

Prayer Devotions
September 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.

Tajikistan

Persecution Type: Islamic oppression, Dictatorial paranoia, Clan oppression

Main Religion: Islam

Government: Presidential Republic

Leader: President Emomali Rahmon

Kazakhstan

Persecution Type: Islamic oppression, Dictatorial paranoia, Clan oppression

Main Religion: Islam

Government: Presidential Republic

Leader: President Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev

Jordan

Persecution Type: Islamic oppression, Dictatorial paranoia, Clan oppression, Christian Denominational protectionism

Main Religion: Islam

Government: Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy

Leader: King Abdullah II

Daily Prayers for September: “The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children.” — Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Sunday, September 1st, 2024:

Take it Back

Tauren Wells has a song out that’s entitled “Take it All Back.” This is profoundly needed in our schools where parents have been deemed nonentities in the decisions regarding the “education” of their own children. The theme of the song is, “I’m taking back what the enemy stole.” The enemy is trying his best to steal the hearts, minds and even identities of our next generation, and that demands an army of prayer warriors who are shouting, “Not on our watch!”

Truth has truly stumbled in the streets and our children are being indoctrinated with half truths and exposed to ideologies that are diametrically opposed to the truth of God. There has been such a proliferation of misinformation that we are actually said to be in a “post-truth era.” We must not allow our children to be so filled with secularism masquerading as wisdom that they forget the source of all truth.

They need the stability that comes from a reliable standard, and they need adults who are advocating for them, modeling a godly worldview, teaching truth and exposing deception, and who are on their knees before God and on their feet before those who are seeking to misguide them. “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” (**Matthew 18:6** NIV)

The enemy wants to hijack our kids by causing them to question God’s truth. We can’t let Him steal their innocence and destroy their future. It’s a spiritual battle, and in the words of Tauren Wells - “I’m raising the battle cry; I’m holding the banner high. With the power of the Holy Ghost, I’m taking back what the enemy stole.”

Monday, September 2nd, 2024:

Distraction, Doubt, Division, Destruction

Our struggle is not against flesh and blood. It's not against those whose appearance or beliefs are different from our own, and it's not against a political party. Our struggle is against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly realms! (**Ephesians 6:12**)

Satan wants to destroy anything that poses a threat to his dominion over earthly flesh, and he does this through distraction, doubt, and division. His first strategy is to distract us from pursuing God with our whole hearts. Then he causes us to question the purity and relevance of God's word and how it applies to our personal lives. Did God *really* say? That puts us on shaky ground, and what's more, it reveals areas of possible contention and disagreement with others.

This causes division, and the greater the separation, the greater the chaos. How can we ever expect to come and reason together when we are adamantly defending our own personal agendas rather than God's? When we get caught up in the madness around us, we are drawn away from the truth that can save us.

Just remember - the enemy's ultimate goal is destruction, starting with the lives and testimonies of individual believers and extending to families, the church, and any system of government that still supports godly values. We need to get back to the basics of first knowing God and His Word and then genuinely building our lives on that sure foundation. Know the truth by studying His word; then apply it to your life - all of it. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (**Romans 12:2**) Once that is established, the rest will naturally fall into place. (**1 Peter 5:8-12**)

Tuesday, September 3rd, 2024:

Rest and Restoration

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake." - Psalm 23:1-3 (ESV)

Reflection: Psalm 23 beautifully portrays God as our Shepherd, providing for our every need. The imagery of green pastures and still waters symbolize peace and provision, while the restoration of our souls points to God's desire to renew us spiritually.

Supporting Scriptures:

1. **John 10:11 (ESV)** - "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."
 - This verse reminds us that Jesus, our Good Shepherd, cares for us so deeply that He sacrificed His life for our salvation. His guidance is rooted in His profound love for us.
2. **Isaiah 40:11 (ESV)** - "He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young."
 - Here, we see God's gentle and nurturing nature. He carries us close to His heart, providing comfort and strength, especially in our times of need.

Application: In the hustle and bustle of life, it's easy to become weary and lost. But God, our Shepherd, invites us to rest in His presence. He leads us to places of peace and renews our strength. Trust in His guidance, knowing that He restores our souls and leads us in righteousness for His glory.

Prayer Points:

1. **Rest in God's Presence:** "Lord, help me to find rest in You. Lead me to Your green pastures and still waters where my soul can be refreshed."
2. **Trust in His Guidance:** "Father, I trust You as my Shepherd. Guide me in Your paths of righteousness and help me follow Your lead every day."
3. **Spiritual Renewal:** "Holy Spirit, restore my soul and renew my spirit. Fill me with Your peace and strength, so I may walk in Your ways."

May you find comfort and renewal in the loving care of our Good Shepherd. Amen.

Wednesday, September 4th, 2024:

Even If

As a child, the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego was one of my favorites. Knowing that God protected those three young Jewish men who were thrown into the fiery furnace when they refused to bow down and worship King Nebuchadnezzar's golden idol was thrilling!

Their faithfulness and obedience to God was above reproach. They were so confident that God would save them, they said, "even if He doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up."

So, into the furnace they went. The best part was when the king ordered them to be removed from the furnace because he spotted a fourth person inside. In fact, after being tied up and thrown into the fire, they were walking around unharmed by the flames that were seven times hotter than usual per the king's instructions.

When the three men came out, not a single hair on their heads was singed and their clothes didn't even smell like smoke. Where did the fourth guy go? The king believed it was an angel of the LORD, and He praised God. He immediately issued a decree that anyone who spoke against God would be savagely killed, and their house destroyed.

The three men trusted God enough to say that even if He didn't save them, the result was still the same. Whether they were burned to death or they were saved, God was and still is King and He is good.

Even if our prayers are not answered the way we want and even if things don't go our way, Jesus is still good. He will always be good. And He will never leave us nor forsake us.

Daniel 3:16-30; Deuteronomy 31:8

Thursday, September 5th, 2024:

Strong Tower

“This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.” (**Psalm 118:24**)
Are you worried about the future? “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice.”
(**Philippians 4:4**) “The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease.”
(**Lamentations 3:22 NLT**) Go to Him in that “...secret place” (**Psalm 31:20**) and pour out your
heart. He is listening. He is delighted that you are seeking him. You are his child and like a
good Father, he wants to comfort you. Put your trust in him in the smallest request and wait
and see how he hears and then answers you. It is your privilege to go before him. Has he
answered your prayers in the past? Has he been merciful in the past? Have you known his
hand of protection over you? Has he lifted a heavy burden from your shoulders? Has he
provided when you could see no way possible? Has he carried away a past hurt? You can
trust His word that says “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (**Hebrews**
13:8) What He did for you yesterday, He will do for you today. “...He will never leave you nor
forsake you.” (**Deuteronomy 31:6b NIV**) He is a strong tower, a refuge from the storm, your
provider, your counselor with all wisdom for every situation you face. Come before Him with a
song of praise. Get in His presence, pour your heart out to Him. Go to Him and trust that he
will provide for your every need. Give him the glory because he has everything you need. God
loves you. His lovingkindness brings sunshine into your life. Just call on the sweet name of
Jesus and run to Him! “The name of the Lord is a strong tower, The righteous run to it and are
safe.” (**Proverbs 18:10**)

1 John 3:2, Proverbs 3:6, Philippians 4:19, John 15:26, Psalm 95:2, Psalm 96:8

Friday, September 6th, 2024:

Comfort in Psalm 23:4

"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." - **Psalm 23:4**

Reflection: In our journey through life, we inevitably encounter moments of darkness and fear. Psalm 23:4 speaks directly to these times, offering profound reassurance. This verse reminds us that no matter how dire our circumstances, we are never alone. God's presence is a steadfast source of comfort and strength.

Supporting Scriptures:

1. **Isaiah 41:10:** "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."
2. **John 16:33:** "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Isaiah 41:10 reinforces the assurance that God is always with us, offering His strength and support. John 16:33 acknowledges the reality of troubles in this world but assures us of the ultimate victory and peace we find in Christ.

Application: As we meditate on **Psalm 23:4**, let us remember that God's guidance and protection are always available to us. His "rod and staff" symbolize His authority and care, guiding us through the darkest valleys. We can trust that His presence will comfort us and dispel our fears.

Prayer Points:

1. **Gratitude for God's Presence:** Heavenly Father, thank You for Your constant presence in my life. Help me to always feel Your nearness, especially during challenging times.
2. **Strength and Courage:** Lord, grant me strength and courage to face my fears, knowing that You are with me. Help me to trust in Your protection and guidance.
3. **Peace and Comfort:** Dear God, fill my heart with Your peace and comfort. Remind me that even in the darkest valleys, Your love and care will sustain me.

In moments of fear and uncertainty, let us hold tightly to the promises of God found in Psalm 23:4 and the supporting scriptures. May we walk confidently, knowing that our Shepherd is always by our side.

Saturday, September 7th, 2024:

Challenges of Change

We have a tendency to gravitate toward the familiar or the “easy way” to deal with things. We need to understand that when the situation is unfavorable, there needs to be a change, and change can be challenging. When God finally sent Moses to deliver the Israelites, it didn’t take long for them to start complaining about the difficulties and uncertainties they were facing and begin to question Moses’ leadership, doubt God, and long for Egypt! (**Exodus 14**)

When we don’t see what’s ahead, Satan will try to convince us that where we are (or were) isn’t really so bad. Satan, like Pharaoh, won’t let us claim our freedom without a fight. Sometimes it takes us being between a rock and a hard place - or an advancing army and a raging river - to finally cry out to the Lord.

For the Israelites, the pillar of cloud stood between them and Pharaoh’s army. The enemy’s camp only saw the dark side of the cloud (judgment); the Israelites “saw the light” (salvation) and passed through the parted waters on dry land! They had to totally leave behind even the possibility of returning to Egypt in order to move forward into God’s plan.

This was completely new to them, and it wouldn’t be without hardships and challenges, but they were walking into their freedom and their destiny. We all need to take an honest look at where we are and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us anything we’re holding onto that would keep us in bondage to a lesser life. “Forget what happened long ago! Don't think about the past. I am creating something new. There it is! Do you see it? I have put roads in deserts, streams in thirsty lands.” (**Isaiah 43:18-19**, Contemporary English Version) Embrace the challenge and let it change you for the better.

Sunday, September 8th, 2024:

Seeing Past Your Fork

Relationships are so much more difficult than rulebooks. If you diligently memorize and follow all the rules, you're pretty sure to succeed. But there are no set-in-stone comprehensive rules to guarantee that all relationships will be successful - or even tolerable. Rule following doesn't require a heart commitment - only a head commitment.

This doesn't mean we shouldn't abide by the rules. The crucial element is the why. If we're simply a rule follower, when the one who gave the rules isn't "present" we'll inevitably only follow the rules that make sense to us or fit into what will best suit our personal desires and immediate wants or needs. The very best rule followers were called Pharisees. For them, eating a BLT would have been a ticket to Sheol!

It's not what goes into our mouths, but what comes out of them. (**Matthew 15:11**) What comes out is the overflow of what's in our hearts, and our hearts are shaped by who we follow. When we follow Jesus rather than a set of rules, we obey because we want to - not because we feel we have to.

Rules confine us; they feel rigid and unbending. Rules are impersonal. Relationships, on the other hand, are very personal and fluid in nature. They're forgiving when we mess up, and when we realize our missteps have the potential of damaging the relationship, we alter our behavior because we want to. We change because we value the relationship.

Making rules may sound like the logical thing to do, but they rarely change behavior. However, who we hang out with does. The more we hang with our friends, the more we become like them. Relationships change who you are. The more time you spend with the Lord, the more you'll see your life change for the better. Relationship with God always wins out over rules.

Monday, September 9th, 2024:

Abundance in God's Presence

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” **Psalm 23:5-6 (NIV)**

In these verses, David paints a picture of God’s abundant provision and constant presence. Despite being surrounded by adversaries, God prepares a feast for us, anointing us and ensuring our cup overflows. This imagery signifies honor, blessings, and divine favor.

John 10:10 (NIV): “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.”

Jesus promises us a life of abundance, aligning with the overflowing cup in Psalm 23. His presence brings completeness and fulfillment beyond our physical needs, extending to our spiritual and emotional well-being.

Romans 8:38-39 (NIV): “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

God's unwavering love and goodness are always with us. Like David, we can be confident that His love follows us all our lives, providing security and peace amidst life’s trials.

In moments of fear and uncertainty, **Psalm 23:5-6** reassures us that God’s blessings are not hindered by external circumstances. His provision and care are constant, and His presence is a sanctuary where we find rest and nourishment. We are honored guests at His table, and His anointing signifies our valued place in His kingdom.

Prayer Points:

Gratitude for God's Provision: Thank You, Lord, for preparing a table before me and anointing my head with oil. Your blessings and favor overflow in my life.

Trust in God's Protection: Father, help me to trust in Your protection and provision, even in the presence of my enemies. Remind me daily of Your goodness and love that follow me always.

Dwelling in God's Presence: Lord, guide me to dwell in Your house forever, finding peace and refuge in Your constant presence. Let my life be a testimony of Your abundant love and grace.

Be encouraged by the overflowing abundance of God's love and provision.

Tuesday, September 10th, 2024:

Navigating the Current Culture

Is the current culture more divisive and volatile than ever? Or has it always been this way but we were unaware because we didn't have instant access to worldwide news like we do now?

Stories from the Bible show us that at times, the world was way more divisive and volatile than it is now. But reading about stories that happened long ago doesn't have quite the same impact as it does now that we're living in it.

How do we navigate this? What does God say we should do?

First and foremost, we need to remember that we are citizens of a Kingdom that's not of this world. Even though we are living IN this world, we are not OF this world. Our Creator/Redeemer gave us His Spirit who indwells us, guides us, and empowers us so we can follow His mission of sharing the gospel with others.

Meanwhile, the enemy is doing everything he can to distract us from the mission of making disciples. In fact, before He was crucified, Jesus prayed for the disciples and all believers because He knew we would be hated by the world and attacked by the enemy for our beliefs.

"I have given them Your Word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your Word is truth. As You sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world."

Therefore, let's share the gospel and fulfill His mission!

Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 8:9-11; John 17:14-18

Wednesday, September 11th, 2024:

The Fourth Man

“...The Lord was there.” (**Ezekiel 35:10**)

I will go before you when the battle rages. “Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one--for God himself has given us right standing with himself.” (**Romans 8:33 NLT**) David the shepherd boy had no fear when he faced the giant, Goliath. He told the giant who was coming against him, “...I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty...” (**1 Samuel 17:45 NLT**). Then we see the story of the three men who defied the King’s orders to worship the golden image. The King had the three men thrown into a furnace and the King ordered it to be heated seven times hotter than normal. It was so hot the guards were consumed by the fire but not the three men. When the King observed the fiery furnace, he was amazed because he saw a fourth man in the fire. The King said, I thought we threw three men in the fire? “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” (**Daniel 3:25**) When you face your own ‘fiery furnace’ you too will be victorious because God is with you in the fiery trial. “...He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (**1 John 4:4b**) “...’Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit’ says the Lord of hosts.” (**Zechariah 4:6b**) Ephesians 6 reminds us this is not a battle of flesh and blood, but it is a spiritual battle we are fighting. God has given us the battle position. “Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand.” (**Ephesians 6:13**) We are to stand on the truth of righteousness and put on the “gospel of peace” Then our faith like a shield protects us. Last, take your sword to battle, which is the word of God. And then, pray always.

Thursday, September 12th, 2024

Trust in the Lord and Handling Offense

In our daily walk with God, trust and forgiveness are essential virtues. Trusting in the Lord means relying on His wisdom and guidance even when circumstances seem challenging. Handling offense with grace involves forgiving others as God has forgiven us, freeing ourselves from bitterness and resentment.

Trust in the Lord:

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV): "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

Isaiah 26:3 (NIV): "You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast because they trust in you."

These scriptures remind us that trusting in God brings peace and direction. When we lean on our understanding, we often find ourselves overwhelmed and confused. However, by trusting in God's perfect plan, we can navigate life's challenges with confidence and calm.

Handling Offense:

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV): "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Colossians 3:13 (NIV): "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

These verses highlight the importance of forgiveness in our spiritual journey. Harboring offense leads to bitterness, which can hinder our relationship with God and others. By forgiving, we release the burden of anger and embrace the freedom that comes with God's love and mercy.

Prayer Points:

1. **Trust in God's Plan:** "Lord, help me to trust in Your perfect plan for my life. Teach me to lean not on my understanding but to rely on Your wisdom and guidance. Strengthen my faith as I commit my ways to You."
2. **Grace to Forgive:** "Father, grant me the grace to forgive those who have offended me. Remove any bitterness and resentment from my heart. Help me to extend the same forgiveness and compassion that You have shown me through Christ."

By trusting in the Lord and handling offense with grace, we align ourselves with God's will and experience the fullness of His peace and joy.

Friday, September 13th, 2024:

Prayer Warriors

Have you ever wondered why they're called prayer warriors and not prayer Cub Scouts? It's because they're enlisted to fight - to battle against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies! (**Ephesians 6:12**) Much of the Church has unfortunately relegated prayer to a list of wants or a last ditch effort when everything else has failed. Prayer is a mighty weapon against the enemy, but a good soldier is well-trained in weaponry before ever going out on the battlefield. Anything else would be foolish and suicidal; but the power of just one well-trained soldier is unfathomable.

The same is true with prayer - one person's prayer can turn bitter water to sweet...or supernaturally annihilate a superior army while you sleep! (**Exodus 15:22-25; Isaiah 37:21**) *Because they prayed!* What would have happened if Moses had sided with the mob and complained to God about leading them into the desert only to die of thirst? Or if Hezekiah had surrendered to the heretofore undefeated Assyrian king? We'll never know because they didn't; instead they trusted God and cried out to Him.

Jesus was pretty clear when He told His disciples, "So I say to you, ask *and* keep on asking, and it will be given to you; seek *and* keep on seeking, and you will find; knock *and* keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you." (**Luke 11:9**, Amplified Bible) You see reflected in that perseverance and an obvious expectation that the one being asked will respond. And as Paul added, "Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God. Then, because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel." (**Philippians 4:6-7**, Contemporary English Version) So put on your spiritual armor and go to battle!

Saturday, September 14th, 2024:

Unholy Appetites

You've probably heard someone say, "My eyes were bigger than my stomach." Maybe you've said it yourself at a luxurious buffet. The problem is, if we fail to curb our appetites and continue to overindulge our unhealthy choices, we'll just keep getting larger and larger and more and more unhealthy. If left unaddressed, it can lead to death. As the saying goes - you are what you eat.

The same holds true in spiritual matters. What are you "feasting" on? Just like we need to train ourselves to choose nourishing food over junk to satisfy our palate, we need to make "healthy" choices regarding what we think will satisfy our souls and spirits. God's moral and ethical codes were never intended to deprive us.

When the 10 Commandments were being supernaturally delivered to Moses, the Israelites became restless. Despite having witnessed evidence that it was God leading them, they somehow thought that without Moses they had no direction. Just who were they following? Left to their own devices and desires, they quickly spiraled into an unhealthy spiritual free-for-all.

Instead of bringing freedom, "doing what seems right in our own eyes" puts us in bondage. Without God's guidance, you can see where our country is headed, and it isn't just happening in the secular arena. If we continue to compromise and justify what we're being "fed" on a regular basis, what's offered on the table will continue to lure us with what will never satisfy but will only lead to death. When is enough enough?

Any addict will tell you they never determined as a child to become a crackhead or an alcoholic. The pusher's ploy is often "the first one's free." Don't let the enemy feed you his garbage. "For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God." (**Titus 2:11-12, NLT**)

Sunday, September 15th, 2024:

Faithfulness in an Ungodly Culture

Daniel's story teaches us about faith, perseverance, and honoring God in the face of adversity, despite living in a hostile environment.

Daniel 1:8 - "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way."

- Daniel's commitment to his faith, even in small things like food, demonstrates his dedication to God's commands.

Daniel 6:10 - "Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before."

- Despite the threat of death, Daniel continued his practice of prayer, showing his unwavering perseverance in faith.

Daniel 6:22 - "My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty."

- God honored Daniel's faithfulness by delivering him from the lions' den, proving that God protects and rewards those who honor Him.

Daniel's life is a powerful example of faith and perseverance. He stayed true to God despite immense pressure to conform to Babylonian culture. His steadfastness in prayer and obedience not only protected him but also showcased God's power and faithfulness. We are encouraged to remain firm in our faith, trusting that God will honor our commitment and deliver us in times of trial.

Prayer Points

1. **Strength to Persevere:** "Lord, grant me the strength and courage to remain faithful to You, even when I face challenges and pressures from the world around me. Help me to stand firm in my beliefs and practices, just as Daniel did."
2. **Faithfulness in Daily Life:** "Heavenly Father, help me to honor You in my daily actions and decisions. Let my life be a testimony of Your goodness and faithfulness, inspiring others to seek and trust in You."

May Daniel's example inspire us to live faithfully in all circumstances, knowing that our perseverance and honor towards God will be rewarded.

Monday, September 16th, 2024:

Endurance Through Trials

The story of Job is a powerful testament to the strength and resilience of faith in the face of overwhelming adversity. Job, a man described as blameless and upright, faced unimaginable trials—loss of wealth, health, and family—yet he remained steadfast in his faith.

Romans 5:3-4 says, “Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.” Job’s journey mirrors this truth. His suffering was immense, but it cultivated in him an unshakeable endurance, a profound character, and ultimately, a steadfast hope in God’s righteousness and justice.

In the New Testament, **1 Timothy 6:12** encourages believers to “Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” Job exemplified this fight of faith, holding firmly to his integrity and trust in God despite his friends’ accusations and his wife’s despair.

Job’s story challenges us to embrace our trials as opportunities to deepen our faith and reliance on God. It is in these moments of suffering that our endurance is tested and refined, producing a character that reflects Christ’s own steadfastness.

Prayer Points

1. **For Strength and Endurance:** Pray for the strength to endure trials with faith and patience, trusting that God is working in our lives to produce character and hope.

Father, grant me the strength to endure my trials with unwavering faith. Help me to trust in Your purpose and timing, knowing that my suffering produces endurance and hope. Amen.

2. **For Faith in God’s Sovereignty:** Pray for a deepened trust in God’s sovereignty and goodness, even when His ways are beyond our understanding.

Lord, help me to trust in Your sovereign plan, even when I cannot see the path ahead. Remind me of Your goodness and faithfulness, and help me to rest in Your perfect will. Amen.

Tuesday, September 17th, 2024:

Deep Darkness

When you're in an exceedingly dark place, what you need more than anything is light. Without it, it's nearly impossible to safely navigate. Isaiah rightly prophesied that those who walked in darkness would see a great light, even though it would be many years in the future, through Jesus, the Messiah. (**Isaiah 9:2**) However, in order to actually benefit from the light, there would need to be repentance and a turning from the darkness. Sadly, there seems to be a great deal of reluctance to walk out of the dark.

Interestingly, there is a theory that in some animals blindness is an adaptation to perpetually living in darkness. There seems to be a spiritual application in that. If people continue to choose to walk in darkness, the result could be permanent blindness. In Jesus' time, He was shedding light on the truth and the religious leaders were threatened by Him, so much so that they eventually succeeded in crucifying Him. Jesus is the light of the world, but those who had adapted to the darkness of their man-made religion refused to turn to Him.

Jesus Himself declared that He is the way, the truth, and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through Him. (**John 14:6**) There's both objective (universal) and subjective (circumstantial) truth. When Jesus says He is the truth, it's the objective, universal, transcendent, immutable truth of Almighty God whose word is both a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Jesus tells us very plainly, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (**John 8:12**) Don't settle for groping about in the darkness, walk into the light of life before blindness sets in.

Wednesday, September 18th, 2024:

Glory to Glory

The backlash from the golden calf incident was that God told Moses they could still go into the Promised Land, but His Presence would not go with them. “Then Moses replied, "If You aren't going with us, please don't make us leave this place.” (**Exodus 33:15**, Contemporary English Version) But he didn't stop there. Because this found favor with the Lord, Moses asked to see His glory. Bold. Hungry. And God said yes! He showed Moses as much of His glory as he could handle and not die.

We tend to read that and relegate it to past tense, a one-time occurrence - after all, that was *Moses*! This is a false mindset. We have access to that same glory. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (**John 1:14**) The question then is if we have the same hunger for Him, the same commitment to following Him, and the same boldness to actually ask Him.

It's not so much a question of seeking to receive from Him as it is to know Him on a deeper, more intimate level. The result of God's glory resting on Moses was visible, and although our faces may not reflect His glory so intensely that they shine and we have to wear a veil, there should be evidence to those we encounter that there is something different. His Presence brings peace and rest - even in the midst of difficulties. His glory changes and transforms us - at least it should! It's only when we're truly separating ourselves and seeking.

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

(**2 Corinthians 3:18**, New King James)

Thursday, September 19th, 2024:

Peace in the Storms of Life

Life's storms are inevitable, but God's peace is unfathomable. Philippians 4:7 reminds us, "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." This peace is not dependent on circumstances but rooted in God's presence and promises.

In **2 Thessalonians 3:16**, Paul prays, "Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you." This verse reassures us that God's peace is ever-present, available at all times and in every situation. It's a peace that transcends human comprehension and is accessible through our relationship with Jesus.

Jesus himself offers a profound promise in **John 14:27**: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." The peace Jesus gives is distinct from worldly peace. It's not temporary or circumstantial but eternal and secure.

When we face life's tempests, we can anchor ourselves in God's promises. His peace acts as a guard over our hearts and minds, shielding us from anxiety and fear. By trusting in Him, we can navigate any storm with a serene heart, knowing He is with us.

Prayer Points:

1. **For Inner Peace Amidst Chaos:** "Lord, grant me Your peace that surpasses all understanding. Help me to trust in Your presence and promises, no matter the storms I face. Guard my heart and mind with Your peace, and let me find rest in You."
2. **For God's Peace to Reign in Difficult Situations:** "Heavenly Father, I pray for Your peace to reign in every difficult situation I encounter. May Your presence be my refuge and strength. Help me to remember that Your peace is always available, and let it guide me through every trial and tribulation. Amen."

Friday, September 20th, 2024:

Accepted in the Beloved

You were chosen. “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight in love.” (**Ephesians 1:4 NIV**)

The ‘world’ would try to entice you into seeking riches, looking for fame, searching for excitement and the next big thrill and every pleasure the world offers. Maybe for awhile you have found satisfaction in worldly pursuits. But dear friend that doesn’t last. You end up being frustrated and go searching for something new trying to satisfy the cry of your soul and you are left feeling hopeless. The only hope for the longing soul is the joy and satisfaction that comes from a spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” (**John 14:6a**) Everything you are searching for can be found in a relationship with Jesus Christ. If you have searched to fill the void and you have tried everything, why not search for Jesus? The word of God says, “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” (**Jeremiah 29:13**) If you are reading this, know that you are chosen. You are not only chosen but you are accepted. You are loved. Jesus is preparing a place for those who know Him. Have you prepared a place for him in your heart? Ask Him to come into your heart today and to forgive you of your sins. Jesus is waiting with open arms to welcome you into the family of God. “...to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.” (**Ephesians 1:6**) You can’t earn it. It’s the free gift of God.

Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, John 14:3

Saturday, September 21st, 2024:

Switching Pronouns

Psalms 23 ranks as one of the most popular Psalms in the Bible. It's filled with beautiful imagery, comfort, and hope. How wonderful it would be to lie down in green pastures and truly rest because our Shepherd is there watching over us and keeping us safe from evil.

Recently, it struck me that King David wrote the first three verses **about** our Lord in third person pronouns: The Lord, He, His. And in verses 4 and 5, David wrote directly **to** the Lord by switching to the second person pronoun: You.

I've read this Psalm too many times to count but it never really impacted me like it did that day. It felt so intimate, and it spoke to my heart deeper than ever before.

That's one of the many things I love about reading the Living Word. We know it's living because it speaks to us on deeper and deeper levels the more we read it. Isn't it so awesome that Holy Spirit indwells us and transforms our hearts to love and understand the Bible?

During this particular reading when I realized the intimate impact of the pronoun shift, I felt led to jot down a list of what David referenced about our Lord and what he said to our Lord.

The Lord is my Guardian. He satisfies me. He fulfills my needs. He leads me. He restores me.

Lord, You are with me. You protect me. You comfort me. You provide for me. You purify me. You are generous. You are good. You are merciful. You will be with me forever.

Now when I'm feeling discouraged or overwhelmed, I pray those promises, and I'm instantly filled with His peace that surpasses all understanding. God is SO good!

Psalms 23; 1 Corinthians 2:7-16; Philippians 4:7

Sunday, September 22nd, 2024

Overcoming Challenges Through God's Presence and Power

Life is filled with challenges that can leave us feeling overwhelmed and uncertain. Yet, as believers, we are equipped with divine strength and assurance through God's presence and power. In **2 Timothy 1:7**, Paul reminds us, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." This powerful verse encourages us to face our struggles with confidence, knowing that fear is not from God.

In **Isaiah 41:10**, we are reassured, "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." This promise from God underscores His unwavering presence and support in our lives, especially during difficult times.

Furthermore, in **Philippians 4:13**, Paul declares, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." This verse serves as a reminder that our strength comes from Christ, empowering us to overcome any obstacle.

When we face life's challenges, we must remember that God's power, love, and presence are with us. We are not alone, and we have been given a spirit of power to rise above our fears.

Prayer Points:

1. **Strength and Courage:** "Lord, grant me strength and courage to face the challenges before me, knowing that You have not given me a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind."
2. **Divine Presence:** "Heavenly Father, remind me of Your constant presence and help me to trust in Your promise to uphold and strengthen me in every situation."

May these scriptures and prayers fortify your spirit as you navigate life's trials, knowing that God's power and presence are always with you.

Monday, September 23rd, 2024

Daily Percentages

I like to check the backs of vitamin bottles and food purchases to see how they fulfill the minimum daily requirement of certain essentials needed for optimal health. We somehow have the notion that if we can just hit that percentage, we're good to go. The key word we sometimes overlook is *minimum*. It doesn't guarantee vibrant health; it means it's just enough to hopefully keep us out of the doctor's office.

How often do we approach our spiritual life with the same mindset? And what do we use to determine our minimum requirement? Is it five minutes reading a devotional? Actually going to church on the weekend and sitting through the service? Praying before bed? Cracking open the Bible - occasionally? What is enough?

I love the example of giving in Exodus 36. Moses asked for "whoever was willing" to bring their offerings to build the Tabernacle, and they responded so generously that they had to be told to stop! It's a heart issue, not a task list or a tally sheet. The more our hearts are drawn to Him, the more we'll be able to discern how we should be serving Him to bring Him glory.

"Whatever you do, work at it with your whole being, for the Lord and not for men, because you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as your reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." (**Colossians 3:23-24**) When your heart is in it, you don't have to ask, "Is it enough?" You'll experience such joy in what you dedicate to Him that you'll easily exceed what others might consider enough to avoid the fire.

Sadly, when the givers were told "enough" and the giving stopped, it was too late for the reluctant to take part in the blessing. Don't be a lazy scorekeeper.

Tuesday, September 24th, 2024

A Timeless Plot

It's a classic theme in literature – good versus evil. We have an innate desire to see an intense battle in which good ultimately triumphs, and part of the reason for that is because it's a story that began when ours did - in the Garden of Eden. We have an arch villain who is sinister and Machiavellian with a full arsenal of malicious, deceitful strategies and a host of minions to do his bidding.

But we also have a mighty champion. Even though at times He may appear to be oblivious to the enemy's wiles, we are assured He will come to our defense. In fact, when the odds appear to be impossibly stacked against the side of good and the situation becomes seemingly hopeless, this is when we cheer the loudest at His meticulously planned appearance and His miraculous triumph against evil. "Do not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God Himself will fight for you." (**Deuteronomy 3:22**)

It's Luke Skywalker finally closing his eyes and giving over control to "the force." We have a very powerful force living inside of us as well, and it behooves us to remember that and to give Him control. This is how we fight our battles – it may look like we're surrounded, but we're surrounded by Him. When we surrender to His guidance, we can be assured of an ultimate and glorious victory. "What then shall we say to all these things? If God is for us, who can be [successful] against us?" (**Romans 8:31**, Amplified Bible) As long as we're for Him, He is always for us.

Wednesday, September 25th, 2024

Strengthened by God's Word

In our daily walk with Christ, we encounter spiritual battles that challenge our faith, resolve, and purpose. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, offers profound insights into preparing for and engaging in these spiritual conflicts.

Ephesians 6:10-12: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Paul reminds us that our strength comes from the Lord. The battles we face are not merely physical or emotional but are rooted in spiritual realities. We must rely on God's power and not our own. The "full armor of God" is essential to withstand the enemy's attacks.

Ephesians 6:13: "Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."

Preparation is key. By putting on the full armor of God—truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God—we are equipped to stand firm. This armor is not just for defense but for maintaining our ground, rooted in the unshakeable foundation of Christ.

Ephesians 6:18: "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."

Prayer is our lifeline in spiritual warfare. Continuous, Spirit-led prayer keeps us vigilant and connected to God's guidance and power. It is through prayer that we intercede for ourselves and others, fortifying the entire body of Christ.

Prayer Points:

1. **Strength and Protection:** "Lord, strengthen me with Your mighty power. Clothe me in Your full armor so I may stand firm against all spiritual attacks. Protect my mind, heart, and spirit as I walk in Your truth and righteousness."
2. **Vigilance in Prayer:** "Heavenly Father, help me to be persistent in prayer. Teach me to pray in the Spirit at all times, interceding for others and staying alert to the spiritual needs around me. May Your peace guard my heart and mind."

Through God's Word and prayer, we are empowered to face spiritual battles with confidence, knowing that victory is assured in Christ.

Thursday, Sept 26th, 2024

New Thing

“...For I have called you out of darkness into His (my) marvelous light: **(1 Peter 2:9)** I loved you before you knew me. My grace is upon you. You might think your sin is too great and cannot be forgiven. When Jesus was nailed to the cross, he took all your sin, and He paid the penalty for sin with his life. There is no sin that is too great for His forgiveness. “He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.” **(Psalm 103:12 NLT)** I have come to give you new life and cleanse you from all guiltiness. “So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.” **(Romans 8:1 NLT)** You are forgiven by the sacrifice Jesus made when he was crucified and shed his blood on the cross. “In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” **(Hebrews 9:22 NIV)** When you receive Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are made new. You are spiritually born again. You are free from your old life and a new life in Christ begins...by the grace of God. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” **(2 Corinthians 5:17)** Rejoice, shake off the shackles of the past. It’s the dawn of a new day. A day to live and walk free with Jesus. “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” **(Isaiah 43:19 NIV)**

1 John 4:19, Mark 15:37, John 3:16

Friday, September 27th, 2024

Quick-Slow-Slow

In the book of James, he tells us to understand this: you must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

Quick-Slow-Slow.

Thinking of it that way helps me remember the foundation of this essential verse.

Why should we be quick to listen? Because it's the foundation of building relationships. Jesus tells us to love one another but how can we do that if we don't take the time to listen and get to know someone?

How do we share the gospel if we aren't first listening to learn where they are in their current circumstances and understanding the condition of their hearts? When we are actively listening, most people will reveal a lot about themselves. This will help us meet them where they are. Jesus modeled this brilliantly.

We also need to be slow to speak. The saying, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care" comes to mind. It's hard to be in a conversation with someone when you know they aren't listening. They're just waiting for you to finish talking so they can say what they want to say.

"Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut." This is just one of many Proverbs that remind us to be slow to speak.

The last reminder is to be slow to get angry. There are many Scriptures addressing anger and how human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. "Don't let evil get the best of you but conquer evil by doing good."

When we know what we ought to do but we don't do it, that's a sin. It's not enough to know these things; we must put them into practice.

Know-Do

James 1:19; Proverbs 10:19; Romans 12:21; James 4:17

Saturday, September 28th, 2024

Eyes Focused on God in Praise and Thanksgiving

In the hustle and bustle of daily life, it's easy to become overwhelmed and distracted. Yet, there is profound peace and joy in fixing our eyes on God, especially through praise and thanksgiving. By doing so, we acknowledge His sovereignty, express our gratitude, and strengthen our faith.

Scripture:

1. **Psalms 100:4:** "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name."
 - This verse reminds us that thanksgiving and praise are the keys to entering God's presence. By focusing on Him with gratitude, we draw closer to His heart.
2. **Colossians 3:17:** "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."
 - Here, Paul encourages us to incorporate thanksgiving into every aspect of our lives. By doing everything in Jesus' name with a thankful heart, we keep our focus on God.
3. **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18:** "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
 - These verses call us to a lifestyle of joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. No matter the situation, maintaining a heart of gratitude helps us stay centered on God.

Prayer Points:

1. **Gratitude for God's Faithfulness:** Lord, thank You for Your unending faithfulness. Help us to remember Your goodness and to offer You praise and thanksgiving in all circumstances.
2. **Focus on God's Presence:** Father, guide our hearts and minds to stay focused on You. May our eyes be fixed on Your greatness and love, lifting our spirits in praise.
3. **Strength in Difficult Times:** Holy Spirit, empower us to remain thankful even in challenging times. Let our praises rise above our trials, acknowledging Your sovereignty and trusting in Your perfect plan.

In moments of joy and struggle alike, let us commit to keeping our eyes on God, offering Him continuous praise and thanksgiving. Through this, we will experience His peace, draw closer to His presence, and reflect His glory to the world.

Sunday, September 29th, 2024

More than Conquerors

How often have you heard others say, or perhaps you yourself have said, “Well, I’m only human!” As if that somehow excuses our failures to live up to what we know is right and moral. If you’re a follower of Christ, that’s a lie. We’ve been given a precious gift and identity that transcends our mortal bodies, and we can tap into the supernatural power that gives us to overcome any obstacle to obedient living that may come our way.

Jesus didn’t give His life just so we could cope with our fears and trials. He died so that we could become victorious overcomers! We need to not only acknowledge what that means; we need to walk it out with conviction and authority. Whenever you find yourself in a compromising or difficult situation in which you have a choice to make, make it a habit to declare not what the world (flesh) would say you are, but declare who God says you are. “He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” **(2 Corinthians 5:21)** Therefore you are more than a conqueror **(Romans 8:37)**, a new creation **(2 Corinthians 5:17)**, an adopted heir of Almighty God **(Ephesians 1:5)**. “But you are A CHOSEN PEOPLE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *GOD’S* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;” **(1 Peter 2:9, NAS)** Keep reminding yourself of all those things, and remember that through Him we have the power to overwhelmingly conquer. Greater is He! Praise God.

Monday, September 30th, 2024

Make a Difference

We're in a season of turmoil and oftentimes confusion, so it's absolutely critical that we understand what "kingdom" we belong to. We are citizens of the United States, but our first citizenship is in the kingdom of God. As such, we should be placing our hope and trust in Him to be the difference maker, but for Him to do so, we need to be engaged in the process.

You've heard it said that we get the leaders we deserve. They're the ones who reflect the hearts of the people - or at least the ones who are getting out and voting. Electing who we personally feel is the "right" candidate for any given position isn't going to solve all our problems, but it can certainly alter the course we're on right now!

That said, it's vitally important for the body of Christ to know who the candidates are and what they stand for. We're not electing a personality - we're hopefully seeking to elect someone who will speak truth and will honor the Biblical worldview on which our country was founded. And that means we need to vote; we need to encourage other Christians to vote, and we need to encourage those who are not registered to remedy that.

We live in a time where propaganda is more prevalent than truth. Again, know the truth about the candidates and then share it in a loving and respectful way with others. It won't always be well received, but it may be planting a seed. Know the facts, expose the lies, and ask for wisdom, discernment, and Spirit-filled stamina to run the course. Every voice can make a difference. (**Galatians 6:9**)