



21 Days of Fasting and Prayer
January 8-28, 2018

Prayer, Fasting, and Personal Devotion Guide



A NEW START TO A NEW YEAR!

As you prepare for the next twenty-one days, it can be tempting to start thinking of a laundry list of prayers you'd love to see answered. But we really want to encourage you to keep this simple. Think about the top two or three things most pressing on your heart and zone in on those with God. Write down in the space provided below, and be open to hearing what the Lord wants to show you in those areas. The breakthroughs, miracles, and answers to your prayers will be by-products of drawing closer to Jesus.

When praying, make your primary goal to know Jesus more and experience Him. Pray prayers of total surrender, and aim to glorify God with your life. Focus first on what's right about Him, such as His goodness and His greatness, and see everything else through that filter.

And most simply, make time to pray daily. Don't overcomplicate this! Just talk to God. Have that place and time where you can seek Him every day. If you don't plan to pray, you won't. If you find it a challenge to disconnect from the busyness of your day, engaging in worship music is a great way to prepare your heart for prayer.

During this fast, I am praying and believing God for:

#allin2018

Instructions for All In 2018...

Examine your life and prayerfully determine what areas most need breakthrough. You can use the guide attached to select one or several areas, or you might have one different than those listed. Remember, it is only a guide. You may also want to consider fasting for a family member or on behalf of someone else. Once you select a breakthrough decide how you are going to fast during the 21 days. You can reference the guide. We have provided a card for you to write these things down.

21 breakthroughs for which you could fast...

1. Financial Provision & Blessing or to get out of debt
2. Physical Healing for a family member, friend, or yourself
3. Victory over sins like pride, legalism, or self-righteousness
4. Restoration of a Relationship
5. To quit a bad habit like Smoking or others
6. Overcome Drug or Alcohol addiction for a family member, friend, or yourself
7. Salvation of a friend or family member
8. Promotion or New Opportunity at Work
9. Wisdom or Direction for a Critical Decision
10. Deliverance from Spiritual Oppression
11. The influence and growth of a ministry you lead or serve in
12. Victory over anxiety, fear, depression, or loneliness
13. The courage to make a decision you know you need to make
14. Improved Communication or Conflict Resolution in your marriage
15. A revival of your passion and love for the Lord
16. The development of a devotional time with the Lord
17. Spiritual Awakening for your spouse or children
18. To stop living a double life, one at church and one at work
19. Overcome Sexual Issues like pornography, lust, or impure thoughts
20. Expansion of the Children and Youth Ministries
21. Launching of more Small Groups

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14 ways you could fast...

1. All meals for 21 days.
2. 2 meals a day for 21 days.
3. 1 meal a day for 21 days.
4. All meals 3 days a week for 3 weeks.
5. All meals 1 day a week for 3 weeks.
6. Only Eat Nuts, Grains, Fruits, and Vegetables for 21 days, Daniel's Fast.
7. All food and drink Water only 1 day a week for 3 weeks.
8. Television for 21 days.
9. Coffee or Caffeine for 21 days.
10. Only drink water for 21 days.
11. Video Games for 21 days.
12. Facebook, or other social websites for 21 days.
13. Desserts, Sweets, Soft Drinks, or Chocolate for 21 days.
14. All meals for 7 days, 2 meals a day for 7 days, 1 meal a day for 7 days.

7 things you can expect...

1. You can expect it to be challenging and difficult. This will take discipline and focus on your part. Disciples are known by their discipline.
2. If you'll stick to your commitment to the Lord you should see a great increase in your faith and your personal spiritual transformation.
3. God may answer your request during this 21 days but he may not. There is no way for people to know exactly what God is going to do. We do know that during this emphasis we will draw closer to the Lord and that is our responsibility.
4. You will be more sensitive to God's Holy Spirit in your life. Removing the necessities and distractions of life will add a new sense of clarity to the voice of God.
5. You will have an increased fellowship with God and have a greater understanding of what it means to depend upon Him to meet your needs. The biblical word for this is the Supplication of God.
6. You should find yourself praying more small direct prayers throughout the day.
7. You should expect an increase in spiritual tension and resistance from the Devil. The Bible doesn't speak at all on the physical dangers of fasting. However, on several occasions mentions the spiritual danger of fasting, specifically the pride and acknowledgement of being a devoted, zealous and admirable disciple.

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3 Dangers to guard against...

1. The “God will reward me for this” mentality. Fasting is not the “work” that earns blessings from the hand of God. This is a demonic lie from our consumer culture.
2. The Pride and Self-righteous attitude that can come with practicing spiritual disciplines. This is not about you being the best disciple; this is about your desire and hunger to draw closer to God.
3. The idea of breaking your fast because you’ve already done enough. Several times during the fast you will think to yourself “I can’t do this any longer”, and you will try to justify breaking your fast since you’ve already done more than ever before. Don’t quit. Stick to your commitment.

1 Reason why God rewards fasting...

God rewards fasting when it’s done with the right heart. Proper fasting confesses that we are helpless without Him, and that we require Him to give us the Hope we need to press on in the world he created. This brings Glory to God because the giver always gets the Glory.

A Message to Families about Prayer and Fasting Together...

Your children may hear you speak about the upcoming 21 Day Prayer and Fasting Emphasis with much anticipation. They may wonder if this is something that they can do along with their family, and the answer is yes! Explain to your children that fasting will help them grow stronger as a Christian and closer to Jesus. When they take special time out to pray to Jesus and at the same time, take special effort to not enjoy a favorite food/snack item or activity during a certain period of time, they are fasting.

We will be providing a KidZone Fasting Calendar that will give suggestions as to how children can fast and seek the Lord during these 21 days. There will be a Bible reading for each day, that we encourage you to do together, as a family. Each day will also have a suggested fast for that day, such as:

- Fasting TV, Movies, DVDs and Videos
- Fasting Sugars, Desserts, and Candy
- Fasting Computer (except for school) and Video Games

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As a family, sit down together and talk about for whom or what your children are seeking God about and in which way they are going to fast. Explain to your children that there will be times when they will find it hard to fast and may even want to change their minds in the middle of the fast. However, as parents, gently encourage them and help them keep the commitment they made to the Lord and see how He answers their prayers. Following the 21 Days of Fasting and Praying, sit down with them and talk about what the Lord did during this special time. Before you begin the 21 Day Prayer Guide keep in mind your family's schedule and decide which days of the week you are going to meet together to pray. Be sure to explain in simple words the prayer emphasis for that particular day, so your children can be a part of the prayer time.

Remember that a child's body needs the proper nutrition and activity as well as rest to keep them healthy and whole. They don't need to fast complete meals or healthy food choices for days at a time or give up the exercise that playtime affords. Children respond best with a set schedule, so be sure to create one where they will know which days during the 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting that they will be fasting and what exactly they are fasting.

Here are some other suggestions:

1. Their favorite cartoon or TV program
2. No Family TV on a specific day/night – use this time to play games or spend family time together
3. No "Fast Foods" for all or part of the 21 days
4. A special treat or snack (candy, cookies, sweets, etc.)
5. A favorite activity (going shopping, playing games, playing video or computer games, etc.)

21 Day Devotionals

(For best results, include this devotional along with your daily time reading God's Word and prayer. We highly recommend the Bible plans available on the YouVersion App or at Bible.com)

Day 1: January 8

"Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need." MATTHEW 6:33

When Jesus called the disciples to follow Him, the Bible says they got up and immediately followed Him. They were engaged in their everyday, busy lives. But there was something so amazing about Jesus that they followed Him at once. They chose to seek after the kingdom of God over their own previous plans. Surely, everyone Jesus asked would be willing to follow Him since He was the Son of God, right? When the rich young ruler approached Jesus and asked what he must do, Jesus told him to sell everything and follow Him (Matthew 19:16-22). But the Bible says he turned away sad and unwilling to give up what he had for what Jesus promised. We would like to think we would be willing to give up our stuff to follow Christ, but would we? More importantly, do we? Are we seeking to further God's kingdom first or is it further down the list of things to do? What has God asked you to turn away from in order to pursue His purpose for your life? Write it down. Pray for God to transform your heart and mind so you may discern what His will is for you.

Day 2: January 9

"John replied, "No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven. You yourselves know how plainly I told you, 'I am not the Messiah. I am only here to prepare the way for him.' It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the best man is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less." JOHN 3:27-30

Imagine for a second that you are going on a three-day camping trip into the North Carolina mountains with your best friend. You buy a brand-new backpack to carry all the supplies you need for the adventure. However, after you purchase the new backpack, you don't have enough money to buy all the other new equipment. So you borrow old camping supplies from friends and family that seem to be 50 years old. You pack your bag reluctantly, but you are pleased to have at least all the equipment you need. Your backpacking partner shows up at your house with brand new camping gear. Your partner's backpack is filled with the latest and greatest camping equipment. The best part is that there is two of everything. Your friend says, "I wanted you to have the best equipment, so this is my gift to you." Does the fact that you have already packed your bags deter you from pulling all your old, decrepit supplies out and stuffing your new backpack with all your new stuff? Probably not in the slightest.

When we give our lives over to Jesus Christ, He makes us brand new. You could say that Jesus gives us a brand new backpack. All the old stuff that we've been carrying around is all traded for the brand new. We have a clean slate. We realize the stuff we had in our life before is old and falling apart, but we feel like we have no choice but to put it into our bag. Greed, gossip, selfishness, along with a whole assortment of vices stay with us. As we grow in our faith, Christ is offering us new life daily with Him, but we have to take the junk out of our old bag before He can fill it again. What is even more amazing, Jesus not only offers us the new, but he removes the old. Still, we cannot keep taking it back and putting it in our bag. He gives us contentment in place of greed, words of encouragement to replace our gossip, and a heart to serve others instead of serving only ourselves. Daily look in your bag, identify the old ragged pieces and ask God to take your desire for them away and replace them with life-giving supplies. That is the way to prepare for the journey!

Day 3: January 10

“My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” GALATIANS 2:20

“Annie” is a classic movie. “The sun will come out tomorrow. Bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow there'll be sun.” Whether you have seen the new Annie that was remade in 2014, or the classic one from 1982, both movies highlight the transformation of Daddy Warbucks. He is both rich and powerful. One of his publicity advisors recommends taking on a foster child to boost public perception of a caring philanthropist. The Warbucks team couldn't care less about Annie, and they let her know she is a burden, but they smile for the cameras. It is all a façade. However, Annie's charm melts away their stoic exterior causing them to begin caring for her and in the end, they risk everything to save her. This is similar to how Paul relates to living like Christ. First, he had to put on the facade. He acted like an upstanding Roman citizen so everyone would notice him. But one day Jesus Christ walked into his life and dissolved the façade and the labels he had worked so hard to earn. What about you? Are you keeping up appearances or seeking to have Christ change you from the inside out? How are you putting on a façade in front of others? Do you have those days when you feel like you are trying your hardest to impress everyone else instead of living to glorify God? What would allowing Christ to really live in you and through you look like at home, or work, or with friends? If you want to glorify God, let everyone see His Son through your actions and words.

Day 4: January 11

“You must not have any other god but me.” EXODUS 20:3

Have you ever seen kids who have a special comfort item that they could never part with? A stuffed animal. A pacifier. An old tattered pillow case. Maybe they have a blanket like Linus in

the Charlie Brown Peanuts comic. It goes where they go. The child may choose to temporarily leave it to play with another toy, but most of the time it's never out of their sight. What happens when the item is left at Grandma's house? If the parent realizes it first, plans go into action immediately to retrieve it quickly. If the child realizes it first, pandemonium ensues. It's extremely difficult to console a child whose item of comfort is missing! Before we begin to think these reactions are limited to the toddler years, think back to the last time you left your phone, wallet, or purse at home. Sure, we will not wail and drop to the ground and cry, but there are things in our lives that bring our day to a halt if we do not have them in our possession. The Bible would call these idols. Idols aren't just golden calves or bronze statues of the past. Idols still exist and could take a very real place in our life. Anything or anyone who receives our devotion can sneak into the place of God in our lives. When we depend on someone or something to provide what only God can in our lives, we are setting up idols. What, or who, do we praise in front of others more than we do our God who has provided us salvation? Sports teams? Politicians? Our children? A car? A bank account? If we forget to spend time in God's word and prayer one morning, do we have the same sense of panic as if we had left our phone at home? We can ask God to show us what or whom we have put in His place of honor and for the ability to restore Him to His rightful place in our lives! Ask and be ready to listen and obey. Make God your number one obsession and see how He becomes the most important thing in your life.

Day 5: January 12

“One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: “Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus replied, “What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?” The man answered, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” “Right!” Jesus told him. “Do this and you will live!” LUKE 10:25-28

“All” is a very important word. If a friend told you that they had 1 million dollars in their bank account and they were going to give you “some” of it, you'd be excited and curious. You'd be excited because you knew that you'd be getting an amount of money, but curious because you wouldn't really know the amount. But if that same friend told you that they had 1 million dollars in their bank account and they were going to give you “all” of it, then you'd be ecstatic. You'd be overjoyed because you would know exactly how much you'd be getting. The word “all” means, “whole quantity.” “All” means “every last drop.” How fitting that Jesus says that He wants “ALL” our hearts, souls, strength and mind. Just like the friend who says, “I'll give you ALL of my bank account,” Jesus is the friend who said, “I'll give you ALL of my life.” What is standing in the way today of Jesus having ALL your heart, soul, mind and strength? Surrender your ALL over to Jesus today, and His ALL will be ALL you need.

Day 6: January 13

“If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it.” MARK 8:35

Because of recent events in Oregon and in the Middle East where believers have been persecuted by gunpoint for their faith, many Christians may begin to wonder what their answer would be to a gunman’s question, “Are you a Christian?” The movements #ImAChristian and #IWouldSayYes are good movements in theory, but if you were to be completely honest with yourself, how would you actually answer if you were put on the spot and your life was on the line? And on a lesser scale, how would you handle a controversial conversation with a friend who thinks differently about issues the Bible is sure about? Would you stand up for the truth in love? And what about the pressure you might feel to conform to the way others live or behave that is contrary to the guidelines of God’s Word. Would you be able to stand up under that pressure to do the right thing? In every situation we have the opportunity to embrace God’s ways or deny them. One of Jesus’ closest friends, Peter, denied Jesus not once, but three times. Peter was fearful of what might happen if he acknowledged his relationship with Jesus. But, there is forgiveness even in this as we can see in Peter’s life after he denied Christ three times. After Jesus restored and forgave Peter, Peter received many other chances to deny Christ to escape punishment or ridicule, but he never again chose to deny his Savior and ended up dying for the sake of Christ. Peter realized that following Jesus was worth losing everything in this life because of all that he gained in the next. God may not call you to die for your faith, but He is definitely asking you to live for it. If we say, “Yes, I am a Christian” we risk losing our lives or our reputations or some of our relationships here on earth, but Christ promises those who risk that will gain life with Him eternally. Are we willing to trade something so temporary for the promises of life and hope and love we find in God?

Day 7: January 14

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.” MATTHEW 13:44

HGTV has a television series called Million Dollar Rooms. During the show the host walks through rooms which by themselves totaled over a million dollars to construct. These rooms might be bathrooms, kitchens, or game rooms. One line heard throughout the series from owners is that these extravagant rooms are worth every penny. To the average American, who would spend a million dollars on a bathroom? And for that matter, who would spend a million dollars on any one room? It seems a bit excessive, doesn’t it? Obviously the values attributed to things vary among people. Some people in various parts of the world consider indoor plumbing a luxury they can live without while others find the thought of drinking clean water through the tap to be revolting. Jesus’ words found in Matthew, however, apply to every person, rich or poor. The kingdom of heaven is worth more than anything we can own on this earth. When we

say, “Yes!” to Christ we are giving Him control of what we have on this earth. We are declaring that what He promises is better than what we already have or what we could obtain in our own power.

What is God asking you to relinquish control of right now? If we are holding onto it, unwilling to give it up, it is because we do not think it is worth it. We do not recognize the value of the treasure available to us after we let the other go. The man could not purchase the field until he had sold everything else. And we cannot receive from God what He has promised us until we let go of what He asked us to put away.

Day 8: January 15

“I also give you all the best olive oil, the best new wine, and the grain that is offered to God as the firstfruits of their harvest—all the firstfruits they offer to God are yours. Anyone in your household who is ritually clean may eat it.” NUMBERS 18:12–13

Farming sustained the Israelites’ life. Lacking the local Wal-Mart, Winn-Dixie, Publix, or even a refrigerator, their meals revolved around their crops. Each year as the new crops began to grow, they began anticipating new crops since they were still eating the crops from the previous year. That is a long time to eat leftovers! As they gathered up their first load of grain, or their firstfruits, it may have been tempting to use their fresh, new grain to make a tasty loaf of bread. But instead, they ground it into fine flour and delivered it to the Temple as an offering to God. The Israelites gave God their firstfruits as a way of telling Him, “We trust you to come through.” Firstfruits were a sign of things to come. They trusted God to provide more crops for their families. Unless we are farmers, our firstfruits will look a bit different from for the Israelites. What are your firstfruits? Is it your time? Is it where you pour out your passion? What is your best? Some people advocate for quiet times first thing in the morning, but that may not be your best. What God desires is our best. What God desires is first place in our lives. Put God first, give Him the best, and depend on Him to provide the rest. God is faithful and He will always come through.

Day 9: January 16

“And since Abraham and the other patriarchs were holy, their descendants will also be holy—just as the entire batch of dough is holy because the portion given as an offering is holy. For if the roots of the tree are holy, the branches will be, too.” ROMANS 11:16

The word “Holy” means, “set apart, sacred, worthy of complete devotion.” The imagery of Romans 11 is an olive plant in an orchard. God planted it and tended it. Some of those branches stopped producing fruit, so God pruned those branches off. He also found olive branches from wild trees and grafted them into this olive plant. Unless you are of Jewish decent, the wild branches represent you being grafted into the tree. When God grafts us in, we receive our nourishment from God’s holy root. Paul described what Jesus explained to His disciples:

“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned” (John 15:4-8 NLT). How is our connection to Christ? Is our graft holding tight causing us to flourish and bear fruit? It’s hard to produce fruit and be healthy when there is not a connection to the main source of all nourishment, the root. Either way, you can depend on God to prune the things in your life that are diseased and sick. His pruning may hurt and be difficult, but when those parts are gone, you will begin to heal, grow, and flourish like God intends.

Day 10: January 17

“Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce. Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine.”

PROVERBS 3:9–10

We might read this verse and conclude to ourselves, “If I just tithe my 10 percent, then I’ve got it made. I will be rich beyond measure if I’m just faithful with my tithe.” But we must keep in mind the first six words, “Honor the LORD with your wealth.” Most of us may not consider ourselves wealthy because the term wealthy is relative. Another word used for wealth is possessions. Is God honored through what we own? If you do not know, then ask Him! First Corinthians tells us, “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (10:31 ESV). How do we honor God with our phones or other electronic devices? How do we honor God with our choice of television shows or movies? As hard as it may be to turn away from some of these things, we are turning to God and He will provide for more than what we gave up. A missionary in South Africa traveled weekly to a nearby village to have a Bible study for the women in the village. One week the only woman attending the study was the woman living in the home where they met. The missionary shared about giving that day and at the end the woman asked if giving her only two-rand coin (worth about a quarter) to a beggar would be an acceptable gift to please God. Even though we would say she gave out of her poverty, according to these verses she gave out of her wealth. It wasn’t about the finances, it was about her faith. She wanted to honor God with everything that she had. How can you honor God like she did? Is there something He wants you to give up so He can be honored and lifted up?

Day 11: January 18

“But those who obey God’s word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.” 1 JOHN 2:5–6

Cardiac surgeons have to attend quite a bit of schooling before they begin to do surgeries. They complete five years of a general surgery residency and two or more years of a specialized cardiac fellowship before becoming certified to perform surgeries on patient's hearts. They have to watch surgeries and they have to assist surgeries before they ever do one on their own. What if this wasn't the case? What if someone studied hard and passed the tests, but was never required to assist with or even watch a heart surgery? Would you let them operate on your heart? No way! You want a doctor that knows everything there is to know about the heart, but has also learned by assisting other great cardiac surgeons. This type of experience-based knowledge was what John wrote about in 1 John. He knew some would just read Scripture and proclaim they were amazing Christians, but were far from Christ. When we read God's word, we may wonder how we are to apply it to our lives. This is why it's so important that we look at the life of Christ as our prime example of how to live. Learn from the pro! As we begin to take small steps to apply it, we may still feel like we just are not getting it. Loving our enemies may look a lot messier in our lives than we first pictured. Keep up the good work, because you will be able to step back later and see how God has changed you and affected those around you. Then, you will know that you are in Him, just as John wrote. Let's get excited to see how God is going to perfect His love in us today by obeying Him, no matter how messy it might get.

Day 12: January 19

“Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.” PSALM 1:1–3

Would you seek out a person who just broke out of prison and ask them for some life experience wisdom? Would you go to a sporting event and choose to sit next to the unruly fans that are yelling at the refs and throwing trash down on the playing field? These are obviously bad ideas. When we begin to read Psalm 1, it seems like a checklist that we can easily check off.

Don't walk in the counsel of the wicked. Check.

Don't stand in the way of sinners. Check.

Don't sit in the seat of scoffers. Check.

Delight in the law of the LORD. Hmmm.

Meditate on His law day and night. (What does that even mean?)

How can we delight in a bunch of rules? We delight in them when we realize that they aren't rules but guidelines for living the life God has for us. Only when we trust the One who wrote the rules and trust in His purposes will we fully experience all that God has for us. Think of it this way. When you get on a roller coaster, you are more than eager to follow the instructions to buckle up because it's easy to imagine the consequences of failing to do so, right? Well,

delighting in God's law is worth more than even protecting ourselves from failure; it is life giving (John 10:10). And when we meditate on Jesus' words day and night, we will be solid in our faith like a well-watered tree. The word "meditate" means: "ponder, think about, consider." Take God at His word and meditate on His word, day and night, to see how fruitful your life can really be!

Day 13: January 20

"Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people." COLOSSIANS 3:23

When a man and woman are in love, they tend to do things for their special someone they may not normally do for others or even themselves. They will clean their apartment until it sparkles and shines, even if they never vacuumed before. Those who have only braved making a PB&J sandwich will aspire to make an entire four-course meal from scratch. Why do they put themselves to so much trouble and effort? Because they want to show their love. These feverish attempts to impress may fade away with time, but they can give us a glimpse of what Paul was instructing the Colossians to do. When we tire of working for a person who may or may not appreciate us, we must remember that ultimately we work for Christ. We are His bride! He sees how we work, even if our boss and co-workers don't. Even if our extra efforts do not show up on our yearly review, we can be sure God has taken notice. Putting a smile on God's face is infinitely more important than a pat on the back from a co-worker. Do you seek the applause of others or the pleasure of God? If you find yourself consistently disappointed by the reaction, or lack thereof, of others, you might have a misplaced priority of affection. Ask God to help you get the right perspective on this, and watch and see how He changes your heart! He will help you do everything in His strength, for His glory, when you put Him first.

Day 14: January 21

"The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ." 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12

The Amazing Race is a reality television series where teams race around the world seeking clues, solving puzzles, and trying to finish ahead of the pack. In 2005, they held a family edition in which each group contained four family members. These members helped each other out physically, mentally, and emotionally throughout the race and stayed together even when they were tempted to go in multiple directions. What would you think if three of the four members of one of these teams decided the fourth was not pulling their weight and asked the producers to send that person home? Even if you agreed with their assessment, you would be shocked if they were to be so ruthless to one of their own family members. They would never do that. Why? Because family helps family. When a family member is struggling the rest of the family picks them up and helps them cross the finish line.

As a body of believers, we are running a race around this world, but it is not to win a million dollars, it is to tell lost people the message of Christ. If we see a weak member, we do not drop them off like excess baggage and we do not jump ship when our family as a whole is struggling. We help one another in whatever way we can. We challenge and encourage those around us to give it all we have toward the goal. We want to finish this race with a smile on our face and hand in hand. How can you encourage those in your spiritual family this week?

Day 15: January 22

“So be careful how you live. Don’t live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.” EPHESIANS 5:15–16

Imagine if we had a Category 5 hurricane barreling down on us and all the local news media stations were giving us notice to evacuate. You know that time is of the essence. With one hour to load up the family and any belongings before leaving town, what we spend our time on would reveal our priorities. We would not be worried about recording our favorite shows, downloading some new apps, or going to the gym to work out. We would use every minute to get the house ready for the storm and our family ready for the journey ahead. Spiritually speaking, we need to prepare for storms. Sin has caused the world we live in to be broken. Because of sin in our world there is evil which causes storms, devastation, and desolation. God’s Word tells us that we need to make the best use of our time because the days are evil. This means we need to take care of the people around us by making sure they know the truth of the gospel of Christ. We have to do our best to make sure that everyone knows that in the midst of the storm of evil, Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Jesus is the Savior that can sustain us and protect us. Beyond our words, we need to evaluate our actions. We need to watch what we say and how we say it. We live in the victory of Jesus’ defeat of sin, not weighted down by guilt and shame. Because we do not have much time, we must use the time we have to the glory of God. We need to live differently, speak differently and act differently.

Day 16: January 23

“Trust GOD from the bottom of your heart; don’t try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for GOD’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he’s the one who will keep you on track.” PROVERBS 3:5–6

A Bible teacher named Ray Ortlund tells a story that illustrates these famous verses found in Proverbs and what it means to “trust in the Lord with all your heart.” He says, “One winter day, a man was crossing the Susquehanna River. He did not know how thick the ice was. So, after crawling along on all fours across the ice, gingerly feeling his way forward, he heard some racket and clatter coming up behind him. He looked back, and here came a sleigh being pulled by four horses, and the driver was moving them along at a pretty good clip right across the

frozen river. The man driving the sleigh was a local. He knew how thick the ice was because he had crossed it lots of times. Too many Christians are like the man down on all fours, creeping along, and way too cautious. Their trust in the Lord is halfhearted. Then along comes a wholehearted Christian, one who knows God and has experienced Him many times before, and he changes the tone for everyone around.” We as Christians must realize how sure and solid our foundation is. We have the responsibility to look out for our brothers and sisters who are also traveling this road with us and continually encourage them about “how solid the ice is.” As we grow in our faith, we will come to trust the sureness of Christ more and more. Who has God put in your life that you can look out for and encourage today?

Day 17: January 24

“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” ROMANS 8:28

Do you ever feel like some days you serve God and live fully in Him and other days you don't? That's because sometimes it's easy to see God working in our lives and other times we feel like we don't. This is because of a word called, “perspective.” Our perspective is how we see things, not actually how they are. Just because we can't see God working doesn't mean He isn't. When we feel like we don't see God working in our lives part of our flesh wants to give up living for God. We think, “God I've been praying about this for hours and nothing has changed. So I'll do this my way since your way doesn't seem to be working.” This is the part of our heart's perspective that plays tricks on us. John reminds us though that God is greater than our perspective, even 22 the nagging voice that keeps us from receiving all Christ has in store for us. Remember 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” God is greater and He is faithful. The reality is that God is working for you. God is madly in love with you and God will never let you go. Depend upon God and live for Him today and every day of the year! It's so important to stay connected to God every moment of every day.

Day 18: January 25

“Let's keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going. He always keeps his word. Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshipping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching.” HEBREWS 10:23-25

Pinterest is a social network that allows users to visually share, and discover new interests by posting (known as ‘pinning’ on Pinterest) images or videos to their own or others' boards. Typically three types of people use Pinterest for arts and crafts. There are those who create a craft, photograph it, and post it. Others view the post, pin it, and do the craft later. And the last group just looks through posts with no intention of ever starting a craft project. Pinterest was

created for people to share with the world, their love for something. As Christians, we are commanded to love God first and then love one another. Our love for God and others wasn't intended to be hidden, but shared. Holding onto God's promises and trusting Him at his word helps us to love Him more and more each day. Finding Him faithful time and time again brings us to a place where our love for Him is real and strong. Other people, however, can be harder to love. As the body of Christ, we are to encourage one another. Let's get creative in how that looks. It may be a cup of coffee to a new mom who just needs to stay awake. It may be warm, fuzzy socks for someone spending a few days in the hospital. It may be a meal for a family coping with loss. Let's get creative in how we encourage one another. If you have no idea where to begin, feel free to copy other people's acts of encouragement! God wants us to give love to each other and not just sit by and watch as it is given. We are all needed and wanted in the body of Christ! Write the names of people who you know need encouragement below. Then pray for them and begin thinking of ways you can encourage them. It may take a group effort so include others. Jesus told the disciples they would be known by others for their love for one another (John 13:35). We want everyone to know us by how we love one another.

Day 19: January 26

“So one night the king of Aram sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city. When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere. ‘Oh, sir, what will we do now?’ the young man cried to Elisha. ‘Don’t be afraid!’ Elisha told him. ‘For there are more on our side than on theirs!’ Then Elisha prayed, “O LORD, open his eyes and let him see!” The LORD opened the young man’s eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.” 2 KINGS 6:14-18

Day 20: January 27

Here's some background to this amazing story: The king of Aram was attacking the people of God. Elisha, God's prophet, would let his king know of upcoming attacks and they would thwart the king of Aram's plans. The king of Aram accused his commanders of treason, but they informed the king of Elisha's work against him. Elisha's servant woke up early one morning and went about his duties only to receive the shock of a lifetime. He was not a soldier; he was a young servant of a prophet. He was scared. Elisha wasn't scared and comforted his servant by asking God to reveal His supernatural troops. When the servant saw the mighty army of God, he no longer feared the army of soldiers on their doorstep. When you first get up in the morning and start your daily routine, do you sometimes discover problems that may seem to equal an army on your doorstep? What do you do? Do you run and hide or just give up? Let's give God the first of every day. Let's ask God to show us His provision before we even discover the army on our doorstep so we will not be driven to fear at the sight of our problems. God is our protector and He is mighty to save and you are more than a conqueror in His strength!

Day 21: January 28

“Though the Lord gave you adversity for food and suffering for drink, he will still be with you to teach you. You will see your teacher with your own eyes. Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, “This is the way you should go,” whether to the right or to the left. Then you will destroy all your silver idols and your precious gold images. You will throw them out like filthy rags, saying to them, “Good riddance!” ISAIAH 30:20-22

The prophet Isaiah was speaking to a people that over and over again had turned away from God to trust in themselves, other countries, or even idols. God gave them warnings and second chances, but they chose to learn the hard way. Isaiah reminds them of God’s continued care, even through the tough consequences to their poor decisions. God not only allowed them to live and continue to be a people, He continued to be present among them even through their hardships. Isaiah knew the people would continue to wander off of God’s plan, but he reminded them that God’s voice would continue to affirm His path and encourage them to follow. And as the people followed God’s good path, they saw the worthlessness of their idols and the ineffectiveness of trusting in pagan nations. What about us? Do we find ourselves continuing to travel down the path of trusting our own devices, or the provisions of others who do not know God? Have we caused problems for ourselves that could have been avoided if we would have just listened to the voice of God? If so, it’s never too late to start listening to God. Ask God to reveal to you anything you place over Him and why it will fail. Then ask God to put down barriers to those detours that so easily trap you. As the Message translation puts it, “God is right there and He’s on the job.” He is faithful. He is always present. He can be trusted.

#allin2018