

# *Prayer Devotions*



## **January 2021**

**Luke 18:1**

**Pray Always and Never Give Up**

## ***Prayer for Persecuted Church***

### **Pray for those in the midst of persecution**

*Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. Hebrews 13:3*

Global watchdog Open Doors reports that 322 Christians are killed every month for their faith while millions more suffer persecution on a routine basis.

Please pray that these believers will not only stay committed to the call of Christ but also will respond in love to the evil shown by their aggressors. God's love will open doors for these believers to share the Gospel even more.

This Month's Countries, these are some of the most dangerous countries to follow Jesus:

**China**

**Mauritania**

**Central African Republic**

## Daily prayers for January

Resolution One: I will live for God. Resolution Two: If no one else does, I still will. ~ Jonathan Edwards

### Friday, January 1<sup>st</sup>:

Maybe a good prayer for 2021 for the body of Pure Heart could be easily remembered if we memorize the number 1515. That would stand for 1 Peter 5:1-5. Peter is exhorting (counseling and warning) the elders (pastors and spiritual leaders) to shepherd (nurture, guard and guide) the flock (all of us) who are their responsibility. They are to do this not under compulsion, but willingly; not motivated by the paycheck or to seek a name for themselves, but eagerly and cheerfully; and not in an arrogant or dictatorial fashion, but modeling for us what it looks like to walk out our faith. That way, when Jesus returns (who is our Chief Shepherd) they will receive unfading crowns of glory. Hallelujah! Likewise, those who are younger or of lesser rank are to be subject to them, giving them due respect and taking to heart their counsel and leading. Then we all are to clothe ourselves with humility. The word for clothe actually refers to a white scarf or apron that was fastened to the girdle of the vest of slaves to distinguish between slaves and freemen. We are all subject to someone, and what we are being told is that our attitude towards one another should be one of mutual respect and humility that is obvious and is devoid of any arrogance or pride because God Himself opposes any form of pride (boastfulness, self-importance, condescension) and will frustrate and defeat those who are prideful, but He gives grace (favor and blessing) to the humble. Pray that for all of us. Declare it over every church that claims the name of Jesus and especially over the body of Pure Heart. May we all take to heart the admonition we are given and then thank Him for His example and for His enabling power to walk it out. **Micah 6:8; John 15:10-17; Philippians 2:1-8; Colossians 3:12-17**

## **Saturday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>:**

When disappointment feels like a heavy weight. When sadness and grief overwhelm you. When the air around you gets really thin and you struggle to catch your breath...that's when His grace meets you. The heart is raw and vulnerable and exposed and He invites you to bare it all to Him, holding nothing back, and He holds you right there in the mess of you. This sort of honest relationship breeds deep intimacy. His healing hands when life deals a blow. His abiding peace when nothing, absolutely nothing, makes sense. Grace is that lifeline, the Presence that exists in this present moment. The supply is endless. Free gift this gift of grace. No striving, no earning, no deserving. Just abiding. It's there. It's there for me. It's there for you. Lean into it. Let it catch you, break your fall. Feel the breath of grace blowing softly in heavenly whispers, lifting you from your own weariness. His grace is sufficient. Always sufficient. Grace: A promise to carry you.

**Ephesians 1:3-7, 4:4-7; 2 Corinthians 12:9**

## **Sunday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>:**

It's that time again when many of us are making New Year's resolutions, and this past year we've had plenty of opportunity to reflect on what doesn't work and possibly determine some things that need to change. I don't in any way mean to downplay the importance of setting goals. As my husband likes to say, if you aim at nothing you'll hit it every time. The only problem with some of the resolutions we make is that they typically are focused on ourselves as to our appearance (I need to go on a diet), our health (I need to exercise more), maybe our finances (I need to be more conscientious about saving), or even relationships (I need to spend more time with those I care about). These are all good things to consider, but keep in mind that the underlying objective for our resolutions should be how they will help us to better serve the purposes of God and His kingdom. Our lives are simply part of a greater story being written, and the only thing about our story that has any true value is how it fits into His story. And His story is epic! Who knows but that you might be rehearsing and preparing for a role like Gideon, Nehemiah, Paul, Esther...whether it is a leading role or a very important supporting one, be ready and committed to give it your all. Those who take part in a major production are diligent to study their part down to the finest detail in order to perform their role with excellence and credibility. You've heard it said that an actor or actress was "born for" a specific part. Well so were you. He created the perfect role for you when you were still in your mother's womb; you only need to ask him what it is and then decide what needs to be done to prepare for it and fill it.

**Psalm 139:13-16; Proverbs 19:21; 1 Peter 4:11**

## **Monday, January 4<sup>th</sup>:**

Who do you say I am? We, like Peter, are asked this question throughout our lives. As followers of Christ, our lives are tensed between two cultures. The first culture involves my faith, the second one my environment. My situation is not different from what both Peter and Jesus experienced. As a young person, the environment supported my faith. We could say “Merry Christmas” and the laws of the land were at least outwardly respected. In that time my surroundings were relatively peaceful compared to the discord of the past few years. Recent decisions by the state disrespecting constitutional guarantees create an age old challenge every believer must answer. The questions are:

1. Where does authority lie?
2. What do we consent to when the state limits worship of God?

The founders of this nation clearly followed the message given in Acts 4. Amidst the challenges, many have forgotten or never knew the examples of our forefathers. Nevertheless, Jesus asks, who do you say I AM? Lord, help us to truly say You are the Son of God.

**Tuesday, January 5<sup>th</sup>:** “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” My brother-in-law expounded on this with - if you teach a man to fish he’ll want a new rod and reel, a tackle box, lures, etc. However, there is valid wisdom in the basic premise that just meeting a person’s physical needs will not be self-sustaining. In fact there are situations in which habitually meeting only someone’s physical needs can become detrimental to them because it can foster either a sense of diminished value and ability or it can create a dependency that inhibits their desire to become self sufficient and fulfill their own God given purpose. That’s why the strategy of our Resource Center is to not only meet the physical needs that families have for food and to assist in connecting them with additional resources for shelter or other services, but caring people are there to listen to their stories and to pray with them. Because give a family a food box and they’ll eat for a time, but give them the Bread of Life and access to the One who supplies us all with our daily bread and they will experience life everlasting with a hope for their future both now and eternally. Remember to pray for Life Bridge (the Resource Center). Remember to bring in donations to keep the shelves stocked. Remember to volunteer if you are able and maybe to be one of the friendly faces who welcome and assist those who come in need. What better way to be the hands and feet of Jesus. Jesus had the right idea when He taught His disciples how to fish! **Proverbs 19:17; James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:16-18**

**Wednesday, January 6<sup>th</sup>:**

**Renewed:** When a New Year approaches, we look forward with great expectation to the future. It's kind of like wiping the slate clean and starting over again. The New Year brings us new hope. Especially when we put our faith in Christ, we can look to the future with renewed enthusiasm. We can leave behind the fear, the failure and any disappointments of the previous year. Paul said it so well, “...Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead.” (Philippians 3:13) The New Year fills us with such renewed strength and invigorates our soul in anticipation of good things on the horizon. God's goodness and mercy is following us. If we listen to the voices of the world, we can easily be thrown off the path and be distracted from hearing the spirit. Matthew 11:15 “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Celebrate the new day. Rejoice as we leave the old behind. Ephesians 4:23 “Be renewed in the spirit of your minds.”

## Thursday, January 7<sup>th</sup>:

We always affirm that Christianity is not a religion – it’s a relationship, and that is the amazing and life transforming truth that we have to offer those who are searching. Yet how many of us are more prone to handing them a Bible as soon as they are saved and telling them to read it for answers to their questions about Him rather than confidently encouraging them to ask Him to speak to them directly through prayer? Perhaps the reason is that we aren’t so sure ourselves that God still speaks directly to us. Maybe you’re one of the many Christians who believe that God only speaks to us through the Bible, and although that is a very powerful way in which He speaks to us, He also wants us to know His voice in all situations and with every fear and doubt. As Dallas Willard states in his book *Hearing God*, “If God doesn't speak today, then the greatest disservice we could ever do to people is to tell them that they can have a personal relationship with God.” Jesus tells His disciples in John 10:27, “My sheep *hear my voice*...” He doesn’t tell them to read the manual. Instead He models for them the practice of regularly spending time in conversation with the Father. Conversation – interactive communication between two or more participants. God has not developed laryngitis or decided to withdraw and distance Himself to see how well we interpret His word. Rather He desires to have fellowship with us just like He did with Adam and Eve when He walked and talked with them in the garden before sin separated them. Sin is the only thing that can separate us from hearing the Father, and Jesus has already covered that! In fact God even implores us to call on Him; He has wonderful things to say to us if we’ll only be still and listen. He may give us a dream, a mental picture or impression, He may remind us of a particular verse or prompt us to one that may be new to us, or He could even speak to us audibly! Our part is to simply ask and then to be still in expectancy. The more you listen, the better you’ll recognize His voice! Then you can confidently post your status as “in a relationship.”

**Genesis 3:8-10; Isaiah 6:8, 30:21; Jeremiah 33:3; John 16:13**

## Friday, January 8<sup>th</sup>:

When we read about Paul being shipwrecked on the island of Malta, we need to fully appreciate his situation. He was being sent to Rome to stand trial because of false accusations from the Jews who were threatened by him. The shipwreck would never have occurred had the pilot of the boat and the centurion in charge of Paul listened to his warnings about the danger of sailing when they did. And then when he tried to help build a fire, a viper came out of a bundle of sticks he was gathering and *attached* itself to his hand. It didn't just bite him. The islanders, who up to this point had been most gracious, now looked at Paul as a murderer because it was obvious that "the gods" were punishing him. And then when Paul's response was to simply "shake it off, shake it off" (credits to Taylor Swift theology) their opinion of him changed. They waited and watched *for a long time*, and when he didn't drop dead they now decided he must be a god! In fact, this amazing occurrence gave Paul an audience with the leading man of the island, and the end result was the entire island being impacted for the sake of Christ. Do you see all that Paul had to endure? Falsely accused by his own people, not listened to and subsequently shipwrecked on a remote island, bitten by a deadly viper for trying to help, his reputation going from being reviled as a sinner to being worshipped as a god. And through it all he remained steadfast in his mission. We can't control our circumstances, and we certainly can't control the fickle opinions of others. When we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, we can go back to Taylor Swift's lyrics, "Players gonna play, play, play...; haters gonna hate, hate, hate..., I'm just gonna shake it off!" There will always be those who criticize, disapprove, or flatter to the point of tempting your ego. This can be frustrating, disappointing, hurtful, and even dangerous because it holds the potential to divert us from God's mission for our lives. But in the end there is only one opinion we need to be concerned with - that of the one who is in charge, and He's the one who initiated the journey in the first place. Lord, help us keep our focus and not get derailed by the appearance of circumstances or the opinions of others.

**Philippians 3:7-14; Colossians 2:6-19; Hebrews 12:1-3**

## **Saturday, January 9<sup>th</sup>:**

It is always so comforting to be reminded of God's mercy, love, grace, compassion and forgiveness; but we must remember that He is also a God of justice. It's a two-sided coin, and if you toss that coin, justice would be heads. Because He is inherently holy He cannot look on sin. It's why He turned His face from Jesus on the cross. The need for justice must first be satisfied in order for us to experience the mercy, love, grace, compassion and forgiveness. And it's because of the intensity of His love for you and me that He sent Jesus. As Dan so poignantly reminded us last month, the depth of the suffering and rejection that Jesus endured not only on the cross but in so many other instances in His short life on this earth was in order to redeem us so that we could come into the presence of the Father. Let that sink in! There are no exceptions. Every person who has ever walked or will ever walk this earth deserves to be judged according to the holy standards of God, and spoiler alert – not one of us will ever make the cut without the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus. I don't know if it's even possible for us to grasp the enormity of that, but I know He is pleased when we make it our life's pursuit to live in gratitude for His unfathomable love and to demonstrate it through drawing closer to Him and in obedience and a desire for the rest of His creation to also know Him.

**Leviticus 17:11; John 3:16; Hebrews 9:11-15, 22**

## Sunday, January 10<sup>th</sup>:

It would be pretty accurate to say that our faith has probably been stretched this past year. Jentzen Franklin likens faith to a rubber band – it doesn't serve any purpose unless it's being stretched. That's when you know whether or not it can be depended upon. A rubber band is just a piece of elastic material when it's lying in a desk drawer. In order to hold things together it needs to be stretched, and even a little wimpy mustard-seed-sized rubber band can hold some things together that might surprise us, but we'll never know if we don't test it. For testing our faith, it's the difference between being comfortable or courageous. New opportunities don't come without some risk, and in order to seize them and possibly experience one of God's miraculous displays of provision there needs to be some tension. The greater the tension, the greater the testimony. That kind of trust requires faith, and that's when faith becomes a weapon to the enemy. I used to confiscate rubber bands from my students, and when they questioned why I would tell them because it was a weapon. When they disputed that fact, I would loop the rubber band around my index and middle fingers, pull it back as far as I could, and place my two fingers against their arm. Then I would ask them, "Does it feel like a weapon now?" The farther it is stretched, the greater is its potential to produce amazing results. We also know that if we leave a rubber band in the drawer for a long time it will get dried out and brittle and will be of no use. The beautiful thing about faith is the more you use it the stronger it becomes. Just like muscles that we stretch before running to prevent cramping up, when we continually stretch and use them they grow in their reliability to accomplish what is required of them. Ask God to give you rubber band faith that you're willing to test and trust on a regular basis, knowing that He will never require more than He knows we can handle through His provision.

**Matthew 17:18-20; Hebrews 11:1-6; 1 John 5:4**

## Monday, January 11<sup>th</sup>:

If there's anything we learned in 2020 it was how to deal with change – online learning and preaching, being told to sanitize virtually every surface we touched, social distancing, stockpiling toilet paper...But as we just celebrated the birth of Christ we can also see that sometimes change is not only inevitable but necessary. When Jesus became flesh it changed everything; He came to establish a new kingdom and with that we were given the invitation to experience new birth in our spiritual lives, but that new birth is an invitation to change – out with the old, in with the new. When we accept His invitation to a redeemed life we also accept the responsibility to begin aligning our thinking and actions to His new and improved specifications. If your car was out of alignment, you wouldn't keep replacing the tires and hope for the best. You would align the car to factory specs and the rest would fall into place. The same idea is true with our lives. I don't put all my effort into not lying and cheating; I learn to value honesty and integrity because that's what my Creator and Savior values and I know that He knows what will cause everything to run more smoothly and effectively. That's what repentance is. It's not just acknowledging the problem. In Hebrew it's *shubah* signifying turning back, retiring, or withdrawal from something. In Greek it's *metanoia* which basically means to change one's mind or thinking. It's not enough to admit you're a sinner; you have to accept that you need a Savior. There should be noticeable evidence in your life that you have been and are being made new more and more all the time. Retire the old self and its skewed way of thinking, change directions, and allow the mind of Christ to become your default setting. Begin to focus on His word and make it your life's maintenance and repair manual.

**Isaiah 43:18-19; Ephesians 4:20-24; 2 Corinthians 5:17**

## **Tuesday, January 12<sup>th</sup>:**

In November Pastor Jennings delivered a powerful message in the “Out of Control” series. We were reminded that when we try to live in control of our lives there is a greater propensity that we will wind up living a life that is out of control. And the dichotomy is that in order for us to have a life that is under control, we need to be willing to relinquish it. The key is to what or to whom we surrender control. When we choose to trust Jesus, we exponentially increase the potential for a meaningful, productive and satisfying life; but it isn’t a one-time decision where everything moving forward is smooth sailing. Pastor Jennings pointed out that just as we would most likely do everything in our power to “fix” an unsatisfactory image looking back at us from our mirror before we leave the house, we should have the same mindset for the spiritual image of ourselves that is revealed through the written and spoken word of God. Most of us probably check the mirror at least once every day before we venture out. Checking only on Monday morning isn’t going to produce positive results for Tuesday and beyond. Likewise, sitting in church week after week and listening to enlightening messages and nodding our heads in agreement will do nothing for us spiritually if we walk out the door and do not choose to take any steps to conform to what we know we are supposed to be reflecting. As we were urged to do, don’t leave the “mirror” until you have addressed what needs to be fixed. And we have to be doing this on a regular basis. The results will be visible and valuable.

**2 Corinthians 3:14-18; James 1:22-24**

## Wednesday, January 13<sup>th</sup>:

People are sometimes prone to ask - why pray for God to change something when He never changes; isn't that just an exercise in futility? It is absolutely true that God never changes His character, but He does change His mind. When God was furious with the Israelites over the golden calf and the depth of their corruption He told Moses He would destroy them and make a great nation of Moses. But Moses interceded for the people and we are told in Ex. 32:14 that the Lord changed His mind. Other translations read that He relented, which can also be translated that He repented, which we understand simply means to change one's mind. Much to Jonah's consternation, He did the same concerning Nineveh. In Jonah 3:10 we read that God relented from the disaster that He said He would bring on them, but it displeased Jonah greatly. Nineveh was a wicked city and Jonah didn't think they deserved to be spared. But Jonah knew that God was gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and one who relents concerning calamity. That is God's character, which doesn't change. God changed His mind because a believer prayed. God wants to have mercy on us, and He will relent even if He can only get one person to agree with Him. In Ezekiel God searched for just one person to pray on behalf of Israel so that He would not have to pour out His wrath on the land. One man to stand in the gap! Never ever doubt the power of one person's prayers. When we appeal to the compassion, grace, and lovingkindness of our Father and are praying according to His will, we very well may be opening the floodgates of His blessing in a situation He is eager to bless. It's the nature of a loving Father.

**Psalm 103:8-13; Exodus 33:19; Matthew 7:11**

## **Thursday, January 14<sup>th</sup>:**

Hear My Voice: "Your ears will hear a word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or the left." Isaiah 30:21 AMP

My voice is not haughty, pushy or loud. My voice is soft and gentle. It's the still small voice you hear as you seek My presence. My sheep hear My voice and that of another they will not follow. Sometimes I speak to you in the majesty of the clouds or the vastness of the ocean, a beautiful sunset and even the rainbow. I am always speaking to you in My word; giving instruction, wisdom and knowledge. I have given you the Holy Spirit to be your comforter, counselor, helper and a voice of conscience. I lead you in paths of righteousness for My name's sake. I guide you with my eye. As you spend time in My presence you sense My nearness. You can hear My gentle voice saying I love you with an everlasting love. I will never leave you or forsake you. I am your rock. I am your strong tower. Run to Me and I will always welcome you with open arms.

**1 Kings 19:2; John 10:27, 14:26; Psalms 23:3, 32:8; Jeremiah 31:3; Hebrews 13:5; Proverbs 18:10**

## **Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup>:**

It seems that no matter how many times you read a particular story, if you're looking for it there's always something new to be gleaned. For me this was the proverbial "handwriting on the wall" story in the book of Daniel.

Belshazzar was the son of Nebuchadnezzar and thus was familiar with the whole story of his father's great empire being taken away from him in a bizarre and humiliating fashion for a time until he came to his senses and acknowledged the God of heaven and gave glory to Him. He also would have known how it had all been revealed to his father in a dream that was interpreted by one of the Israelites. We know that Nebuchadnezzar had made Daniel ruler over all the province of Babylon and chief administrator over all the wise men. (Daniel 2:48) Yet when Belshazzar brazenly used the vessels of gold that had been taken from the temple to serve wine at a drunken feast and the writing appeared on the wall, we read that the king called for "all the wise men" to read the inscription but none could. The queen then entered and reminded the king that in the days of his father there was a man in whom was found illumination, insight and wisdom "like the wisdom of gods." Obviously Daniel was no longer included in the cadre of what was considered the wise men of the kingdom. It only took one generation. We know how disastrous that was for Belshazzar. We have a solemn responsibility to not only teach the next generation the wisdom of God but also to remember the lessons from the past.

**Psalm 119:165, 145:3-4; 1 John 1:1-10**

## Saturday, January 16<sup>th</sup>:

November was the month designated for us to pray for the persecuted church, and when you read some of the accounts of what Christians in other countries suffer for their belief it is almost unfathomable to imagine how we would respond in similar situations. Our first response should be to fervently pray for them to be surrounded by the comfort, encouragement and strength of the Presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The second should be thanks to God for the privilege we enjoy to be living in a country where we are not persecuted for our faith – yet. Our time may be coming sooner than we would want to think. In fact Paul warns Timothy that indeed (certainly), all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus *will be persecuted*. So it's not really a matter of *if* but *when*. We need to be prepared to take a stand. We could learn something from a starfish. They are echinoderms, which means they have the ability to regenerate. This was discovered when starfish were threatening to destroy oyster beds. Captured starfish were broken into pieces and thrown back into the sea, but the outcome was an increased population of starfish! We need to be willing to be starfish Christians –kill me and two more will rise up in my place! It's a radical stance, but when you find yourself in a battle, you need to choose sides and be prepared to defend your position at any cost. For us to live is Christ and to die is gain. There's no room for lukewarm warriors. Choose you this day.

**2 Timothy 3:1-13; Romans 14:7-8; Matthew 10:28**

## **Sunday, January 17<sup>th</sup>:**

If you were standing in the check-out line at the grocery store, and when it came time for you to pay for your groceries the cashier told you, “Oh, it’s already taken care of; the person ahead of you paid for your groceries,” how many of you would refuse the offer and insist that you pay your own debts? After all, you didn’t even know the person and you certainly hadn’t done anything to warrant such generosity. We have a much larger debt than the cost of a few bags of groceries, and in truth there is no way we could ever come close to settling the account. We are told that the wages of sin is death, and no matter how hard we may try, none of us is capable of living a life without sin. The unbelievably good news is that someone else has already paid for it and all we have to do is accept the fact that we don’t deserve such generosity and there’s nothing we could ever do to earn it. All He asks of us is to acknowledge our desperate need and bring Him our broken lives so that He can exchange them for redeemed and eternal ones that are lived out in following Him. It’s a get-out-of-jail-free card. Now that’s an offer that no one should refuse.

**Romans 3:19-24, 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-9**

## **Monday, January 18<sup>th</sup>:**

“Let none of you suffer as a murderer or thief, or as an evildoer or as a busybody.” 1 Peter 4:15

Peter knew murder and theft violated God’s rules for civilized life. Here He warns believers that God knows other behaviors can prevent people from living peacefully with others in society. Such acts would typically be handled through the courts and a nation’s system of justice. A series of articles in the November 2020 issue of Scientific American stressed the harm being done by the deliberate planting of misinformation on Internet sites. Examples involved broken marriages, lost jobs, even health issues. One of the recommendations for evaluating Internet misinformation was “do not focus on the veracity of the post.” In the past some of the examples of misinformation would have been called slander. It was harmful because it was false. The author also wrote that “no one should be shamed for sharing misinformation.’ Throughout 2020 I have encountered stories of people receiving death threats based on false information delivered over the Internet anonymously. Obviously the experts writing Scientific American may advise us not to focus on the veracity of a post when we choose to pass on something we have read. Lord, help us to discern truth from fiction and not to believe the misinformation.

## **Tuesday, January 19<sup>th</sup>:**

**Surrender.** Each day begins a fresh new day of My grace and mercy. You are the apple of My eye and I long to touch the depth of your heart with My love. I desire for you to have a pliable heart that I might mold you into the image of Jesus Christ. It is not a work on your part but a labor of love on My part. The enemy comes to steal and destroy the life that I long to give you. But I have come to give you life and give it more abundantly than you can think or imagine. Today is a new day. Look up to Me and I will guide your steps in the way I have chosen for you. When you surrender your heart, you allow Me to prune away all that is not of Me. It is a process. Here a little, there a little. This “process” allows for a closer walk with Me. As you find yourself walking closer to Me you will find joy spilling over into all areas of your life. My word is true. Jesus said, “Come to Me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 2:28 NLT Surrender your heavy heart My child and enter into My rest.

**John 10:10, Psalm 37:23, John 15:2, Hebrews 4:3**

## **Wednesday, January 20<sup>th</sup>:**

We might look at last year as boot camp, preparing us for a bigger battle that He has already warned us about. We absolutely should be in prayer concerning all that has transpired, but we need to broaden our expectations and the way we approach God with our requests. We tend to pray for God to fix our situation, but we certainly don't expect Him to tell us to actually do something. Boot camp is defined as: a short but very difficult training program which prepares recruits for all elements of service: physical, mental and emotional. It gives service members the basic tools necessary to perform the roles that will be assigned to them for the duration of their tour. It is described as being a "short" period of time, but talk to anyone who has actually been through it and they would beg to differ with that perception when you're in the midst of it. However the objective is to produce soldiers who have been rigorously conditioned and trained to protect and preserve their homeland and it's values and to fight against all enemies who would seek to harm or destroy it. We are in a spiritual battle, and the enemy is out to destroy us and everything we stand for and hold dear. If you are truly a follower of Christ, you've been drafted. Nobody wants to be dishonorably discharged by hearing the words, "Depart from Me; I never knew you." Ask Him not only to prepare you for the battle but to give you your marching orders, and then be ready to obey.

**Ephesians 6:10-20; 1 Corinthians 15:57-58; 1 Timothy 6:12**

## **Thursday, January 21<sup>st</sup>:**

People who know me know that I'm a word person. I love words and language, and I also love God's Word. There are times when the subtle nuance of just the right word can make all the difference between explaining and inspiring. This can apply to how respond to God's words to us either through our own reading or through the messages we hear. Do we observe, or do we absorb what we are experiencing? To observe means to notice, to watch, to be a spectator without actually taking part in something. However to absorb means to take something in, incorporate something into the whole, to soak it up and understand until it is becomes a part of. When we spend time reading or listening to the words of the Lord, it can't be just something we chalk up on our to-do list. Read two chapters; listened to an entire message; attended the weekly Bible study. Check. People who merely observe an event may get some enjoyment from it, and they may even get really excited, but they probably won't derive a lot of benefit from it because they were merely bystanders – no skin in the game. Think of it this way. We have metal trash cans because we can throw almost anything in them, and when the garbage truck comes and empties them you can rinse them out and pretty much eradicate any residue from what they had been holding. Don't be a cold and hard receptacle. You would never line your trash can with your favorite white shirt because it would show the evidence of whatever you threw into the can – it would absorb and retain evidence of having come in contact. That's how we should be when we come in contact with the living Word. There should be undeniable evidence. We need to absorb, not merely observe. Don't be a spectator; be a sponge.

**Psalm 1:1-3, 119:11, 18; James 1:19-25**

## **Friday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>:**

One of the foundational tenets of Pure Heart is that of becoming like Jesus for the sake of others. If that is to be our mindset, then we should strive to truly have the mind of Christ. So what is your mind most focused on? Family – health – finances – marriage? With Jesus it was always people because He knew the heart of His Father was for people. That's why He was sent to this earth – because His Father so *loves* all of us and His desire is that none should be lost. It's why in heaven there's a huge celebration when a single lost sinner repents. He knows the reality of eternity and the dire consequences for those who don't repent. The story Jesus tells of Lazarus and the rich man is not a parable. He specifically refers to Lazarus as a certain beggar, and the fate of the rich man gives a graphic picture of the torment of being separated eternally from God. In fact, Jesus spoke a lot about eternity with and without God and so was compelled to warn all of those created in the image of His Father about the peril of not taking it seriously. And He saw in people their potential rather than their present condition: in *Zacchaeus*, the despised tax collector, He saw the possibility for generosity; in Peter, the impetuous and uneducated fisherman, He saw the rock upon which He would build His church; in Paul, a Pharisee and persecutor of His followers, He saw one who would evangelize the world and write the bulk of our New Testament. It didn't matter what they were in bondage to when they first met Him – it was what they could become once they had embraced Him. What does He see in you? What do you see in others? Lord Jesus, may we truly have Your mind when we see others that we might have Your compassion for them and see them as You do – fearfully and wonderfully made, holding potential that can only be realized through You.

**Matthew 9:35-38; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Philippians 2:1-3**

## **Saturday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>:**

There are times when I'm reading the word or a book or listening to a message and I become overwhelmed with a sense of hearing a word that is very personally addressing an issue with which I am dealing. Whose voice I am listening to determines how I respond. Do I feel conviction or condemnation? If my feeling is one of remorse and a determination to seek forgiveness and find strength from God to overcome, it's conviction. Conviction of sin is God's way of inviting you to restore fellowship with Him. However condemnation implies guilt of some evil and reprehensible crime with the evidence of wrongdoing being indisputable and demanding punishment in the form of a sentence to somehow make amends for the offense. It suggests being judged unfit. It involves shame. It involves us being charged with the offense, found guilty, and it demands that we must pay the penalty. It separates us from the Father and fails to acknowledge that the price has already been paid. Praise God, there is now no condemnation for us because Christ has taken the penalty for our sin on Himself so that we may enter into His rest and approach His throne of grace with confidence. Any guilt we may feel for straying from what we know is His path for us should lead to conviction, not condemnation. Acknowledge, confess, and repent.

**Romans 8:1-4; John 3:18-19; 2 Corinthians 7:10**

## **Sunday, January 24<sup>th</sup>:**

Destiny: Hear the voice of the Lord. Ask him to speak to you. He is a God of personal relationship. He loves you with an everlasting love. He longs to draw you into the secret place and commune with you. His manifest presence is real. He is near to all who call upon Him. He has drawn you with loving kindness. He desires to bless your life. In His presence is fullness of joy. Follow Him and walk with Him. Hear His voice behind you saying this is the way, walk in it. Let Him lead you to the glorious vision of your destiny. He has created you for a specific purpose that only you can fulfill. He has given you unique gifts to be used for the glory of the King. "Perhaps you were born for such a time as this." Esther 4:14 Seek His face, evermore. "Give unto the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Psalms 29:2 Today, hear his voice and declare it is a new day. The time for weeping has passed. The night is over but joy has come to the morning. "Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them." Isaiah 42:9 Declare the new day. Your destiny in the Lord is calling to you!

**Jeremiah 31:3, Matthew 6:6, Psalm 145:18, Isaiah 30:21, Romans 12:6, Psalm 105:4, Psalm 30:5**

## Monday, January 25<sup>th</sup>:

Joseph is a good example of both humiliation and humility. Humiliation is something that is thrust upon us, sometimes by chance and others as a result of our own poor choices. Joseph experienced both – when he was imprisoned after being falsely accused of forcing himself on Potiphar’s wife and when his brothers sold him to a caravan of Ishmaelite traders because they despised him for his favored status with their father and for relating to them his prophetic dreams of ruling over them. Joseph could have very easily and understandably become bitter and vindictive as a result of the many negative things that happened to him. Instead he chose to walk in humility and obedience to his God, and that is what prepared him to walk the path of significance that God had prepared for him. It was a succession of repeated choices to respond with humility, not a onetime decision. Unlike the practice we seem to have embraced of handing out participation trophies to everyone who shows up, I believe God desires to be able to ultimately hand us a prize for finishing well. It is an ongoing process. We should begin each morning by asking what we need to do *today* to win it for Jesus. Joseph’s answer to interpreting the dream for Pharaoh was, “I can’t do it, but God can.” He wanted to make sure the glory went to the right One. The result was that Joseph was promoted to a rank second only to the king! Joseph outcomes require Joseph choices. Be more aware of the purpose of God than the unpleasantness of the circumstance. Give the Holy Spirit permission to show you where you need to realign yourself with His purposes. It just could be that humiliation is the tool to prepare you for the prize. Rather than praying for Him to please you, pray that your life would be such that He would be pleased *with* you. **Deuteronomy 8:2; Romans 8:28-29; 1 Peter 5:6-7**

## **Tuesday, January 26<sup>th</sup>:**

Have you ever wondered why, immediately following His baptism in the Jordan and having the Holy Spirit descend on Him, Jesus was led into the wilderness by that same Spirit in order to be tempted by Satan? And actually the account in Luke says that the Spirit impelled or forced Him into the wilderness. As always, it was for our benefit. In fact, there's a principle called "the devil after the dove" that directly applies to this lesson. We need to be aware of the absolute certainty that whenever we are in a position of threat to the enemy we will experience some form of temptation to derail us. Every failure and sin begins with temptation, but the confidence we can have is that we know the Spirit would never lead us into a situation that He won't also lead us out of as long as we remember the arsenal Jesus used to defeat him – the word of God. One of the first verses I memorized was Psalm 119:11, "Your word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You." We don't have to be victims of the temptation; we can be victors through the power of Jesus in us and the weapon of the word. For sure we will meet with opposition and those who would try to intimidate or dishearten us, but we know His power, and we are told through the prophet Isaiah that no weapon formed against us will prosper. Sometimes the wilderness experience is to prepare us for a greater mission. Jesus was anointed by the Spirit through the baptism; He was approved and shown fit for the battle through the wilderness experience. If you are following Him, there will be temptation. Expect it, detect it, and reject it. Greater is He who is in you, and He has already won.

**Hebrews 2:17-18, 4:12-16; I Corinthians 10:13**

### **Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>:**

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. “ Philippians 4:13

Paul preached the above message despite being beaten, thrown in person and being arrested for his beliefs. He credited God with providing the resources he needed to keep going. As a loving parent warns his/her child of dangers to avoid, Paul reminded the Philippians that “many walk...who are the enemies of the cross of Christ.” (Philippians 3:18) That message is equally valid today. Paul understood a living Christ on the inside is more than sufficient to endure the circumstances he met outside. What God had prepared for Paul to accomplish, He provided what was needed for Paul to accomplish the task. It didn't matter how much or how little he had. What mattered was that Paul knew his assignment from God was to speak the good news of Christ to those who disbelieved. God has given each of us that mission and makes it possible for us to do His will. Lord, thank You for the example of Paul. Help us to remember it is You who is our provision.

## Thursday, January 28<sup>th</sup>:

More and more we see evidence of end times prophecies being fulfilled, and that means we need to be keenly aware of climate changes in the spiritual realm and especially of the spirit of antichrist with all of its deceptions. The word Christ in Greek comes from *christos* which in Hebrew is *Mashiach* or Messiah, so the Antichrist is anti (against or in place of) Christ our Messiah. Remember that when the true Christ came to earth He was fulfilling countless prophecies, but many people missed it, and that was especially true of what we would call the religious community. Probably one of the greatest evidences of the spirit of antichrist is the apostasy or falling away from Christ. It isn't too difficult to find examples of this in today's culture: rampant immorality, loss of respect for authority, violence in the streets, tension and mistrust between races. We see the blatant examples, but more alarming is the progressive infiltration of these attitudes in the body of Christ. It's a constant chipping away of fidelity to the whole of Christianity. A little compromise here, a little doubt and disbelief there, and suddenly the deceptive lies of the counterfeit become more and more plausible, especially because they are tailored to each of our own personal preferences and weaknesses. The Antichrist is no fool. He will be revealed when believers and the rest of humanity have been sufficiently brainwashed to believe that "science and reason" are easier to accept than the wisdom from above. More than ever we need to test the spirits and know the Lord so intimately that we won't fall prey to the imposter. We can't afford to put it off; every day we must be spending time in the Presence to ensure we will be able to tell the truth from the lies so we won't be seduced away from the one true Savior.

**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 1 John 2:18-25**

## Friday, January 29<sup>th</sup>:

Continuing with the theme of Antichrist, the *spirit* of who he is will precede his physical appearance on the scene. Because of the increase of lawlessness we are told that most people's love will grow cold, but we cannot lose heart and just give up and accept it as our new standard. Matthew tells us that those who endure to the end will be saved. I personally would choose to be among them! To keep our love from growing cold we need to heat up our fervor for Him above our earthly pleasures and appetites. Take up your cross and put them to death. Be alert. Don't allow yourself to be deceived by the flattery and smooth speech of those who cause dissention and promote practices that are contrary to what you know to be true according to the word. Remember that you are His temple, and anything that you would consider inappropriate in the sanctuary is just plain inappropriate for you at any time. And don't expect it to be easy. We are promised that there will be persecution for taking a stand against what may be politely referred to as being politically correct, but we can't sit back and expect somebody else to be our mouthpiece. We need to walk in godliness and truth while demonstrating love and mercy, knowing that the deception is rooted in ignorance and a disinterest or disregard for the truth. It is imperative for us to be so familiar with the truth that the lies will be obvious. This is on our watch. Ignorance does not protect us from consequences, and it is His desire that all come to a knowledge of the truth. Know your enemy, but know your Commander better!

**Matthew 24:4-13; Romans 16:17-18; 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 12-13**

## **Saturday, January 30<sup>th</sup>:**

**Turnaround:** Fear not. I have spoken these words many times. John 16:33 “These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Look to Me for I am the God of new beginnings. My timeline does not necessarily match your timeline. This is a year of turn round and it shall be in My timing. Your faith brings the victory, as you wait on Me. The battle belongs to Me. I am always working and fighting on your behalf. You will see victory as I turn the present chaos around. My purposes will prevail. You must keep your eyes on Jesus and not on the storm or you will begin to sink like Peter when he stepped out of the boat onto the water. I am in the storm with you but you must look to Me to be victorious. A victory is on the horizon. Do not give in to fear. Remember there is nothing too difficult for Me. I am still the God of miracles. I am the same yesterday, today and forever. Turnaround is coming.

**1 Samuel 17:47; Matthew 14:28; Jeremiah 32:27; Hebrews 13:8**

## **Sunday, January 31<sup>st</sup>:**

I have a good friend who is very prophetic. This person gets beautifully vivid mental images when we pray, and I have to admit that it makes me a bit envious at times. How I would love to have that gift. But I don't, and I have come to not only accept it but also to realize that we all are given different gifts for a reason and that each gift has a specific and necessary purpose. I need to cultivate what I have been given in order to showcase the glory of God in whatever manner He has seen fit to manifest His presence and leading.

There are a variety of ministries and gifts, but all are from the same Spirit. As a result, there are a variety of effects but it is the same God who is bringing it all about. His Spirit imparts gifts according to the needs of the body of Christ and it is our privilege and responsibility to minister to one another according to the gift(s) we are given. We should also remember that there will be times when we will suddenly find ourselves operating in a gift that is new to us, and it's always possible that it is for a given situation, or it could be that He has determined a new or expanded area in which He desires to use us. It's all up to Him. Lord, make us willing vessels who joyfully receive the gifts you would choose for us that we may serve You with excellence.

**1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11**