My five year old Grandson Ezekiel doesn't like to sleep in his own bed. Things usually start off well...we read a story, we pray, I turn on his night light..but at some point in the night, he finds his way to our bed.

Some nights he's like a boomerang, I put him in his bed, he comes back, I put him in his bed, he comes back. One time, I was so tired, instead of putting him in his bed, I just left him with Cyndie and went to his bed myself...I figured at least I'll get some sleep...Guess what happened? He came stumbling back to his bed looking for me!

When I asked him why he comes into my bed every night, he shrugged his shoulders and said...I just want to be with you Papa. (Yes my heart melted)

There's something powerful about being in the presence of God. About knowing that God is with us. Over his life, Jacob realized this truth, and now he was reassuring his son Joseph that God would be with Him too!

When I understand that God is with me and that He will never leave me, it helps me face the trials in life. I may be going through something, but I'm not going through it alone. My Father in heaven is with me...He's guiding me, He's helping me, He's holding on to me!

Knowing these truths help me to find peace in the middle of the chaos. Strength even though I'm weak, courage even though I'm afraid and joy even when I'm sad.

Prayer Focus:

No matter how you feel, remember that God is with you!

Reflection:

Take a moment and tell your heavenly Father how much you love His presence. Spend some time in worship and prayer, thanking Him for His goodness and grace!

Day -7 “But God Strengthened Me” By Sammy Collozo

*26 My flesh and my heart may fail, **but God** is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Psalm 73:26 (NIV)*

In this Psalm a man named Asaph (Israel's Chief Musician at the time), is describing how he found himself envying the prosperity of people who were not walking according to God's path.

He envied their prosperity in health, their prosperity in wealth, and their care-free attitudes. He began to feel as though he had walked on God's path all this time for no reason, and he questioned if keeping his heart pure and staying innocent was all for nothing.

He thought, “Well God if I did those things, I would've been punished but these guys can just get away with whatever they want!”.

If you're an older sibling you may know that feeling all too well. You can still remember that one time you saw your younger sibling doing something that would have landed you in a three month grounding or a three-hit-combo spanking, yet when they got caught, they got out unscathed. Even now as you read, I know that frustration is rising up from the pit of your stomach and you just wanna yell out, “WELL IF I DID THAT, THINGS WOULD'VE GONE DIFFERENTLY!!”

Maybe you don't have a sibling, but like Asaph, I think we've all been in a place where we've looked out and have seen people who have no care for God make so much money they could mop the floor with it, or people at our school or workplace who mock God get endless praise for their work.

Honestly, I don't blame you for feeling upset. It's easy to see someone succeed while walking the wrong path and feel that way. We might fight against God and say “Hey God, why is it that these guys who hate you are doing so well?”

They have it all yet I tithe every paycheck, I read my Bible daily, I try to follow your path wholeheartedly, and I still don't have half of what they have. God it's just not fair!”

Over this recent summer I worked as a lifeguard, and there was another lifeguard who got caught fully asleep on the job. I mean the dude was so knocked out he probably thought he was at home tucked in bed with his teddy bear.

Nothing ever happened to him for it and I could've easily gotten upset, but the key is, I knew what was coming. I knew that he didn't get in trouble because the manager wasn't planning on keeping him for long anyway, so instead of causing problems, he let it go for now.

Asaph later recognized in our Psalm for today that while these wicked people may be enjoying life now, if they continue on this path it'll only lead straight for their ultimate end where God would enact true and righteous judgement for their ways of life. He also realized God's faithfulness even through the times when Asaph was upset at him and so he comes to the conclusion, which is our verse for today, *"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" Ps. 73:26 (NIV).*

It's so easy for us to see others succeed while walking away from God, and get frustrated or even jealous, but maybe what you need today is a perspective shift. As believers, we know what waits at the finish line of God's path, and like Paul said, *"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" Romans 8:18 NIV.*

Hey faithful servant and friend of God, maybe He's letting them enjoy this now because their best day will be the closest they'll ever get to heaven, while you going through your worst day is the closest you'll ever get to hell. Instead of seeing things from your current place on the path, take the bird's-eye view and look at God's faithfulness in your past, and the reward to come in your future. Even when your flesh and heart fail, and they will, God will be your strength and everything you need, and He never fails!

Prayer Focus:

Begin to praise God for what you do have, and ask Him to help you trust Him with what you don't have

Reflection:

In what area of your life do you need a perspective shift?

Week Two

Day 8-"But God Turned Things Around" By Tisha Ramos

29 *"When they had done all that the prophecies said about him, they took him down from the cross and placed him in a tomb.*30 **But God** raised him from the dead!-Acts 13:29-30 (NLT)

When I was in a relationship with my children's father, I felt trapped. The relationship was abusive for both me and my children, both physically and emotionally. I was afraid for my life and felt there was no way out. I remember going to and from work on the express bus and looking out the window fantasizing of the places I could escape to. "maybe I could escape there, or here".

Mind you, these were not locations of people I knew, but structures outside that seemed possible that one could live out of"; that's how desperate I was. One could even say I felt dead. I truly felt this was my life and there was no way out. **BUT GOD...**

For the disciples at that time, what could be more final than death. Yes Jesus had said that he would rise in three days, but did they really take him at His word? Think about it, had they taken him at his word, they might have said, "yes, he's gone, but we don't have to worry, he'll be back in three days". But that's not what happened. In *Mark 16:10*, after Mary saw Jesus at the tomb, it says, *"She went to the disciples who were grieving and weeping and told them what happened."*

Before my kidney transplant (about 2 years before), I had a procedure done to install a fistula in my left arm for dialysis. Although it was an out-patient procedure and went fine, after the operation, the bruising it left was FRIGHTENING..

the bruise went from my upper arm, all the way down to almost my wrist. It went from purple, to black, and stayed that way for months!!!! I remember being so afraid that this would never heal, and that my arm would look this way forever.

The strange thing is, that when I think about it, that bruising frightened me more than my actual kidney transplant. Perhaps because the transplant was internal, and I could not see what the kidney did once it was in there. And yes there was a scar but no bruising, not like my arm. Sometimes there's something about the physical and visual, that we as humans, let trump the spiritual or let overshadow our trust in God. Yes, my arm was bruised horrendously, **BUT GOD!** I watched and watched and after time the bruising was gone, but I had to TRUST that God was not going to leave things that way

Just like in that bad relationship, I had to trust that God was going to get me out of that, but I had to look past the physical.

The disciples physically saw Jesus die, and for them at that time it was finite.. **BUT GOD**.. for them, at that time they could not focus, or think about what was happening in the spiritual. God was working nothing could stop him, but at that time they could not see that.

Family, there are so many “but God’s” throughout scripture that we can rely on as proof, that God is not finished and that he truly turns things around. For me personally, it was being freed from an abusive relationship that I thought would never end, and a physical bruising that I thought would never go away. But God did come through for me those times and continues to do so!

Prayer Focus:

Let’s pray that the Lord will give us strength to rely on HIS word, HIS truth, and HIS POWER and to trust, that HIS “but God” moments are real and eternal, and that he can turn things around.

Reflection:

What is happening in your life right now, either physically, emotionally, or financially. What is happening in this physical realm, that is trying it’s best to trump, or out do, or out shine, God’s glorious miraculous power, or not letting you believe that he can turn things around and that a “BUT God” moment, is on the horizon.

Day 9- “But God Gave Me New Life” By Pastor Maria Aponte

*2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—Eph 2:1–5 (ESV)*

Do you remember who you were before Christ? I do. Have you ever looked back at your life and realized, “*I am not the person I used to be*” and aren’t you glad?

I remember when my eyes were first open to sin .I mean I could see clearly and understand that there was "UGLY" all around me. That spiritual awakening that differs from what we think is right from wrong. It was like God had given me a new set of eyes , the scales were removed , because new glasses couldn't reveal sin to me the way that God could .

What about you?

Could you see, spiritually , how God has brought you through many troubles , heartaches and sufferings? Look at where you are now, Do you ever wonder how did I ever get here?

But Ephesians 2:1–5 reminds us that our story does not have to end with our past. That's no longer our Narrative! Paul begins by describing what we were like when we were separated from God. We were spiritually dead because of our sins and disobedience.

My Past Does Not Have the Final Word!

Maybe your thinking:

“I used to be...”

“I used to do...”

“I used to live...”

But God says:

“I am making you new.”

Your testimony is not simply, “Look at what I used to be.” Your testimony is:

“Look what God has done!”

My New Life Is Because of God's Mercy

Ephesians does not say that we became alive because we were good enough.

It says: **“But God, who is rich in mercy...”** Mercy means God did not give us what our sins deserved. Instead, He gave us grace, love, forgiveness, and new life through Christ. That is why we can lift our hands and say: **“I am not here because I am perfect. I am here because God is merciful.”**

Here's what changed...

“BUT GOD”

We were dead — **but God.**

We were lost — **but God.**

We were broken — **but God.**

We were far away — **but God.**

We had no way to save ourselves — **but God.**

Ephesians 2:4–5 says:

4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

God did not wait for us to become perfect before He loved us. He loved us while we were still dead in sin. **I Was Dead, But God Gave Me Life**

The Bible says we were “dead in trespasses and sins.”

Dead people cannot bring themselves back to life. That means I could not fix myself.

I could not save myself. I could not work hard enough to make myself spiritually alive.

Prayer Focus:

He gave me life. Thank God for what He has done, and will do, according to His promises.

Reflection:

Take a moment today and think about these words:

“But God...”

What has God brought you through?

What has God changed in your life?

Where were you before Christ?

And where are you now?

How can I align myself to trust and believe what God says? Your story may have started with brokenness, failure, sin, or pain. But if Jesus has touched your life, you can say:

“BUT GOD GAVE ME A NEW LIFE!”

Day 10- “But God Protected Me” By Pastor Barbara Colon-Malave

*2 And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. 3 **But God** came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife.”-Genesis 20:2–3 (ESV)*

Genesis 20 reminds us that there are moments when we cannot see what God is doing behind the scenes. Abraham made a fearful decision, and Sarah was taken into Abimelech’s household. From a human perspective, the situation appeared dangerous and uncertain. **But God.**

Those two words can change everything. God stepped into a situation that Abraham could not control. He spoke to Abimelech, revealed the truth, and protected Sarah. God’s intervention preserved His promise and demonstrated that His purposes would not be defeated by human weakness or circumstances.

There may be times in our own lives when we look back and realize, “I should have been overwhelmed. I should have been trapped. I didn’t know how I would get through it—but God protected me.” Sometimes His protection is obvious. Other times, we only recognize it afterward. God’s protection does not mean we will never face difficulty. It means that even in difficult circumstances, God is present, God is working, and God remains faithful to His purposes.

Abraham’s fear did not cancel God’s faithfulness. That is encouraging for us. Our mistakes, fears, and weaknesses do not make God powerless. We should still take responsibility for our choices, but we can also trust that God’s grace is greater than our failures. Perhaps today you need to remember a moment when God protected you. Think about where you could have been but weren’t. Think about what could have happened but didn’t. Think about the danger you never saw because God intervened before you knew you needed Him. You may not understand every circumstance in your life right now. But you can look back at God’s faithfulness and say: “But God protected me.” And the same God who was faithful yesterday is worthy of your trust today.

Prayer Focus:

Thank God for all the times He has protected you even when you didn’t understand what He was doing,

Reflection:

What situation in your life can you look back on today and honestly say, “But God protected me”?

Day 11-"But God Redeemed Me" By Pastor Cyndie Tolone

*15 **But God** will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, For He shall receive me*
-Psalm 49:15 (NKJV)

How many times in your life have you looked at your circumstances and wondered, *How did I get here? Will I ever get out of this?* The weight of our past mistakes, disappointments, losses, or struggles can make us feel as though our story has already been written. **But God!**

Psalm 49 reminds us that our financial status, our possessions, and human strength cannot ultimately save us. There are things in this life that money cannot fix and human effort cannot overcome. But the psalmist declares, "But God will redeem my soul."

That means your circumstances do not have the final word...

Your past does not have the final word...

Your failures do not have the final word...

Your pain does not have the final word...

But God does!

To be redeemed means to be bought back, rescued, delivered, and restored. When I could not rescue myself, God stepped in. When I was lost and hopeless He found me. When I was broken and had nothing to hold onto, He began putting me back together. When I felt like my story was over, God reminded me that He was still writing it!

But God redeemed me!

He redeemed the years I thought were wasted. He redeemed the tears I cried in secret. He redeemed the places where I had been wounded. He redeemed my mistakes and used them to teach me. He took what looked like the end and showed me that He could create a new beginning.

Redemption does not mean that everything that happened was good. It means that God is powerful enough to bring good, purpose, healing, and testimony out of what was meant to destroy us.

The enemy may remind you of who you used to be, but God reminds you of who you are becoming! Your past may have a history, but it does not have to have your destiny.

But God!

Those words are a testimony all by themselves.

I was hurting...but God!

I was lost...but God!
I was broken...but God!
I didn't know how I would make it...but God!
I thought I was finished...but God redeemed me!

And the beautiful part of *Psalms 49:15* is that redemption is not only about what God brings us *out of*. It is also about belonging to Him: *"for he shall receive me."*

God doesn't just rescue us and leave us standing alone. He receives us. He draws us close. He reminds us that we are His!

So today, don't let your past convince you that God cannot use your future. He will! Don't let what you have lost make you overlook the One who is still holding you. Your story is not defined by what happened to you. Your story is defined by what God can do with it. Nothing is wasted!

And when you look back over your life, you may not understand every chapter. But you can lift your hands and say:

"I should have been defeated...but God!"
"I should have given up...but God!"
"I was broken...but God!"
"I was bound...but God!"
"I was lost...but God redeemed me!"

Prayer Focus:

Take some time and thank God for being your Redeemer!

Reflection:

Am I living with the pain of the past, instead of letting God write my future?

Day 12- “But God Has The Final Say” By Atira Whaley

7 But God is the Judge: He puts down one, And exalts another.

-Psalm 75:7 (NKJV)

“Only God can judge me” says someone who did or is about to do the craziest, most sinful thing you’ve ever heard of. I always roll my eyes when I hear this because, is it true? Absolutely! But do sinful people really know what they mean when they say this? Absolutely not!

The author of Hebrews tells us that *“It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31)*. Hell, God’s judgement for unbelievers is final and forever. That’s a scary thing.

However, God’s final and forever judgment can be an encouragement for believers because that means the blessings bestowed on us are final as well! We are children of God (*Galatians 3:26*), we are free (*John 8:36*), we are forgiven (*Ephesians 1:7*), we are saved (*Romans 10:13*) and we are loved (*1 John 4:10*)!

When people tell us, or we tell ourselves that these things aren’t true, when shame and guilt creep in, when life’s circumstances rock our world, let us be so deeply rooted in His truth that the lies of the enemy, the world, and our fleshly thoughts aren’t strong enough to shake our identity in Christ. He has the final say about our identity, our lives, and our future. He is the author and finisher of our faith. Not ourselves or anyone else, but God has the final say!

Prayer Focus:

Thank God and rejoice that he has the final say about who you are! As you pray, think deeply about the things God has saved you from, freed you from, and forgiven you of. Praise him for these things!

Reflection:

Is there any sin or doubt hindering you from fully embracing your identity in Christ?

Day 13- “But God Made It Grow” By Pastor Jacob Tolone

*6 I planted, Apollos watered, **but God** gave the growth.-1 Cor 3:6 (ESV)*

In life, people have a tendency to give praise to a pastor or evangelist instead of God. Some say, “That pastor changed my life.” The apostle Paul reminds us, however, that it is ultimately God who grows the seed of salvation or faith.

What's amazing to me is that God invites us to play a part in this beautiful gift of spreading the gospel (even when He technically doesn't need our help!) That could look like sharing your testimony with a loved one, encouraging a close friend, or offering to pray for a stranger.

Have you ever allowed your little niece or nephew to help you with a task? My niece Amaris is three years old and is at the stage where she wants to do everything herself. She doesn't want help from her parents or Uncle Jake and Titi Jojo. One day, my wife and I were getting ready to walk our dog Josie, and Amaris ran up behind me and said, “I'll walk Josie! Let me go with you.” We gave in to her cuteness and let her walk with us.

As we were walking, Amaris really wanted to grab the leash out of my hand and walk Josie herself. Obviously, it would be dangerous to let her walk alone in the street and to walk a dog who could pull her around. So instead, I let her hold the middle of the leash, while I held onto the handle. Amaris had a blast walking Josie and spending time with her. By the end, she was so happy and told her parents that she walked Josie “all by herself.” She had no idea that I was holding onto the leash handle the whole time.

In a much greater way, God invites you and me to “hold onto the leash.” Not because He needs our help, but because He delights in allowing His children to participate in His work.

Jesus said to His disciples, and to us today, “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*” (Matthew 28:18-20).

The Lord calls us to play a part in spreading the gospel, discipling others, and praying for them. You and I have been chosen by the Creator to carry out His will!

Even though He could have sent angels or made the rocks cry out, He chose to bring His kids into His plan. What an honor it is to be a child of God! We get to be part of sharing His love and truth, which transforms lives. But while we participate in spreading the gospel, ultimately, God is the one in control. Some will plant the seed, some will water it. But only God gives the growth!

Prayer Focus:

Pray for a greater boldness and urgency to share the gospel with those around you, trusting God to bring the growth.

Reflection:

Who is God placing on your heart to share the gospel with, and what is holding you back from taking that step?

Day 14- “But God Is Faithful” By Pastor Mike

*12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; **but God** is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

-1 Co 10:12-13 (NKJV)

My family and I love the beach. For years we would drive out to Long Island and play in the waves! On one of those memorable days, the waves were really big. We were all having fun, jumping into the waves before they crashed onto the sand. I remember my Son Michael and I were waiting for the next wave, our eyes looking out into the ocean, when all of a sudden I see Michael's feet flying up in the air! He was knocked off balance by the undertow.

*“An **undertow** is a subsurface return current that pulls water back down the beach along the seafloor after a wave breaks on the shore. As waves push water up onto the beach, gravity pulls that same water back out. This returning water flows underneath the incoming waves, creating a temporary tug or pull around a swimmer's feet and legs”*

https://www.surfertoday.com/surfing/the-differences-between-rip-currents-undertows-and-rip-tides#google_vignette

As soon as Michael was trying to get to his feet from the undertow, he got hit with a crashing wave that sent him back down under the water. We laugh about it now, but at the time it was scary.

This reminds me of how temptation works.

While we were watching the waves, we could see them coming...

Sometimes we can see temptation coming right at us...it's obvious, and we say to ourselves “Don't do that”... “Don't click that”... “Don't go there”.

But temptation isn't always obvious like a wave, sometimes it's sneaky like the undertow. It just hits you all of a sudden...when you're not expecting it. It's not a huge crash like a wave...it's a sudden and forceful pull...It's that sudden thought that pops into your head, it's that one picture that pops up in your feed, it's one secret that you don't tell your spouse...The next thing you know you've fallen and are getting “pounded by the waves” so to speak. As followers of Jesus, we must stay alert.

This is why Paul says “Therefore *let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*”

This scripture reminds us that we are all vulnerable to temptation. The devil wants you to think that nobody else struggles with what you struggle with. That's a lie! Look at what Paul says...

*13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; In other words...many men and women of God are tempted by the same things that you and I are tempted, and here's those two words again...**but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.***

This means that although others are tempted in the same way that we are, they have overcome those temptations not in their own strength, but in God's strength! God is faithful...He offers us a way of escape, the question is will you take it?

Sometimes the way of escape is walking away, praying, turning off the tv, computer, or phone, calling a trusted brother or sister in the Lord, reading God's Word...etc. Remember, it's not sinful to be tempted, it's sinful to give in to the temptation

God is faithful...Notice that He is supervising the temptation...The devil can't do anything without His knowing about it...and He's not going to leave you by yourself...He knows that we need His strength...He will help you overcome temptation if you let Him! You stand firm in the faith and keep moving forward! And the next time temptation comes knocking at your heart's door, let Jesus open it!

Prayer Focus:

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to give you the power and wisdom to not fall into temptation.

Reflection:

What things can I do to help me avoid being pulled under by temptation?

*If you find yourself caught in habitual sin, we're here for you. Reach out to one of our Pastors.

Week Three

Day 15- “But God Encouraged Me” By Alyse Colon

*5 When we arrived in Macedonia, there was no rest for us. We faced conflict from every direction, with battles on the outside and fear on the inside. 6 **But God**, who encourages those who are discouraged, encouraged us by the arrival of Titus.-2 Co 7:5–6 (NLT)*

Have you ever been in a season where you felt like you were being pulled in every direction? Things were happening around you, but at the same time, you were fighting battles within you. I know I've experienced that, whether it was during college, at work or just during life in general. You may have smiled, kept going, and told everyone you were okay—but deep down, you were tired.

Paul was in that kind of place. He said there were conflicts on the outside and fears on the inside. Yet right in the middle of all of it, something changed: **But God**

God knew exactly what Paul needed, and He encouraged him through the coming of Titus. Sometimes God encourages us through His Word. Sometimes through prayer. Sometimes He sends a person who says the right thing at exactly the right moment. And sometimes, He simply reminds us, “I’m still here. Keep going.”

Maybe you've been asking God for an answer, a breakthrough, or simply the strength to make it through another day. Don't overlook the small ways He may already be encouraging you.

Your situation may say, “Give up.”
Your fear may say, “You can't do this.”
Your circumstances may say, “You're alone.”

But God encourages me.

He knows when we're discouraged. He knows when we're tired. And He knows exactly what we need to keep moving forward.

Prayer Focus:

Ask God to open your eyes to the encouragement He is already placing around you, and ask Him to use you to encourage someone else who may be struggling.

Reflection:

Where do you need God's encouragement today, and who might God be calling you to encourage?

Day 16- “But God Has A Plan For Me” By Tiquel Whaley

*10 So she turned to Abraham and demanded, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won’t have it!” 11 This upset Abraham very much because Ishmael was his son. 12 **But God** told Abraham, “Do not be upset over the boy and your servant. Do whatever Sarah tells you, for Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted. 13 But I will also make a nation of the descendants of Hagar’s son because he is your son, too.”-Ge 21:9–13 (NLT)*

As a former high school student, and current high school teacher, I’m very familiar with adolescent social dynamics. There’s the popular crowd, the nerds focused on getting good grades, the athletes, and the geeks who are off reading comic books. But then there are the outcasts; those who nobody seems to know or even care about. One might walk past them in the halls, and never glance their way. They aren’t invited to any parties or hang outs.

They have friends to study with, so their grades slip. And then when they graduate, they’ve barely made connections for anyone to keep up with how they’re doing in life. Have you ever felt like an outcast in society; like nobody cares about you or even wants to talk to you. I bet Ishmael felt this way. He was about to be banished by his own family, just because he wasn’t the “chosen one.”

He was hated by Sarah, and definitely didn’t have a great relationship with Isaac. God even instructed Abraham to listen to Sarah, and to follow through with sending him out from them. But even though Ishmael was on his way into the wilderness, God had a plan for his life. The Lord saw Ishmael, and still planned something beautiful for his life, and promised that he “will also make a nation of the descendants of Hagar’s son because he is your son, too.”

If you ever find yourself feeling like Ishmael did; like nobody wants to know you or cares about you; if you feel like you have no purpose, and there’s no way you could have a meaningful impact; or if you feel like you have no one to turn to or confide in, let me tell you that God has a beautiful plan for you.

As children of God, our Father loves us dearly, and has given us His word, which wonderfully maps out the things He has in store for us. In *Psalms 32:8*, God says “*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.*”

Seek the Lord through prayer and fasting and reading His word, so that he can instruct you, and reveal his good and perfect will to you. It may not make sense right now, but I can assure you that God has a plan for you!

Prayer Focus:

Thank that He is a good Father towards us, and that He cares deeply about His children. Ask Him to begin to reveal His plan for your life, and ask Him for the grace and strength to carry it out.

Reflection:

Are there any areas of your life in which you are losing hope in God and His plans?

Day 17- “But God Hears Me” By Asia Rodriguez

17 But God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, “Hagar, what’s wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.”
-Ge 21:17 (NLT)

I became a senior in high school this September, and I was not prepared at all for all the stress that would come with the college application process. When I start to think about my future, I get super overwhelmed by all the thoughts of what college to attend, what I plan on studying, what career I want to pursue, and what my life is going to look like in the next few years. I've had moments where I prayed “God, please show me what I'm supposed to do. Please help me make the right decisions because I don't want to mess up my future.” But I still had so many questions, and sometimes I felt like I was waiting for an answer. I realized that just because I didn't have an answer yet didn't mean God wasn't listening. God knew what I was worried about. God knew what I wanted for my future. And God heard me.

Genesis 21:17 says “God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.”

The boy didn't have a perfect prayer, he was simply crying, but God still heard him. You might not know how to pray about what you're going through. Sometimes we feel like we have to know exactly what to say to pray, but God never asked for that. He wants us to come to Him exactly how we are, and he knows what we're feeling in our hearts. Even if all we do is ask God for help, He still hears us. He just wants us to come to Him. He wants us to talk to Him about the things that make us happy, the things that scare us, and the things that we don't understand.

We tend to pray about things and start to lose faith when we don't get the answer right away. We start thinking “Maybe God is getting backed up with all my calls, that's why I'm still going through this.” This verse reminds us that God hearing us doesn't always mean we'll see an answer right then and there. Sometimes we're waiting for God to change our situation, but while we're waiting, God is changing us. He can give us peace when we're anxious, and hope when we feel like giving up. We may not understand what He's doing yet, but we can trust that He hasn't forgotten about us.

The verse also says “Do not be afraid.” God knew Hagar was scared. He knew she didn't know what was going to happen. But He reminded her that she didn't have to be afraid because He was there. We need that reminder too.

When we're stressed about school, our jobs, our future, relationships, family, or anything else, we can remember that God already knows what we're worried about. We don't have to carry everything by ourselves. So even when we don't have the answers, we can pray. And even when we feel like nobody sees what I'm going through, we can remember one thing:

God knows me. And God hears me.

When I asked God to help me that day in class, He didn't right away tell me where I was going to go, and what I was going to study. But, in that moment of stress, God still heard me, and He brought peace and light to my worries. I was reminded that God has me in the palm of his hands, and He is never going to let me fall. I realized that I don't need to have my whole future figured out right now because God already knows the plans He has for me. I may not know where I'm going, but I know who is walking with me. I can trust that God is listening to every prayer and every little thought that I bring to Him.

You might be wondering, "How can I trust that God hears me when I'm still waiting for an answer?" If you're in a rough time, remind yourself that God hasn't forgotten about you. Talk to Him about what's on your heart, even if you don't know exactly what to say at times. Ask yourself "Am I still trusting God even when I don't understand what He's doing?" Sometimes God's answer doesn't come right away, but that doesn't mean He isn't listening or paying attention. He knows your heart, and He hears every tiny prayer. So even when you're waiting, keep talking to Him, keep trusting Him, and remember that God hears you, and He loves you.

Prayer Focus:

Thank God for always hearing us

Reflection:

Am I trusting God while waiting for an answer to my prayers?

Day 18- “But God Will Take Care Of Me” By Felicia Hogan-Reed

*4 So Jacob called Rachel and Leah out to the field where he was watching his flock. 5 He said to them, “I have noticed that your father’s attitude toward me has changed. But the God of my father has been with me. 6 You know how hard I have worked for your father, 7 but he has cheated me, changing my wages ten times. **But God** has not allowed him to do me any harm.-Ge 31:4–7 (NLT)*

At the age of 19, I dropped out of college in Massachusetts. As I returned home back to the Bronx, my mother informed me that I would have to either work or go to school. I thought to myself, “Yes! I’ll work; it’s easier.”

My first real job as a young adult was working in a copy center for a company named Pitney Bowes. I worked the swing shift from 3 pm to 12 am.

At that company, we didn’t get paid for lunch, so we had to work an extra hour each day to make eight hours a day, 40 hours a week. I was paid less than 4 dollars an hour.

I worked in a law firm, delivering photocopies to secretaries' or attorneys' desks. Although the work was easy, it wasn’t easy leaving home midday to travel into the city to get to work by 3 pm. During that time, all I did was sleep and work. My work hours didn’t leave room for much of anything else. Hanging out with family and friends came to a halt.

Moreover, it was challenging leaving work at 12 am to get home whatever time I got home. Sometimes, there would be an hour or more delay on the number 4 train. In addition to that, I didn’t live close to the train station. Once I got off the train at 167th Street and River Avenue, I still had to walk 9 to 10 blocks to get home to my building. (It was faster walking home than waiting for the bus to come.)

Some streets were pitch dark, and the streets were mostly bare. Yet, I stayed the course. I never missed a day (or night), and I worked hard. I felt like I didn’t have a choice. But to my surprise, three months later, my manager told me that I was getting a promotion. I was promoted to the day shift, and I received a few cents more in my pay. Yaaayyyy!!!! I have often thought about how dangerous it was for a young woman like myself to have been walking around the streets, 1 to 2 am in the morning in the South Bronx. Curiously, I never felt afraid, and there was never an incident where anyone tried to accost me. God took care of me.

In Genesis 31, we learn that Jacob worked many years extremely hard for Laban, enduring heat, cold, and sleepless nights. Yet, Laban cheated Jacob, changing Jacob’s “wages ten times”. As Jacob quietly tried to escape his predicament, Jacob believed

that Laban would have taken his daughters away from Jacob “by force”, and would have sent Jacob away empty-handed.

But God took care of Jacob. God warned Laban to “leave Jacob alone”, and Laban eventually made a covenant with Jacob in which they both agreed to not harm each other.

Maybe, you have been mistreated. Maybe, you have recently suffered a loss. Or maybe, you find yourself in a challenging situation or season, and you may not know what to do. Surrender it to the Lord.

Remember that God sees you and your situation, and that He is always near. Know that He loves you, and that He is faithful. Trust that God will take care of you.

Prayer Focus:

Begin to thank God for the unfathomable love He has for you, and for His faithfulness.

Reflection:

What worries or fears are you currently carrying that you need surrender to God to take care of?

Day 19- “But God Can Do Anything” By Abby McLeish-Graham

15 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream last night, and no one here can tell me what it means. But I have heard that when you hear about a dream you can interpret it.”

*16 “It is beyond my power to do this,” Joseph replied. “**But God** can tell you what it means and set you at ease.”-Ge 41:14–16 (NLT)*

It's not uncommon to seek everything but God; we've all done it, whether knowingly or unknowingly. In my lowest moments, I've so quickly and easily tried to be self-reliant, thinking, “God helps those who help themselves”. Often, we instinctively turn to troubleshooting, brainstorming, and McGyvering life, becoming prisoners to our limitations, resulting in frustration and even more straw-grabbing solutions. Too often, we get caught in the loop of swapping the cure for a Band-Aid, a cure that has always been right under our noses, with no restrictions on accessibility whatsoever.

We serve the all-knowing Father, and with Him, any and everything is possible. With Christ, the things our humanity barred us from are now unrestricted. Jesus has always specialized in doing exactly what man said they could do but never could, and what man said He couldn't do but could've always done. Like Joseph, we must humble ourselves, relinquish control to Christ and allow Him to go beyond our limitations; allow Him to do the impossible in our lives. So let us be keen to the ways Christ offers Himself to us and our situations, as they may never even present in the way we expect or even the way we want when we want, but will most definitely always be in the way we need!

Throughout history and in our lives, the truth is revealed again and again that no one, no thing but God can do anything. So as you go through your day-to-day, remind yourself, “I am a limited being, **“BUT GOD”** is a complete declaration.

It is only through yielding completely to Christ's omnipotent hand that we are able to experience anything good and perfect; we obtain pure peace when we rest in the reliability of His reputation.

Prayer Focus

Release your biggest and smallest concerns to God and watch Him work on your behalf in His perfect time.

Reflection

Where have I allowed my limitations to become the solution in a space where the only option should be nothing but God?

Day 20- “But God Had Mercy” By Nordia Chambers

*25 Meanwhile, I thought I should send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a true brother, co-worker, and fellow soldier. And he was your messenger to help me in my need. 26 I am sending him because he has been longing to see you, and he was very distressed that you heard he was ill. 27 And he certainly was ill; in fact, he almost died. **But God** had mercy on him—and also on me, so that I would not have one sorrow after another -Php 2:25–27 (NLT)*

Have you ever looked back at something and realized, “It could have gone differently—but God had mercy”?

Being a caregiver is one of the hardest jobs you have to do. There were so many things I had to do for my dad, but one of those major responsibilities was managing his medications. I mean, I had everything down pat. I created a schedule with each time he was supposed to take them and a specific calendar for me and my family to follow.

I posted it on our fridge for my household to see. It became so ingrained in my brain that, after a while, I didn’t have to look at the schedule I made. I just knew when he was due to take his medications. One particular night, I gave my dad his usual medication but forgot that I had discussed with my brother earlier that day that he would give it to him instead. So, after I had given him a dose, my brother gave him another dose. “Lord, have mercy!” I immediately panicked. It felt like my life had left my body. In that moment, I was carrying fear, guilt, and the responsibility of realizing what had just happened. But thank you, Jesus, my dad was okay, and it didn’t end the way I thought it would.

Sometimes God’s mercy isn’t just extended to the person going through a situation, but it reaches the people carrying the burden with them. God can meet you in the middle of what you are carrying with mercy. My dad wasn’t the only one affected by that moment; I was carrying it too. In Philippians 2:25–27, we read that Epaphroditus was really sick; he almost died, and Paul was already carrying his own burdens. But then Paul says, “But God had mercy on him—and also on me.”

Just like Paul, I realized God’s mercy wasn’t only for my dad, but for me. God’s mercy touched me so I wouldn’t have “one sorrow after another.”

Prayer Focus:

Praise and thank God for the times He has shown you mercy.

Reflection:

Look back and reflect on a time when you realized, “it could have gone differently—but God had mercy.

Day 21- “But God Is My Refuge” By Danielle Rey

*“David stayed in the strongholds in the wilderness and in the hills of the wilderness of Ziph. Day after day Saul hunted him, **but God** didn’t let Saul find him.”-1 Sam 23:14 (NLT)*

These last few years, I’ve been in the toughest season of my life. I felt like I was living in a wilderness. My marriage was failing, finances were a mess and nothing seemed to be going the way I had planned. I prayed, but the answers did not come as quickly as I wanted. I wondered where God was and why he would allow me to walk through such a difficult season. There were days when I felt tired, discouraged and utterly alone.

1 Samuel 23:14 changes the way I look at my own situation. David was being hunted by King Saul, forced to live in the wilderness and constantly move from place to place. Yet in the middle of it all, God was protecting him.

I realize that sometimes God’s protection doesn’t mean He immediately removes us from the wilderness. Sometimes he protects us while we are still in it.

David did not know how or when God would deliver him, but he continued to trust Him. The same God who protected David sees me and what I am going through. And he sees you too. He knows where you are, what you need, and how to guide you through it. Your wilderness may be difficult, but you are not forgotten. God is with you, and He is able to keep you even in places of uncertainty.

Prayer Focus:

Pray for greater trust in God’s protection and guidance. Ask Him to give you peace while you wait, wisdom for each step, and confidence that He is working even when you cannot see what He is doing.

Reflection:

Are you allowing your circumstances to determine your peace, or are you trusting God as your refuge?

