

Prayer Devotions

August 2024



Luke 18:1

Pray Always and Never Give Up.

Prayer for Persecuted Church

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 in just the last year...

- Over 360 million Christians live in places where they experience high levels of persecution and discrimination.
- 5,898 Christians were killed for their faith.
- 5,110 churches and other Christian buildings were attacked.
- 4,765 believers detained without trial, arrested, sentenced, or imprisoned.

These numbers are heart-breaking. And sadly, they do not tell the whole story.

Please pray:

- Whatever their circumstances, God will give persecuted Christians the right words. (Ephesians 6:19-20)
- That persecuted Christians will understand and find peace in the sufficiency of God's grace, even in their weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- That Christians facing hardship will draw from a source of power larger than themselves. (2 Corinthians 1:7-9)
- God be present in their hardship, protecting them according to His will.
- That their witness would inspire those who seek to harm them.

Cameroon

Persecution Type: Islamic oppression, Dictatorial paranoia, Organized corruption and crime

Main Religion: Christianity

Government: Presidential Republic

Leader: President Paul Biya

Brunei

Persecution Type: Islamic oppression and Dictatorial paranoia

Main Religion: Islam

Government: Absolute Monarchy or Sultanate

Leader: Sultan Sir Hassanal Bolkiah

Comoros

Persecution Type: Islamic oppression and Dictatorial paranoia

Main Religion: Islam

Government: Federal Presidential Republic

Leader: President Azail Assoumani

Daily Prayers for August:

"This is our time on the history line of God. This is it. What will we do with the one deep exhale of God on this earth? For we are but a vapor and we have to make it count. We're on. Direct us, Lord, and get us on our feet." - Beth Moore

Thursday, August 1st, 2024:

Don't Leave Home Without Him

In 1975 American Express introduced the slogan "Don't Leave Home Without It" and it has become iconic. The idea was to promote the power and reassurance one could have when armed with American Express Travelers Checks. They were recognized and accepted everywhere! We all like to feel fully equipped and prepared to handle our challenges and needs, financial and otherwise.

If you knew for a fact that there was a mountain lion roaming your neighborhood, I doubt you'd casually go about business as usual. You'd be on guard whenever you set foot outside, and you'd continually remind those you love to be aware and to protect themselves. You'd probably start "packing" - just in case.

There really is a ravenous lion prowling about in our midst, and he's always ready to pounce on any vulnerable prey. "Be alert, be on watch! Your enemy, the Devil, roams around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour." (**1 Peter 5:8**) His agenda is to *kill and destroy* anyone who aligns with the true King.

Jesus wouldn't have taught his disciples to pray not to be led into temptation but to be delivered from evil if both weren't legitimate threats to their (and our) wellbeing. The good news is, "No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; He'll never let you be pushed past your limit; He'll always be there to help you come through it." (**1 Corinthians 10:13**) He is our sure defense - always with us. Don't leave home without Him.

Friday, August 2nd,2024

Truth in Love

According to a 2023 poll by YouGov, 65% of Americans feel that the country is more divided than usual. That was a year ago - now we're in the throes of an election year! It doesn't make the idea of a nation "indivisible" seem very promising, and we know that a house divided against itself cannot stand. **(Matthew 12:25)** So what are we to do?

Those statistics suggest that we are going to inevitably be in contact with those who hold views that are different from our own, both politically and spiritually. How we interact with them can make the difference between widening the chasm or bridging a gap with the objective to facilitate understanding and possibly even soften some hearts. We have three choices in how we respond. Condemn, conform, or compassionately confront.

If we're condemning and vitriolic, all that does is cause the other person to dig in their heels, and they'll probably write us off as fanatics. We can also water down our response and blur the lines, hoping to not offend. But on political issues that reflect a spiritual value, we can't compromise what God has established as truth. That leaves us with our third alternative.

Jesus gives us an example of how this might look when he confronts the woman of Sychar in John 4. He speaks to her person-to-person, not as Jewish man to Samaritan woman. He isn't condescending; He speaks the truth but it's in love. His purpose is to unify rather than to emphasize their differences, and the aim is to achieve God's ultimate goodness in her life. In compassion, He confronts her with truth and an alternative - receiving living water versus trying to satisfy her thirst through her own limited efforts. We're called to present a more favorable alternative, but the decision is theirs. Let His truth in love be what dissolves the differences.

Saturday, August 3rd, 2024:

Federal Conscience Fund

If you've ever defrauded the government in any way, you'll be relieved to know that there's actually a Conscience Fund. There's a story of a man who sent in \$100 saying he couldn't sleep because he had fudged on his taxes, and if he still couldn't sleep he'd send the rest! God has given everyone a conscience, but we can choose to listen or ignore what it tells us.

I read that our conscience is like the sundial of our soul. It functions well when it's in the light, but in darkness it's useless. We can shine a flashlight in the dark, but we control how it casts its shadow. When we're in the light of God's truth, we can trust how we assess our bearings because He is steadfast. If we're in darkness, we'll manufacture our own "light source" for determining everything, and it's safe to say none of us is omniscient.

Our conscience may rightly inform us, but we often ignore it because it goes against what our flesh wants. The more often we ignore it, the weaker its voice becomes until we ultimately silence it. It's only reliable in the light of God's word. **Psalm 119:105** assures us that His word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. That's why it's important to hide His word in our hearts; it protects us from sinning. (**Psalm 119:11**) Then He will be the voice of our conscience telling us, "*This is the way; walk in it.*" (**Isaiah 30:21** emphasis added)

Listen to that voice and respond. Remember the sinner's bar of soap. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (**1 John 1:9**) Keep your conscience clear.

Sunday, August 4th, 2024:

Helmet & Sword

Of the six pieces of the Armor of God (**Ephesians 6:10-17**), the Helmet of Salvation is the most important because all the other pieces are useless without the indwelling Holy Spirit that enters us the moment we receive salvation.

In our spiritual battle against the enemy, it is vital to protect our minds. The Helmet of Salvation gives us the power to take captive every negative thought so we can stay in obedience to God. Jesus taught us how we should battle the enemy by his example while he was in the wilderness (**Matthew 4:1-11**).

The enemy attacks us with condemning thoughts in hopes that it will cause us to doubt God. He attempts to ignite chaos in our minds and in our relationship with others. With the Helmet of Salvation, we can meditate on Christ and His promises to keep us from stumbling. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (**Romans 8:1**) After our Helmet of Salvation is firmly intact (along with the other pieces of God's Armor), it's time to pick up the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The other five pieces of armor are all defensive weapons to protect us from the enemy's attacks; however, The Sword of the Spirit is the only offensive weapon, and it is alive and powerful!

God's Word is our life manual. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (**2 Timothy 3:16**). God reveals His character, gives us instructions for our daily lives, teaches us how to pray, and SO much more!

Jesus fought the enemy with Scripture, and we need to do the same by hiding His Word in our hearts, so we won't sin against Him (**Psalms 119:11**).

Monday, August 5th, 2024:

The Well

“...take the water of life.” (Revelation 22:17)

Seek my face and draw near to me. Jesus will satisfy the cry of your heart. Your heart is craving what only the Spirit can provide. Jesus met a Samaritan woman at the well when she came to draw water. He asked her for a drink. Then, He told her he had living water. And He said to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” **(John 4:10)** Jesus our living hope, wants to satisfy our empty “well” that is dry and thirsting for the living water that comes from the Holy Spirit. The world offers a spring of water that runs dry and makes you thirst again. You end up seeking the next “thrill” only to run dry again and again. Jesus said “But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.” **(John 4:14 NLT)** Jesus is saying only He can satisfy the thirsty soul. He wants to give those who are thirsting the living water so they will never thirst again. So, ask yourself, are you drinking from the “well” of the world or the Spirit? “And the Spirit and the bride say, “come!” And let him who hears say “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.” **(Revelation 22:17)**

James 4:8, John 4:4-14, 1Peter 1:3

Tuesday, August 6th, 2024:

Prayer-alized - Not Paralyzed

The definition of paralyzed is being brought to a condition of helpless inactivity; to be *wholly incapable of movement*. Think of being paralyzed with fear, doubt, or depression. We can be so overwhelmed with our circumstances that we feel helpless - incapable of finding hope or peace. But we have a defense against that. It's called being prayer-alized.

This concept was shared in preparation for a mission trip with the focus on praying more and worrying less. When we remember to bathe all of our concerns with prayer, when we cast all of our cares on Him because we know how deeply He cares about us, all of a sudden we align with Him: *holy, and fully capable of moving* however and wherever He directs us.

This doesn't mean our circumstances are going to change; it simply means we are given a new perspective and a deeper realization of the magnitude of our resources to face the challenges. We need to remember, "It is the LORD who goes before you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or abandon you. Do not fear or be dismayed." (**Deuteronomy 31:8**)

Psalm 107 gives us a vivid picture of the Lord's kindness toward us, even when we've placed ourselves outside His will. Four instances are given when His people were in need, often due to their own rebellion. Then - "'LORD, help!' they cried in their trouble, and He saved them from their distress." Our God is mighty to save; all He asks of us is to cry out to Him. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (**Philippians 4:7**) So don't be paralyzed - be prayer-alized!

Wednesday, August 7th, 2024:

Cast a Shadow

We tend to think of casting a shadow as being a negative thing, but when you live in the desert, you look for the shade of those shadows to protect you from the scorching sun. So shadows can actually serve a positive purpose. And an interesting thing about shadows is they are always in direct proportion to their proximity to the light source.

We can draw a spiritual lesson from that. We're surrounded by people who are succumbing to a hostile environment - one the enemy has even disguised as appealing. Think of the number of cases we hear of those who have perished from the heat because they thought they could go for a hike or simply spent too much time "basking" or otherwise being exposed to the sun.

We can be instruments to offer them their much needed protection, but the degree to which we'll be able to do that will be dependent upon how close we are to the source of light. The closer an object is to the source, the longer the shadow it casts - hence, the greater its potential for influence.

Holy Spirit is our personal heat shield, so when we belong to the Son (pun intended) we absorb the light and His energy, and we can provide comfort to others who may be getting scorched or are dying from an unquenchable thirst. It all depends on how close we are to Him.

Thursday, August 8th, 2024:

Forgiveness - Not Just a Suggestion

C. S. Lewis once said, “Everyone thinks forgiveness is a lovely idea until he has something to forgive.” We know we’re supposed to forgive others, but the actual act of doing so is not always so easy. However, Jesus made it pretty clear when the disciples asked Him to teach them to pray that one of the tenets was asking for forgiveness *as we forgive others*. “For if you forgive other people for their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive other people, then your Father will not forgive your offenses.” (**Matthew 6:12-15**)

Yes, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness, but we have to accept, truly value, and walk in our forgiveness. Refusal to do so has some pretty serious consequences, and they go beyond the spiritual ramifications of disobedience and separation of fellowship with the Father. We can also experience physical effects.

According to the chief of surgery at the Cancer Treatment Center of America, there is medical evidence that holding onto unforgiveness not only causes illness but can deter healing. A pastor/author found in his research that harboring these negative feelings creates a state of anxiety which leads to the production of excess adrenaline and cortisol which in turn depletes the production of natural killer cells which fight against cancer.

The takeaway is this: we have a wealth of reasons to regularly pray to forgive others, so our natural response should be that we are mindful of any areas where we need to be extending forgiveness and then doing it regularly, expeditiously, and sincerely. Remember where we would be without His forgiveness. We need to both receive and extend His amazing example of forgiveness for everyone’s sake. (**Ephesians 4:32**)

Friday, August 9th, 2024:

Words

Words are powerful. God's words are so powerful that all of creation came from them **(Genesis 1)**. He spoke everything into existence.

Our words have power too. Solomon said that death and life are in the power of the tongue. **(Proverbs 18:21)** While that might seem a bit dramatic, think about how the words of others can affect us. Words of encouragement and love can heal when we feel lost and broken. While words that insult and discourage can cause us to give up or plan revenge!

Jesus said, "You can be sure of this: when the day of judgment comes, everyone will be held accountable for every careless word he has spoken. Your very words will be used as evidence, and your words will declare you either innocent or guilty." **(Matthew 12:36-37 TPT)**.

Words express what's in our hearts. "The mouth speaks what the heart is full of" **(Matthew 12:34)**. Every word we utter that's hateful, ugly and toxic, and even our "careless" words, represents a "heart" issue. "But the tongue is not able to be tamed. It's a fickle, unrestrained evil that spews out words full of toxic poison!" **(James 3:8 TPT)**

What comes out of our mouth is a direct reflection of what's inside our hearts. We can't fix this on our own. Pray this Scripture, "May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer" **(Psalm 19:14)**.

We need to ensure our words are edifying others and advancing God's kingdom.

We must learn to yield our tongue to the control of the Holy Spirit. He is the only One who can tame the tongue. "Set a guard over my mouth, LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips" **(Psalm 141:3)**.

Saturday, August 10th, 2024:

Mercy and Grace

“Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split.” **(Matthew 27:51)**

When Jesus cried from the cross it is finished and he gave up his spirit, the veil of the temple was torn in two, just as the body of Jesus had been torn. Jesus is the reason the veil was torn. No longer was the presence of God shrouded in mystery behind the veil. The tearing of the curtain signified that the death of Jesus meant the presence of God was no longer for the Priest only but for all those who “... worship in spirit and truth.” **(John 4:24)** Jesus is our “...great high priest who has passed through the heavens...” **(Hebrews 4:14)** Because the veil was torn, now, we can enter on our own “...come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” **(Hebrews 4:16)** A sacrifice of animals is no longer needed to cleanse sin. Jesus is the Lamb of God who sacrificed his own blood to cleanse us from our sins. Jesus is waiting for you with open arms to forgive sin and cleanse from all unrighteousness. Jesus is inviting you to come into his presence and receive mercy and grace, that you may establish a relationship with God, the Father of all creation.

John 19:30, Matthew 27:51, Hebrew 9:7, Leviticus 16:20, John 1:29, 1 John 1:9

Sunday, August 11th, 2024:

De-emphasize the Differences

There's so much division in our country. We're polarized on many fronts, and you can be sure it's the enemy seeking to divide and conquer because he knows if he can get us fighting against each other we'll eventually implode. In his book *Man: The Dwelling Place of God*, A.W. Tozer wrote, "Were men everywhere to ignore the things that matter little or not at all and give serious attention to the few really important things, most of the walls that divide men would be thrown down at once and a world of endless sufferings ended."

We put so much emphasis on differences – skin color, political bias, nationality, etc., etc., etc. We define and categorize others by these criteria without taking the time to create a dialogue and possibly understand their point of view. That's the best avenue for peacefully resolving issues, and it can also teach us the fine art of learning to "agree to disagree" on things that are not foundational truths.

How much better it would be to have hearts of compassion and to see with the eyes of God the Father, Creator, Savior, and Comforter of all mankind. That's the assignment for His Church - us. Our first and foremost priority is to put our belief in Him and the redemptive work of Jesus. If we are genuinely doing that with all of our hearts, allow Him to cause the rest to fall into place. "Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse...Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies."

(Philippians 4:8-9 The Message)

Monday, August 12th, 2024

Pray the News

On an almost daily basis we are assailed with news stories that are disheartening, depressing, disturbing, and oftentimes infuriating and shocking. This can cause some of us to become enraged and others to retreat into a state of denial. But there's an alternative response – it's called praying the news!¹ We certainly have much to choose from with all that has been going on so far this year, and especially with an election right around the corner.

Rather than raging against the darkness, decide to shine the light of truth on the situation by appealing to heaven for our Father to guide us and to intervene. Ask Him to reveal His divine purpose, remembering that His ways are higher than our ways; His desire is that all men come to a knowledge of the truth; and He desires that glory be brought to His Son Jesus. Consider how He may be using what's happening to redirect or draw people to Himself and to give glory to His Son.

Train yourself to respond to unsettling news rather than react in the flesh. Also remember to offer up a prayer of thanksgiving for those stories that glorify Him and attest to His involvement. Always be ready not only to pray His divine purposes, protection and guidance, but also to listen to what He may want *you* to do in response.

“This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” (1 John 5:14, New American Standard)

Covert, *52 Creative Ways to Pray*, 102.

Tuesday, August 13th, 2024:

With Him - Without Him

We could learn a lot from King Asa. The prophet Azariah warned him, “The Lord is with you *while you are with Him* (emphasis added). If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you,” Asa’s response was to remove the abominable idols from all the land and to restore the altar of the Lord. Then he gathered all the people, and they worshiped the Lord and entered into a covenant to seek Him with all their heart and soul.

The result was 35 years of rest with no war. Then in the 36th year came a test. Baasha, the king of Israel, came up against Judah and Asa enlisted the aid of the king of Syria rather than relying on the Lord’s deliverance. But this time when he was confronted with words from the Lord, he was indignant, and as a result Judah experienced conflict and even disease.

We are told that the Lord looks for those who are completely His that He might strongly support them. It should be a no brainer for us: with Him = success; without Him = conflict and strife. As a country we have been seeking answers and solutions everywhere but where truth can be found. Social awareness will accomplish nothing without God awareness. It’s time we take Him at His word, truly seek Him, and devote ourselves to Him.

We need to stop foolishly looking for worldly antidotes for spiritual sickness. Lord, show us any idols we need to destroy as we enter into covenant with You to seek You with our whole hearts. “Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take.” (**Proverbs 3:5-6**, New Living Translation)

Wednesday, August 14th, 2024:

Know God

Do you know about God? If you're reading this, the obvious answer is "Yes." Most people probably know something about Him.

But the essential question is, "Do you know God?"

There is a vast difference between knowing *about* God and truly knowing Him.

Knowing about God is important. As believers, we should be attending church, reading His Word, and leaning about His attributes. But for many, religion has become a routine. Every Sunday, their "To-Do" list has all the boxes checked while they're merely going through the motions. Their heart remains unchanged and there's no deep connection with the Lord.

(James 1:23-24).

It would be similar to reading about your favorite actor and feeling like you know him or her. But in reality, since you don't have access to them, you only have knowledge about them; you don't really know them.

The good news is you have 24/7/365 access to God, and He wants you to truly know Him. When you seek Him, when you approach Him with an open heart that's ready to understand, with open eyes that are ready to see and with open ears that are ready to hear, He will transform you! When you lean into His love and guidance, you will develop an intimate relationship with Him!

"And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the LORD; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God" **(Jeremiah 24:7)** God doesn't want us to just know about Him, He wants to give us a heart to *know* Him.

As you walk through your spiritual journey, strive for more than just knowledge. Seek Him for a profound connection. By knowing God, not just about Him, you will find the true essence of eternal life.

Thursday, August 15th, 2024:

His Love

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.” (Psalm 118:1 NIV)

In the beginning, God created the most beautiful garden for his crowning creation so they could live in a paradise. But, as the story goes, mankind was banned from the garden after they disobeyed God when they ate from “...the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” **(Genesis 2:17)** As a result, all humanity was infected with sin. “Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence.” **(Genesis 6:11 NIV)** The Bible tells us God was sorry he made man. Let that sink in for a minute. So, God sent a flood on the earth, and everything was destroyed except for Noah, his family and all the animals that were brought on board the Ark that God had instructed Noah to build. But God did not leave us in our sinful nature. God sent his son Jesus Christ, who shed his own blood to pay the price for our sin. God is a merciful God with love and compassion for all mankind. He wants us to come into the “Ark”. Therefore, He is drawing you with loving kindness. You are a special treasure to him. His love is ever lasting. Seek his presence and you will find joy. His love fills the “... longing soul.” **(Psalm 107:9)** “Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” **(Psalm 37:4)** He alone can do for you what no one else can do. God the Father is waiting for you with open arms. If you haven’t already, ask Him to forgive you of your sins, believe that Jesus Christ died and was raised to life and confess Him as your Lord and Savior. “...His love endures forever.” **(Psalm 18:1)** “For I know the plans I have for you, “declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” **(Jeremiah 29:11 NIV)**

Genesis 2:8-9,6:6,6:9-17, John 3:16, Psalm 85:10, Exodus 19:5, Jeremiah 31:3, Psalm 16:11

Friday, August 16th, 2024:

Who Am I?

It's a pretty universal question, and it's one even Moses struggled with. The first time he had to wrestle with it was when a fellow Hebrew asked him basically, "Who do you think you are?" At the time, Moses was a prince of Egypt with the power and authority to rule over the Hebrews. He also was aware of his heritage and most likely his assignment, but he had to understand that the power to do so wasn't in his position.

His next encounter was with God Himself in a burning bush when the assignment was reiterated. Now Moses was the one asking, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh...?!" It was the wrong question, and God answered with, "I will be with you..." Moses wasn't being sent in his own power; it wasn't who he was - it was who God is.

Moses had been trained both as a leader and as a shepherd, and it's noteworthy that the sheep didn't even belong to him; the sheep belonged to his father-in-law. God was now directing him to shepherd another flock that belonged to another - they were God's very own people. And when Moses asked the next question, it was a bit more humble. "Whom shall I say sent me?" He was on the right track, and God's answer was to tell the people "I Am" was sending him.

God IS everything we need, and as long as He is going with us, we don't need to worry about who *we* are. All we need to fully know and depend on is who He is. "And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work." (2 **Corinthians 9:8**, New King James)

Saturday, August 17th, 2024:

Effective Prayer

James tells us that the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. The righteousness he's referring to means being in right standing with God, as in being submitted to Him as Lord. Effective is defined as producing the intended or expected result. When people pray, they're hopefully doing so with the expectation of seeing results; but for prayer to be powerful, they need to be purposeful.

There are different kinds of prayers just like there are different kinds of words - general and specific. If you say you want some food, you could get anything from cheesecake to sardines. Sometimes you don't receive the desired results because you aren't specific. The same is true with prayer, and in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught His disciples some categories.

Give us this day is a prayer for provision. Our daily bread could encompass food on the table, or it could be for employment to be able to put the food. Tell Him exactly what the need is. The next is a prayer of repentance and forgiveness. Forgive us *as we forgive others*. This one should be a daily practice. We should always keep the list short if we want to walk in victory. There are prayers for direction and deliverance. Ask Him to direct your steps and to keep you on the right path in order to protect you from the dangers and temptations that abound when you aren't being guided by Him. This could also include prayer for physical healing or deliverance from spiritual bondage. And for that you can praise Him, thank Him, and submit to His power and authority.

Jesus gives us the basic portfolio - it's the starting point to becoming a powerful and effective person of prayer. **(Matthew 6:9-15)**

Sunday, August 18th, 2024:

Get Out

I'm reading the book of Exodus and found a passage in Jonathan Cahn's *The Book of Mysteries* entitled "The Exodus Factor." Our first thought is that of the Hebrews "getting out" of Egypt in order to enter into the Promised Land. But a little history gives so much more depth to my understanding and appreciation of what God does.

Abraham was the first Hebrew, and his first order from God was to get out - to leave his home in Ur and simply go. *Ivrim*, the Hebrew word for "Hebrew" means those who cross over. So fast forward to the Exodus, the Israelites first had to cross over the Red Sea to come out of Egypt before they would cross over the Jordan to enter the Promised Land.

There's a profound spiritual lesson in that. If we truly want to enter into the promises that God has for us, we first need to leave some things behind. The disciples had to leave their former identities (fishermen, business owners, a tax collector, and eventually Paul who was a well-educated Pharisee and a tent maker) in order to enter into His blessing, power and the promise of eternity with Jesus. They had to *get out* of the boat, drop their nets, and walk into the new and unknown.

The same is true for us. If we really desire a change or a higher level of spiritual engagement, maybe the only thing holding us back is something we're holding onto. To get to the place we want to be, we have to be willing to leave the place we are! "...take off your former way of life, the old self that's corrupted by deceitful desires; you're being renewed in the spirit of your minds; you put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth." (**Ephesians 4:22-24** paraphrased from Holman Christian Standard)

Monday, August 19th, 2024:

Doing Our Part

Have you ever shared the Gospel with someone only to have them completely reject the Good News? They demanded “proof” and wouldn’t accept any Scriptures you shared with them as truth.

Often times, such rejection can cause us to doubt our ability to evangelize so we become less inclined to fulfill our mission (**Matthew 28:19-20**).

Rather than become discouraged, we need to remind ourselves that the mind of the unbeliever has been blinded by the enemy so they can’t even see the light that displays the glory of Christ (**2 Corinthians 4:4**). Paul tells us that the mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God (**Romans 8:7**).

In fact, everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed (**John 3:19-20**).

There is so much proof for the truthfulness of the Bible yet if you’re trying to convince someone of that truth who has sinful blindness, your efforts are futile. (**Romans 1:21; Ephesians 4:18**).

The answer is found in Jesus. He came to earth to bring us to God (**1 Peter 3:18**). It is only through Christ that we can be saved from our sin and receive a true desire to do God’s will. The Holy Spirit, who indwells us when we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, works in us to open our eyes so we can see the truthfulness of the Bible.

God is the One who opens the eyes of the blind to see the truth of Christ, and He accomplishes this by sending people like you and me out into the world to share the gospel message. (**Acts 26:18**) When we do our part, God does the rest.

Tuesday, August 20th, 2024:

He Will Keep You

“Because you trusted me, I will preserve your life and keep you safe.” **Jeremiah 39:18.**

If you have placed your faith in Christ, you have an assurance of His protection for your life. When your will is surrendered to His will, you know that He will “... watch over your life.”

(Psalm 121:7) His word says...” He will lead me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”

(Psalm 23:3) Because of your trust in Him he will keep you. “You are His workmanship...”

(Ephesians 2:10) God has proclaimed over and over in his word that He will preserve you. So, you can say with confidence, “You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble;

You shall surround me with songs of deliverance.” **(Psalm 32:7)** “Listen to these words, “The

Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your

coming and going both now and forevermore.” **(Psalm 121:7-8 NIV)** God’s word shows us

repeatedly that we can trust him to keep us and protect us. “...for He guards the course of the

just and protects the way of his faithful ones. **(Proverbs 2:8 NIV)** Our Heavenly Father desires

to protect you from harm and shield you from evil. That is why we can, “Trust in the Lord

with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.” **(Proverbs 3:5)**

Wednesday, August 21st, 2024:

It's Okay to Question

The pastor in my hometown used to say if you never have questions for God, you must not be taking Him seriously. God is not offended by our legitimate questions, and there really are what could be considered valid questions. When Gabriel appeared to Mary (a virgin) and told her she was going to conceive the Messiah, he didn't chide her for asking how that could happen.

When Gideon was visited by the angel of the Lord, his first question had to do with why they were suffering so if, as the angel said, the Lord was with them. When he was recruited, he was hesitant because he was the youngest in his family, and they were the least in their tribe. The Lord even graciously performed two miracles to convince Gideon.

And we know Moses asked a number of questions about being the one chosen to confront Pharaoh and to deliver the Israelites. Some were legit - some were not. God responded with three miraculous signs: the staff becoming a snake and then being changed back to a staff and the leprous hand both demonstrated God's power to restore; the water turning to blood suggested judgment when restoration is rejected.

All of these demonstrate God's patience and grace. He will ask things of us that we know we are incapable of fulfilling without His intervention. It's okay to ask how it can happen; it's not okay to keep coming up with excuses or to simply refuse to believe Him. He will accomplish *through* us what He asks *of* us as long as we're willing to follow His lead and take Him at His word.

Asking appropriate questions implies that you're taking Him seriously. Then accept that His ways are higher than ours, and with Him - nothing is impossible! (**Isaiah 55:8; Luke 1:37**) So ask away, receive, and don't doubt when He answers. (**James 1:5-6**)

Thursday, August 22nd, 2024

No Substitutions

We live in an age of substitutions. I understand the need for sugar substitutes for diabetics, but oftentimes the reason we look for alternatives to the “real” thing is because we want all the pleasure without any of the possible negative side effects. We want to indulge in sweets and fats and still be fit and slim without having to go to the gym. The bottom line is, we don’t want the discipline of regular workouts, self-denial or even moderation.

We look for “get rich quick” schemes to circumvent hard work and perseverance. It’s no wonder this mentality has spilled over into Christianity where we want to become spiritual giants in five easy steps. We substitute weekend conferences for disciplined daily reading of the Word and application of what it reveals. We pursue happiness more than we pursue holiness, seek gratification more than His glory, and let programs replace seeking His Presence. That just produces more divas than disciples.

The only road to maturity is through effort and enduring, sharing the trials that Jesus and the apostles bore for the sake of glorifying God. There’s no substitute for sitting at His feet and learning obedience, even when it’s inconvenient and may cost us what we mistakenly perceive as success or gratification. “Don’t just do the minimum that will get you by. Do your best. Work from your heart for the real Master, for God, confident that you’ll get paid in full when you come into your inheritance.” (**Colossians 3:22-23**, The Message)

Remember He is Almighty God! “Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of His understanding. He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless.” (**Isaiah 40:28-29**, NLT) Lord, may we never settle for cheap imitations.

Friday, August 23rd, 2024

Changing Seasons

At the time of this writing, we are well on the way to having the hottest summer in Phoenix on record! The good news is, as you read this we should be on the cusp of entering a less hostile season. Some seasons we relish, others not so much, but we learn to adapt. We can't control the climate, but we can control our response.

As we see the "climate" changing in our country, we need to be aware and also adapt accordingly. We're in a season of spiritual hostility - the heat is on, and we can't afford to ignore it. Instead, we need to know how to not only survive but to flourish, and we can't do that on our own. We need to be prepared, and we need help. You don't wait until it's 110 in the house to order an air conditioner!

Think of the days of Noah. His peers were going about their normal routines right up until Noah and his crew boarded the ark, and then their window of opportunity was lost. They had access to the information but chose not to act. These may not be THE end times, but they are certainly tumultuous, and they demand more than a business-as-usual response.

So how do we know what to do? All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable, but we need to know what it says and then do it. **(2 Timothy 3:16)** "So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls. But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves." **(James 1:21-22)** Get prepared; we're in a new season.

Saturday, August 24th, 2024

The Power of Church Community

In **Acts 2:42-43**, we see a beautiful snapshot of the early church: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles." This passage highlights the essence of a thriving church community: devotion to teaching, fellowship, communion, and prayer. These elements are the foundation of a community that not only grows in faith but also in unity and love.

Another scripture that supports this concept is **Hebrews 10:24-25**: "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." This verse encourages believers to come together, motivate each other towards love and good works, and emphasize the importance of communal gatherings.

The church community is vital because it provides a support system where members can share their joys and burdens, pray for one another, and grow spiritually. When believers come together, they create an environment of mutual encouragement and accountability. This togetherness fosters a sense of belonging and helps individuals face life's challenges with the strength and support of their spiritual family.

The shared bond of faith brings a deeper connection that goes beyond surface-level interactions, allowing members to truly understand and support each other.

Prayer Points

- **Unity in the Church:** Pray for unity among church members, asking God to help them support each other, work together harmoniously, and grow stronger in their faith as a united body.
- **Strength and Encouragement:** Pray for strength and encouragement for those who are struggling, that the church community would come together to provide support and show the love of Christ to one another.

Sunday, August 25th, 2024

The Foundation of Apostolic Teaching

In the early days of the church, the teaching of the apostles formed the bedrock of Christian instruction. Just as Jesus had instructed His apostles, they faithfully passed on His teachings to new believers. This was more than mere transmission of information; it was the lifeblood of the developing of the church, ensuring that the message of Christ would endure and spread.

The apostles' teaching encompassed essential subjects such as the resurrection of Jesus, which was the cornerstone of Christian faith. They delved into the Old Testament Scriptures, illuminating how they pointed to Christ. Their witness was not just historical but deeply personal, sharing their transformative experiences during Jesus' ministry. These teachings were not abstract theories but living truths that shaped the lives of early Christians.

At the heart of these teachings was God's Word. The early church devoted itself to learning and living out these spiritual truths. This dedication to Scripture established a strong foundation for the Christian community. The church became a place where God's Word was not only proclaimed but also explained and applied to everyday life.

Today, the church continues this tradition. It remains a place where believers gather to hear God's Word, understand its meaning, and apply its lessons to their lives. Just as in the days of the apostles, our spiritual growth is deeply rooted in the Scriptures. By engaging with God's Word, we are nourished and equipped to live out our faith in a way that honors Him.

Let us reflect on the devotion of the early church to the apostles' teaching. May we also commit ourselves to studying and applying God's Word, allowing it to transform our lives and guide our actions. In doing so, we continue the legacy of the apostles, ensuring that the message of Jesus Christ remains vibrant and powerful in our world today.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for the faithful teaching of the apostles. Help us to value and immerse ourselves in Your Word. May it be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Guide us to live out Your truths daily, proclaiming, explaining, and applying Your Word in all that we do. Amen.

Monday, August 26th, 2024

Praying Together

Prayer is a powerful and essential practice for believers, both individually and corporately. When we come together to pray, we invite God's presence into our midst and align ourselves with His will.

In **Acts 2:42**, we see the early church's commitment to prayer: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." This dedication to prayer was foundational to their faith and community. Similarly, when we gather with family or friends, we create a space for God to move powerfully among us.

Jesus Himself emphasized the importance of corporate prayer. In Matthew 18:20, He said, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." This promise assures us that our prayers are heard and that Jesus is present when we come together to seek Him. Whether we are praying for personal needs, asking for boldness to share the Gospel, or expressing our gratitude, we can be confident that God is with us and working through our prayers.

Individually, our prayer life is equally important. In **1 Thessalonians 5:17-18**, Paul encourages us to "pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Personal prayer helps us maintain a close relationship with God, strengthens our faith, and prepares us to face life's challenges. It also fuels our corporate prayers, as our individual experiences and insights enrich our communal time of seeking God.

As we gather to pray let us bring our needs before God, ask for boldness to share His love and truth, and always remember to give thanks for His goodness and faithfulness. May our hearts be places of prayer, where God's presence is felt, His power is displayed, and His name is glorified.

Prayer:

Lord, we thank You for the gift of prayer and the promise of Your presence when we gather in Your name. Help us to be faithful in our individual and corporate prayers, bringing our needs before You, seeking boldness to share the Gospel, and always giving thanks for Your blessings. May we be filled with Your Spirit and have a heart where Your power and love are evident. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Tuesday, August 27th, 2024

The Power of Visible Faith

In **Acts 2:43**, we read, "Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles." This "everyone" likely refers to those outside the Christian community, who were astounded by the miracles and the evident transformation in believers' lives. The faith of the early Christians was so vibrant and powerful that it drew attention and admiration from onlookers.

The miraculous acts performed by the apostles were clear indicators of God's power and presence. However, it wasn't just the miracles that impressed people; it was the radical change in the lives of those who followed Jesus. These early Christians exhibited a profound love, unity, and generosity that stood out in stark contrast to the world around them. Their faith was not a private affair but a visible, transformative force that affected their daily lives and the community at large.

This prompts us to ask ourselves: Do people notice our faith today? Are our lives marked by the same transformative power and visible difference that characterized the early church? Faith is not meant to be hidden away but to be a light that shines brightly in a world that desperately needs hope and change. When our lives are genuinely transformed by our relationship with Jesus, others will take notice. They will see the love, joy, peace, and hope that emanate from us, and it will stir something within them.

Moreover, do people hear about the stories of life-change that are happening within our community of faith? Testimonies of God's work in our lives are powerful. They not only encourage fellow believers but also serve as a witness to those who have yet to experience the love of Christ. Let us be bold in sharing the stories of how God is moving in our midst, so others may be drawn to Him.

Prayer Points:

- **Boldness in Faith:** Pray for the courage to live out our faith boldly and visibly, so that others may see the transformative power of Jesus in our lives.
- **Sharing Testimonies:** Ask God to open opportunities for us to share our stories of life-change, that they may inspire and draw others to seek a relationship with Christ.

Wednesday, August 28th, 2024

A Heart of Generosity

In **Acts 2:45**, we read, "They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need." This verse reflects the early Christian community's spirit of generosity and mutual care. It wasn't a one-time act of giving but a continual practice of ensuring everyone's needs were met.

This radical generosity debunks the myth that you need to have a lot of money to make a difference. The early Christians didn't necessarily have abundant wealth, but they had hearts willing to sacrifice for others. They saw their possessions as tools to bless and support their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Reflect on what you have. Do you possess items that, if sold, could help someone in dire need? Perhaps it's not about selling everything but about a readiness to part with our surplus for the sake of others. It's about prioritizing people over possessions and seeing the value in lifting someone out of a difficult situation.

This mindset challenges us to consider our own willingness to give. Are we ready to help someone eat a meal, pay a medical bill, or cover essential expenses by sharing our resources? Generosity isn't about the size of the gift but the heart behind it. Jesus praised the widow who gave two small coins because she gave all she had (**Mark 12:41-44**).

Let's strive to cultivate a heart like the early Christians, one that is generous and always ready to meet the needs of others.

Prayer Points:

- **Heart of Generosity:** Pray for a heart that is willing to give sacrificially, prioritizing the needs of others over personal comfort. Ask God to help you see your possessions as tools for His kingdom and to be open to the Holy Spirit's prompting to give.
- **Provision and Wisdom:** Pray for wisdom in how to use your resources effectively to help those in need. Ask God to provide for your needs as you provide for others, trusting that He will replenish what you give out of love and obedience.

Thursday, August 29th, 2024

Living Out the Gospel in Community

In **Acts 2:46**, we see a beautiful picture of the early church: “Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts.” This verse highlights the essence of Christian fellowship and community living. The early believers didn’t isolate themselves; instead, they integrated their faith into daily life, meeting regularly in the temple and in each other’s homes. They shared meals and lived with joy and sincerity.

In the very next chapter, Peter demonstrates this principle. In **Acts 3:1-10**, he and John went to the temple and encountered a man who had been lame from birth, begging for money. Instead of giving him silver or gold, Peter, in the name of Jesus Christ, healed him. This miraculous event led many to hear about Jesus and believe in Him. Peter’s action exemplifies how the early church was actively involved in their community, meeting needs and spreading the Gospel through their actions.

The early church’s approach teaches us that our faith is not meant to be confined to Sunday services or private devotionals. We are called to be out in the community, ministering, praying, and serving. Our daily interactions, whether at work, in our neighborhoods, or with friends and family, are opportunities to live out and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Supporting Scriptures:

Matthew 5:16 - "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Hebrews 10:24-25 - "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Prayer Points:

- Prayer for Boldness in Sharing the Gospel: "Lord, grant me the courage and boldness to share the good news of Jesus Christ with those around me. Help me to see opportunities to minister and serve in my community, just as the early church did."
- Prayer for Genuine Community: "Heavenly Father, foster within our church and homes a spirit of genuine community and fellowship. May we meet together with joyful and sincere hearts, encouraging and supporting one another in our faith journey."

Friday, August 30th, 2024

Living Out Joyfulness & Worshipfulness

In our daily lives, it can be easy to become overwhelmed by worries and fears. We might find ourselves stressed about minor inconveniences—a flat tire, a delayed meal. These frustrations can seem significant in the moment, but they pale in comparison to the trials faced by many around the world and throughout history.

We often forget that countless Christians endure torment, pain, and persecution for their faith. Yet, even amid such suffering, many find a profound joy that surpasses understanding. This joy is rooted in their unwavering focus on Jesus. When Jesus is at the center of our lives, joy naturally follows. The early church knew this well. Despite facing immense challenges, they understood that life with Jesus was infinitely better than life without Him. Their joy wasn't based on their circumstances but on their relationship with Christ.

If Jesus is leading our lives, we have no reason to fear. If He is guiding the church, we can rest assured. If He is our King, our Redeemer, and our Savior, we can trust Him completely.

Let's shift our focus from the problems we face to the Savior we follow. Instead of magnifying our struggles, let's magnify Jesus. When we make a big deal about Jesus, our worries shrink in comparison. Let us embrace the joy that comes from knowing Jesus. In Him, we find peace that transcends our troubles and hope that lights our path.

In **Acts 2:47** praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

We see a vibrant picture of the early church, deeply rooted in worship and praise. Their worship wasn't just a routine but a profound expression of joy and gratitude towards God. This worshipful attitude wasn't isolated but had a ripple effect, attracting favor from others and leading to the continuous growth of the church.

Psalm 100:4 - "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name."

Prayer Points:

Gratitude in Worship: Pray for a heart that overflows with thankfulness as we worship God.

Impact on Others: Ask God to use our worship and joy to draw others closer to Him, just as in Acts 2:47.

As we center our worship on Jesus, let's echo the early church's devotion, praising God wholeheartedly and inviting His presence to transform lives around us.

Saturday, August 31st, 2024

Finding Strength in Weakness

"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." — **2 Corinthians 12:9** (NIV)

The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, shares a profound truth about the nature of God's grace and power. Despite facing numerous challenges and hardships, Paul recognizes that his weaknesses are not hindrances but opportunities for God's strength to be revealed. This perspective is transformative. It shifts our focus from our limitations to God's limitless power.

In our daily lives, we often strive for perfection and self-sufficiency. We want to be strong, competent, and capable. However, this scripture reminds us that it's not about our abilities but about God's grace. When we acknowledge our weaknesses, we create space for God's power to work through us. It's in our moments of vulnerability that God's grace shines the brightest.

Paul's testimony encourages us to embrace our weaknesses and rely on God's strength. Instead of being discouraged by our shortcomings, we can find hope and confidence in knowing that God's grace is sufficient for us. His power is made perfect in our weakness, and this truth can transform our perspective on our struggles and challenges.

Prayer Points:

- **Dependence on God's Grace:** Pray for a heart that fully depends on God's grace, recognizing that His strength is made perfect in our weaknesses. Ask God to help you see your limitations as opportunities for His power to be displayed.
- **Strength in Weakness:** Pray for the strength to embrace your weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Ask God to use these moments to reveal His power and glory in your life. Seek His guidance and support in trusting Him fully, especially during times of difficulty and challenge.

In our journey of faith, may we always remember that it is not about our strength but His. Let us find comfort and hope in the assurance that God's grace is sufficient for us, and His power is made perfect in our weakness.