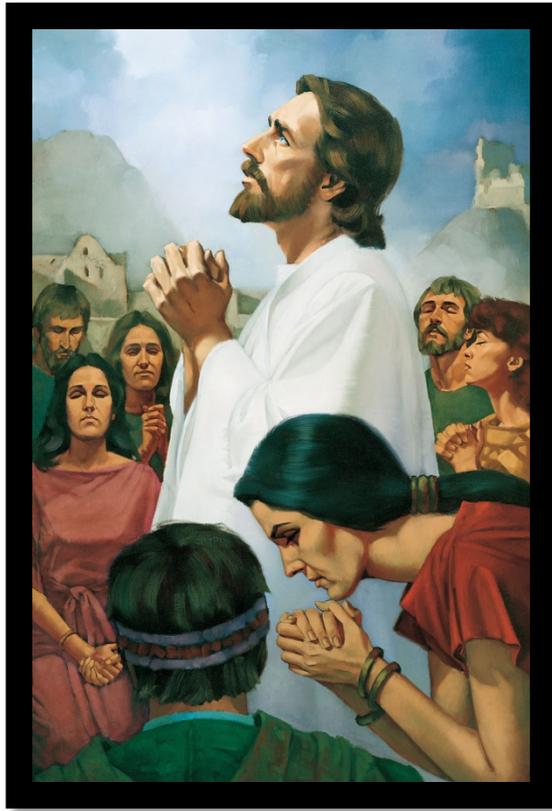


SAVED TO BE HOLY



Intimacy with God Workbook

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INTRODUCTION

You are ready to begin your spiritual journey in the plan of intimacy with God. During this journey you will understand that we truly were saved to be holy, and that God must occupy first place in our life. During this journey you will walk with God for 40 days in prayer and communion. I pray that this will be a great and enriching spiritual experience for you.

40 Days of Study, Prayer, & Action

Each of the 40 readings for the spiritual journey are divided into three sections: a study portion, a time for prayer and communication with the Lord, and an action item for the day. The purpose of these 40 readings is to help you learn seven important lessons:

- 1. You were created to have a relationship with God.*
- 2. You were created to walk daily with God.*
- 3. You were created to communicate with God.*
- 4. You were created to have a healthy mind.*
- 5. You were created to fulfill a mission.*
- 6. You were created to be victorious with Jesus.*
- 7. You were created to be with the Lord forever.*

"...by loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life. And if you love and obey the LORD, you will live long..." (Deuteronomy 30:20, NLT)

Walking every day with God will allow you to live a real and authentic Christianity. Receiving the daily anointing of the Holy Spirit brings to you the life and power of Christ, which makes you more than conqueror in every circumstance of life.

Walking daily with the Lord keeps you united to heaven, and thus allow you to receive the transforming influence of the Lord Jesus.

My desire is for you to develop, during these 40 days, a deep desire to walk every day with God, until the day comes when you will definitely be with Jesus at His second coming. May you be able to enjoy all the blessings and accomplish all your dreams not yet reached with the help of the Lord.

"Those who will put on the whole armor of God and devote some time every day to meditation and prayer and to the

study of the Scriptures will be connected with heaven and will have a saving, transforming influence upon those around them. Great thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth and duty to God, will be theirs. They will be yearning for purity, for light, for love, for all the graces of heavenly birth.”

[EGW, Testimonies to the Church, v. 5, pg. 112-113]

DAY 1: SAVED FOR A DAY

STUDY

Jesus gave us a command:

"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:33, ESV)

As believers we must wake up every day breathing Jesus. We must wake up with hunger and thirst for the Word of God. Just as the body feels the need for the most important meal of the day, our heart also needs the first spiritual food before engaging in any other activity. Jesus tells us that God must come first.

The theory of "once saved always saved" is not biblical. Those who are saved from the penalty of sin (by accepting Jesus as Savior), and that are on their way to eternity or the eternal salvation from the presence of sin (when Jesus returns in glory and transform us), need to keep in mind that salvation from the power of sin is a daily task, and must be develop each day with tremor and fear of the Lord.

"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day." (2 Corinthians 4:16, ESV)

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2, ESV)

"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin... Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." (Hebrews 3:13,15, ESV)

"For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2, ESV)

"Then Joshua said to the people, «Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.»" (Joshua 3:5, ESV)

PRAYER

After reading these passages carefully...

- 1. Ask God to help you develop the commitment to seek Him first on the first hour of your day.*
- 2. Pray that God will do a powerful work of transformation in your life by His grace in order that you may reflect His character to your family and to the world.*
- 3. Pray for our church and our district, and for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on each fellow member.*

ACTION

Make a list of 10 people you will be including in your daily prayers. Write the names of 5 members of your church, and 5 people who are not part of your church. They can be relatives, friends, co-workers. Ask the Lord to touch their hearts, so they can also seek His presence in their lives.

Members:

Friends:

DAY 2: A SPIRITUAL RECIPE, PART 1

STUDY

"What's easier, to become a Christian or to remain one?" Pr. Morris Venden asked this question to several members of one of his congregations. Most of them, regardless of age or sex, said that it was more difficult to remain a Christian. You probably feel the same way. Which brings out a new set of questions...

How can Christianity become significant in your life? How can you come to know Jesus better?

Pr. Venden discovered, as he sought to answer these same questions in his life, that just reading the Bible and praying only when he thought he needed to, was not enough. He felt that he was doing it just to please God.

He then discovered something very important in the words that Jesus said:

"And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst... Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." (John 6:35,53, NKJV)

Jesus was not talking about becoming a cannibal in order to be saved. He was talking about a person's spiritual life. Jesus was describing the life of daily communion, in which we spend time with Him and Him with us. We must come to such a personal relationship with Jesus, that our will is absolved by His. Jesus is saying that we cannot be genuine living Christians unless we seek Him daily. We must have a daily experience with God through a diligent study of His Word, and spending time in prayer.

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." (John 6:63, ESV)

When the Word of God is received in the soul, we partake of the flesh and the blood of the Son of God. So, we need to constantly feed ourselves of the Word, which knowledge is eternal life.

PRAYER

In your time of prayer today...

- 1. Ask the Lord to help you feel the desire to do more than just read the Bible, but to really search it.*
- 2. Pray that God would convict you of your utter need of the Holy Spirit in your life.*
- 3. Ask God to place in your heart a burden for a deeper knowledge of Jesus and His message of hope and salvation.*
- 4. And remember to pray for those 10 people you wrote in your prayer list, and for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the church.*

ACTION

- 1. Read John chapter 6, first in one quick reading, and then take the time to meditate and think about the words of Jesus found in the chapter. Then answer these questions:*
 - a. What is Jesus really saying here?*
 - b. What does it mean for you to eat His flesh and drink His blood? Don't give yourself a "canned" answer. Really think about it and pray about it. Ask God to help you understand.*
- 2. Pay close attention to verses 66-69.*
 - a. What do you think caused many of Jesus' disciples stop following Him?*
 - b. How does their action reconcile with Jesus' question to the 12, and Peter's answer?*

DAY 3: A SPIRITUAL RECIPE, PART 2

STUDY

Someone may ask, "How can I familiarize myself with God if I cannot see Him?"

We become familiar with someone when;

1. We talk with them.
2. We listen to them.
3. We work together with them.

In the same manner, we become familiar with God when we talk with Him (prayer), listen to what he has to say to us (study His word), and work together with Him (our Christian witnessing).

However, when we try to do this, Satan looks for ways to keep us from building that intimate relationship with Jesus. That is why Paul counsels us to arm ourselves so we can combat the enemy and be victorious.

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 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 firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," (Ephesians 6:11–17, ESV)

But what many of us we don't realize is that putting on the armor of God means to put on Jesus.

"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." (Romans 13:14, ESV)

What does this mean? It means to build a relationship with Jesus through the study of the Bible, prayer, and sharing with others the wonderful things God is doing in your life.

"Those who will put on the whole armor of God and devote some time every day to meditation and prayer and to the study of the Scriptures will be connected with heaven and will have a saving, transforming influence upon those around them. Great thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth and duty to God, will be theirs. They will be yearning for purity, for light, for love, for all the graces of heavenly birth."

[EGW, Testimonies to the Church, v. 5, pg. 112-113]

To put on Jesus, to put on His armor, is to live a life of daily devotion. What does that mean? Is to dedicate a special time every day to get to know God. And if we seek God with all our heart the first hour of our day, we will get to know Him as a close friend, and what is His will for us for the day.

But if you don't take time to pray and seek God, then you really don't have time to live. And God won't be able to teach you what you need to know so you can really live the life He wants you to live.

"And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Luke 9:23, ESV)

PRAYER

1. *Ask God to take away whatever is stopping you from dedicating the first hour of your day to Him.*
2. *Ask God to give you the power to practice what is right in your life.*
3. *Ask Him also to help you understand what it really means to put on Christ every day.*
4. *Pray for the courage to tell those 10 people in your prayer list that you are praying for them.*

ACTION

Read the following quote:

"Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour. By prayer, by the study of His word, by faith in His abiding presence, the weakest of human beings may live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold them by a hand that will never let go." [EGW, The Ministry of Healing, p. 182]

1. Write at least three things that you learn from this quote.

2. If you have their addresses, send each of the people in your prayer list a card letting them know that you are praying for them. Include a Bible passage if you like.

DAY 4: UNDERSTANDING CHRIST'S LANGUAGE

STUDY

Speaking with God and hearing His voice (through His Word) must be our first task as we begin our day. Examine carefully the following passages to help you understand Christ's language:

"Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word." (John 8:43, ESV)

"Then he added, "Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given—and you will receive even more." (Mark 4:24, NLT)

"loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days,..." (Deuteronomy 30:20, ESV)

"Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul." (Joshua 22:5, ESV)

Understanding God's will for your life at the beginning of the day is essential for either victory or defeat, both in the spiritual as well as the material aspects of life.

The lack of a relationship with God in the first hours of your day will affect your discernment in all aspects of your life. As we pray and read the Scriptures every day, it is important to learn to really listen to God's voice; to listen and to obey.

"Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors." (Proverbs 8:34, ESV)

If we don't develop this habit of communion with the Lord every day while there is time, we will never do, and it will be too late later on. And that time is fast approaching...

"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "when I will send a famine on the land— not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD." (Amos 8:11, ESV)

Our greatest challenge is to think and act in harmony with the Biblical principles in a world that is totally secular. Therefore, the more time you spend in the Word of God, the more you will grow spiritually.

PRAYER

1. *Pray to God for wisdom to understand His Word as you study it, and for ways that you can share what you are learning with others.*
2. *Begin today, if you have not done so already, to end your prayer asking God to show you what is His will for you for the day.*
3. *Pray for the church leaders, and for the plans the church has for this year.*

ACTION

Read this passage prayerfully and make an effort to make the prayer written here part of your daily communication with God. My grandmother memorized this quote, and it became a great comfort to her in her last days of life.

"Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, "Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me and let all my work be wrought in Thee." This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day." [EGW, Steps to Christ, p. 70]

Have you contacted the people you are praying for already? If you haven't yet, do it this week.

DAY 5: HOW TO KEEP THE WORD IN YOUR HEART

STUDY

As we discussed in the seminar, the purpose of this journey is to help you educate and re-educate your spiritual habits. So, today's task is to begin practicing ways that will help you keep God's word in your heart.

"I have not departed from his commands but have treasured his words more than daily food." (Job 23:12, NLT)

"I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." (Psalm 119:11, NLT)

"Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts." (Colossians 3:16, NLT)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8, NLT)

Memorize & Reflect on the Word

The following words of Jesus tell us that we have the duty to be filled with the Word of God. He is reminding us how important is to know the scriptures.

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." (John 14:26, NKJV)

"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me," (John 5:39, ESV)

If for some reason the Bible was taken away from you, would you survive spiritually with what you have already stored from it in your mind?

The daily challenge for every believer is to present yourself before God the first hour of your day, and fill your mind with His word, and then meditating

about it throughout the day to inspire you and to witness about your faith to others.

Sing the Word

Another way to study the Bible is to sing its words. Many of the Psalms are in fact songs. In many churches portions of the Bible are sang. For example, 1 John 4:8 and Psalm 23.

Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you to create melodies for your favorite Bible passages and sing them in your time of communion with God.

"Sing to the LORD, all you godly ones! Praise his holy name." (Psalm 30:4, NLT)

Write the Word

Copying a Bible text is another practical way to memorize it. When we write it, we can better perceive the details of the text, and we can discover things about that we did not notice when we just read it in passing.

"And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them," (Deuteronomy 17:18–19, ESV)

By reading, singing, and writing scripture daily we will be keeping the Word of God in our heart, and we will learn to be faithful to Him in everything.

Witness of the Word

A Christian has a defined purpose as he or she witnesses to others. Our purpose is to positively influence the lives of persons who live around us as we make God known to them. There are a lot of mistaken beliefs about who God is going around. Satan has blinded people to think that God is a tyrant, that He doesn't care about us. In the Bible, the prophet Isaiah puts it this way:

"You are My witnesses," says the LORD, "And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me." (Isaiah 43:10, NKJV)

What a privilege it is that our God has decided to reveal Himself to the world through our testimony. So, a proper understanding of the Word is essential for effective witness.

PRAYER

A good way to memorize the Scriptures is to react, in prayer, about what God has spoken to you as you read your Bible. For example, put yourself in Peter's place and repeat the following verse as a prayer;

"You have shown me the way of life, and you will fill me with the joy of your presence." (Acts 2:28, NLT)

- 1. Let us pray that God would help us to cleanse both mind and body from the defilement of sin.*
- 2. Let us pray for a personal relationship with Jesus.*
- 3. Let us pray for a willingness to cooperate with God – an attitude of surrender – in order that God may prepare us to receive the blessing we seek.*

ACTION

Exercise:

- 1. Read Psalm 100. Then, see if you can create a melody for it and sing it, dedicating it to the Lord.*
- 2. After you have done this, write the Psalm down, and list things you have learn from it, specially things you did not noticed by just reading it and singing it.*

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. When you speak to someone, share with them what you learned from this and other passages that you practiced with.

DAY 6: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO MEDITATE IN GOD'S WORD

STUDY

Today we will learn the meaning of meditation, and how we meditate on God's Word. Meditation is an important tool to know God and should be used in conjunction with the other methods that facilitate our spiritual growth; hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, singing, writing, and sharing the Word of God.

When we meditate in God's Word, we receive it in the deepest part of our being, so to meditate means to:

1. *Hide the Word inside.*
 - a. *"I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food."* (Job 23:12, ESV)
2. *To think of the Biblical text with the heart totally open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that He may lead me to all truth.*
3. *To allow the Holy Spirit to face the Christian I currently am with the Christian God wants me to be in the light of His Word.*
4. *To place me in a position where God can transform my life and can use me for His glory.*
5. *To eat the Word and live by the Word.*

Benefits of Meditation

More Life

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." (John 6:63, ESV)

The more I am in contact with the Word, I receive more life. God's words contain life. Without the nourishment that comes from daily communion with the Lord you will feel weak and empty, just like your physical body feels the same when it has not received the nourishment of food, and you will not have the strength nor the disposition to act.

More Knowledge

"The teaching of your word gives light, so even the simple can understand." (Psalm 119:130, NLT)

The Word of God is not only life, it also provides knowledge and discernment. The more we feed ourselves of the Word, the more understanding we will have of what is God's will for us for everyday living. The we will have the light needed to share God's love with others. Remember Jesus' words...

"You are the light of the world..." (Matthew 5:14, NLT)

Total Submission to the leading of the Holy Spirit

True meditation implies a total submission of the mind to God's Word and to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And only the Holy Spirit is capable of realizing the work of the transformation of your life, giving us a revelation of the Word and of God's will for us.

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come." (John 16:13, ESV)

Through the work of the Holy Spirit we receive the blessing of knowing God. We must never trust our own understanding nor intellectual capacity to understand spiritual things.

PRAYER

As you pray today, follow the example of Solomon and...

- 1. Ask God to give you wisdom and understanding of His Word.*
- 2. Ask for the daily guidance of the Holy Spirit and submit to Him.*
- 3. Ask God to humble your heart and strengthen your faith.*
- 4. Ask Him to teach you how to properly meditate in His Word so you can receive the knowledge and discernment you need to live according to His will for your life.*
- 5. Continue praying for the people in your list and remember to pray also for your church and the leaders.*

ACTION

Practice Meditation:

Read Jeremiah 15:16 and answer the following:

1. *What does the word "found" suggest?*
2. *What should be the nature of the search? (Read also Jeremiah 29:13 to help you with your answer).*
3. *What does Jeremiah mean when he says, "I ate them"?*
4. *What is the result of finding God's word and eating them for the prophet? Can you see that as something you can experience also?*

Read Psalm 42:1...

1. *When you get up in the morning, what is the greatest desire of your soul?*
2. *Do you get up breathing God's power and the power of His word?*

DAY 7: MEDITATION & SPIRITUAL GROWTH

STUDY

Today we will learn of two basic conditions for meditation to result in spiritual growth, leading you to the presence of God throughout the day.

Spiritual maturity is a process that takes time, and Biblical meditation is an indispensable tool to help keep God's Word in the heart.

"But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear." (Isaiah 59:2, NKJV)

"But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night." (Psalm 1:2, NKJV)

"Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:4, NKJV)

First Condition: Depart from Sin

"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4, NKJV)

Sin is breaking the Law of God. Another word for it is iniquity. A thorough study of the word iniquity means that a person who sins is in a position that is contrary to God. So, committing sin interferes with an intimate and profound relationship with the Lord. Sin will not allow a person to have a clear discernment of what is God's will for his or her life. That is why John gives us this wise counsel in...

"Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father but are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever." (1 John 2:15–17, NLT)

When you seek God the first hour of your day, and it becomes a daily habit, you will naturally despise the things of this world. But, what do we understand by "the world"? We are talking about acts of immorality, vices,

violence, pride, arrogance, vanity, etc. It's anything that keeps you from having a genuine relationship with Jesus.

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."
(Ephesians 6:12, ESV)

A heart that is divided between God and this world will directly interfere with the quality of your understanding of God's Word. Remember that God wants to occupy first place in your life.

Second Condition: Go Joyfully into the presence of God

To go into the presence of God is a basic condition for meditation that produces a deep spiritual growth throughout the day. Your encounter with God in the first hour of your day needs to be the most desired of your tasks.

"You have shown me the way of life, and you will fill me with the joy of your presence." (Acts 2:28, NLT)

To go joyfully into the presence of God is to;

1. *Be delighted in the Lord: The Bible is the Word of God, so when we delight in reading the Word, we are delighting in the Lord, in His love. This was David's experience, and can also be ours. David developed this through his daily relationship with God. He showed through his communion with the Father that he loved Him, and that he found pleasure in His presence. God was his life.*
2. *Be delighted in doing God's will: When you find delight in the presence of God, you will also find delight in doing His will and living a life of faithful obedience.*
 - a. *"And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him."* (1 John 3:22, NLT)
 - b. *"I take joy in doing your will, my God, for your instructions are written on my heart."* (Psalm 40:8, NLT)
 - c. *You attitude as a child of God is to seek God's will for you at the beginning of your day. It is better to know what the Lord requires of you at the start of the day, than to come at the end of the day asking God to forgive you for the errors committed.*

3. *Be delighted in the Word: In this communion encounter with God He speaks to me through His Word, and I speak to Him through my prayers. Thus, filled with joy, I will delight in the Lord, and in doing His will every day. As I meet the Lord at the beginning of my day, as I hear His voice and contemplate Him, the joy I feel will intensify more and more day by day. This is part of the spiritual growth and maturity process as Christ lives in me.*

a. *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20, ESV)*

PRAYER

Before your prayer session, read Romans 12:1-2

1. *Ask God to show you what is His will for you today.*
2. *Continue asking for the Holy Spirit to transform your life, and to place in your heart a feeling of delight for God's Word and for doing His will.*
3. *Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind any sin that you have not confessed and ask God to forgive you for it.*

ACTION

The Psalmist speaks of meditation as a moment of joy and pleasure. We find evidence of this in many of the Psalms. One example is Psalm 119. Read the following portions of it and answer the question below: verses 24, 47, 72, 103, 162.

1. *Is there any aspect of my life in which the spirit of this world is more prevalent?*

DAY 8: PRACTICING MEDITATION – PART 1

STUDY

Today we are going to work on the practical aspects of Biblical meditation. Read the following passage carefully:

"So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, «Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.» So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight... Then he said to them, «These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.» Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures," (Luke 24:28–31,44-45 ESV)

Read it once again and think about details that you may have missed the first time around. Did you detect in the text anything that "touches" any aspect of your life? Speak with God in prayer about what you have learned from this text, and how it can improve your spiritual life.

Now, let me share some lessons that we can extract from the passage, and that can help you learn how to meditate on God's Word.

Meditate in the Presence of the Lord

First, let's think about the phrase *"When he was at table with them"*. Remember that when we open our Bibles, we are placing ourselves in the presence of God. So, when you go to your place of communion with the Lord on the first hour of your day, The Lord is with you, as if by your side or in front of you, ready to speak to you through His word, and to listen to you as you pray.

This is the first requirement in the practice of productive meditation in the Word. It's a solemn moment where the Holy Spirit leads the mind of the believer so that, through prayer and study of the Scriptures, he or she can know what God's will for them is.

Meditation must begin with an attitude of waiting on the Lord, opening the heart and the mind for the Holy Spirit to lead us towards Him and to His word.

It is only here, during our time of communion with God, that evil forces can be broken away from our lives. There is no other way.

"There is but one power that can break the hold of evil from the hearts of men, and that is the power of God in Jesus Christ. Only through the blood of the Crucified One is there cleansing from sin. His grace alone can enable us to resist and subdue the tendencies of our fallen nature." [EGW, Evangelism, pg. 601]

Listening to God's voice

To hear God's voice clearly, it is indispensable to consider the following:

1. *Is the Lordship of Jesus a reality in my life? Is there any area of my life that is out of the control of the Holy Spirit? A divided heart will keep me from having a full understanding of God's word.*
2. *Unconfessed sins will keep me from fully recognizing God's voice.*
3. *Intentional disobedience of the Biblical counsel will directly affect the quality of my relationship with the Lord.*
 - a. *"If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But God did listen! He paid attention to my prayer." (Psalm 66:18–19, NLT)*

Receiving nourishment from Christ

"Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." (John 6:35, ESV)

Every time we go to the Bible to know God, we discover that He who gives bread is always by our side. Through the Holy Spirit Jesus will let us know what the will of the Father is.

When we decide to receive that bread at the first hour of our day, we will be satisfied. Jesus delights Himself in feeding us the bread for each day. When we are in His presence, and humbly seek to do His will, we will receive understanding. Through our daily communion with God, He will reveal the Son to us.

When at the beginning of our day we meditate in the word in the presence of God, we will live with joy, we will gladly witness of His mercy and love, and

we will be more and more like Christ every day, following God's plan for our life.

PRAYER

When we meditate in the presence of God every day, the results will show in our lives. As you study the word and meditate on it, pray for the following:

1. *That you may feel God's presence through the Holy Spirit.*
2. *Ask God to help you learn how to best study His word so you can receive the full nourishment from the Scriptures.*
3. *Continue praying for those in your list.*
4. *Pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on your fellow believers.*

ACTION

Read Exodus 33:15,

"Then he said to Him, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here." (Exodus 33:15, NKJV)

Think about Moses' petition to God. What does it say to you about the need to have God's presence everywhere we go?

As you have gone through the first week of these 40 days of prayer and study, what do you feel is God's program for your life? What is His program for you today? Write down your thoughts and pray about it.

DAY 9: PRACTICING MEDITATION – PART 2

STUDY

Today we will put into practice what we have learned so far about studying and meditating on God's word. But first, let me share with you the following counsel:

"In daily study the verse-by-verse method is often most helpful. Let the student take one verse and concentrate the mind on ascertaining the thought that God has put into that verse for him, and then dwell upon the thought until it becomes his own. One passage thus studied until its significance is clear is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained... With the immense tide of printed matter constantly pouring from the press, old and young form the habit of reading hastily and superficially, and the mind loses its power of connected and vigorous thought." [EGW, Education, pg. 189]

Let's begin choosing a chapter from the Bible and reading it completely. Then we will choose a couple of verses and meditate on them.

Read 2 Chronicles 20 so you can get the whole content of the chapter. If you want to do a deeper study, start reading from chapter 17. As you read the story you will discover that Jehoshaphat king of Judah prepared for war during peace time. He organized an army, restored the worship of God in the country, established a good communication system, placed judges to judge according to God's will. He built in time of peace and abundance, and when the crisis came, he was ready under the guidance of God.

So, let's choose three verses from the chapter, 6, 9, and 12. Read verse 6 and answer these questions;

1. *Who is the God of heaven and earth?*
2. *Who has universal dominion?*
3. *In who's hand is all power?*
4. *Who can stop Him if they were to act?*

Remember that prayer and the study of the Bible go hand in hand. God speak through His word, and I react to what He tells me through my prayers.

Ok, let's go now to verses 9 & 12. This time write your own questions about the passages.

Questions for verse 9;

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Questions for verse 12;

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

As you completed this exercise, did it help you make today's Bible story more personal? Continue this method of studying with other Bible verses and write about your experience. Begin keeping a Bible study journal if you like.

PRAYER

1. *There are several people receiving Bible studies in our church district. Please pray for them, that the Holy Spirit can guide them into all truth. And pray also for those who are teaching them, that they may share the message of salvation with boldness.*
2. *Think about those who are sick and pray for their health.*
3. *Continue praying for the people in your prayer list.*

ACTION

Contact the people in your prayer list and let them know that you are praying for them. Ask them if they have something in particular that they want you to begin praying about. If you feel bold, offer to pray for them right then, whether you are contacting by phone, text or in person.

DAY 10: YOU ARE A SUCCESSFUL PERSON

STUDY

Is having wealth and material possessions synonymous with success, or is it just a temporary illusion of stability?

The truth is that without a daily communion with God success is simply an illusion. Today we will discover the principal cause of true success in life. We will examine the lives of two men who overcame in their spiritual life, and glorified God with their lifestyle. There are lessons to learn from the legacy they left us.

As we study their lives, our desire is for the Holy Spirit to encourage us to also be victorious in our spiritual life and overcome.

David

The Bible says of David...

"... I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will." (Acts 13:22, NKJV)

What was David's secret, that he reached such a level of spirituality? David himself revealed the secret in one of his psalms;

"Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day." (Psalm 119:97, NKJV)

David's great secret to spiritual success was to begin and end his day meditating in God's word. It can be yours also. In most of his psalms David expressed his passion for meditation in God's word. Today many spend a great deal of time seeking intellectual growth, which is good. A Christian should strive to grow intellectually. But we must seek first to grow spiritually.

When you meditate in God's word, your mind makes contact with God's mind. Thus, the power of the Scriptures turns into the greatest power that acts in the development of your spiritual life.

Because of his intimate relationship with the Lord, David was successful and victorious as a shepherd, a soldier, a king, and a writer of psalms. He lived what he wrote.

Joshua

Joshua was another leader who learned to find power and courage through daily meditation in God's word. He was given the mission to lead the people of Israel in difficult times, and he also had to replace one of the greatest leaders who ever lived.

Joshua knew that without God he will not get anywhere. He sought the Lord for he knew that only God could give him victory.

"Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."
(Joshua 1:7-8, ESV)

Joshua's secret to success was to meditate in God's word day and night and obeying it without wavering one way of the other.

Just like Joshua obeyed God and was successful in leading the people of Israel into the promised land, God wants to guide you in every step you take and wants to give you victory in Christ.

Remember that our relationship with God affects our discernment in every aspect of life. Meditating in God's word can revolutionize your life.

PRAYER

God has a blessing for you every day in His word. All you need to do is find it.

In your prayer time today;

1. Ask God to show you your blessing for the day in His word.
2. Pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in your life, in your family and in your church.
3. Ask for God to help you be successful and victorious in your spiritual life.

ACTION

Here is a list of other Bible characters who were victorious in their spiritual life. Read their story in the Bible and find what was their secret:

1. *Joseph*

2. *Ruth*

3. *Esther*

4. *Daniel*

5. *Paul*

6. *Peter*

7. *John*

DAY 11: HOW TO FEED CHRIST'S NATURE

STUDY

Immediately following his baptism, Jesus was taken by the Spirit to the desert. In that solitary place Jesus said something that will forever be key to live a victorious spiritual life;

"But He answered and said, «It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God»."
(Matthew 4:4, NKJV)

So, I want to share some important points that I pray will help you find joy in your study of the Bible and will help you feed Christ's nature in your life.

- 1. You should not view the Bible as a book that is your duty to read. View it as a love letter from God. When a person who is in love with someone receives a letter from that someone, they don't think, "oh boy, I guess it is my duty to read it." No, he or she is anxious to read what their loved one sent them!*
- 2. The key here is LOVE. And if you know God loves you, and you love Him, you will want to know what He wrote for you.*
- 3. The Bible is not a code book, or a book full of rules and regulations. Nor is it the story of an errant and lost people. It is not a book of measures, names, and colors. It is not a book of strange animals and prophetic symbols. The Bible is the most beautiful love letter ever written.*
- 4. It is the story of a crazy and misunderstood love. It is the story of a love that does not tire of waiting. It is a declaration of love written with the red ink of the blood of the Lamb. From Genesis to Revelation it is the blood of the Lamb crying from Calvary, "My child, I love you. You are My most precious possession."*
- 5. We also find in the Bible the story of people like you. People that suffer conflict and temptations. People who sometimes stumbled and fell, men and women who struggled with their temperament and passions, but who overcame by the blood of the Lamb. Through their stories God is telling you, "My child, you can also be victorious. Don't be discouraged, look forward and keep going. I'm with you always."*

6. *As you study your Bible, your greatest enemy is conformity and formalism. Don't allow it to become a mechanical habit, which is of no value to nourish your spiritual life. The reading of the Bible needs to be transformed into a moment of fellowship and dialogue with your Heavenly Father. Don't turn it into a duty or heavy burden, but a delight to find yourself learning of God's promises.*

7. *As you read the Bible apply it to your person. Put yourself in the place of the character. What is it saying to you and about you? Have a notebook to write down what you have learned, or to paraphrase the passage and adapt it to your life.*

I pray that these words of advice can help you truly enjoy your daily time of devotion and fellowship with the Lord.

PRAYER

Today, instead of telling you what to pray, I would like you to write down what you feel you need to pray about. Think of three things that are really important for you.

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

ACTION

Read Romans 8:31-39. In a piece of paper, or in your study notebook, write the words of the passage, but put yourself in them. For example, change the question "What then shall we say to these things?" with "What then shall I say to these things?" See how meaningful it becomes for you.

DAY 12: HOW TO FIND CHRIST – PART 1

STUDY

What I will share with you today and tomorrow was adapted from the book "How to make Christianity real", from Morris Venden.

Can you imagine if God was lost? Some seem to think that God is lost, and even others that God is dead. However, we know that God is neither lost nor dead. Then, if God is not lost, why is it so hard for many to find Him?

Many people find it difficult to find God because there is no one like you and me to share who God is with them. But how are we going to share who God is if we don't spend the time to know Him ourselves?

It is interesting to notice that even some Bible characters at times had the same difficult finding God. Job himself expresses the despair of his hungry soul.

"If only I knew where to find God, I would go to his court." (Job 23:3, NLT)

And Amos writes of people running aimlessly searching for the word of God.

"People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from border to border searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it." (Amos 8:12, NLT)

But the Bible also tells us of those who are successful in their search for God. But they are few.

"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." (Matthew 7:13-14, ESV)

While most follow the wide road that leads to death, some find the narrow road that leads to eternal life. Jesus assured us that if we search for Him, we will find rest for our soul, and God promises that if we seek Him with all our heart, we will find Him, because He is really not far from us.

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you... Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me,

for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 7:7, 11:29 ESV)

God is not an evasive being who is playing hide and seek while our destiny hangs in a balance. It is evident that there is plenty of support so we can find God.

Jesus was very clear in sharing that salvation does not come from us searching for God, but from the way we respond to God’s search for us.

ACTION

Today we are going to turn things around a bit. There are three parables of Jesus in Luke chapter 15 that demonstrate the great truth that it is God who is searching for us, and His effort is greater than any search we could do. They also show how much God loves us and wants to save us.

Read Luke chapter 15 and answer the following:

1. *What /who was lost?*
 - a. *First story:*
 - b. *Second story:*
 - c. *Third story:*

2. *Did it/he know it was lost?*
 - a. *First story:*
 - b. *Second story:*
 - c. *Third story:*

3. *How hard did the owner/relative search for it/him? What was done?*
 - a. *First story:*
 - b. *Second story:*
 - c. *Third story:*

4. *What happened at the end of the story?*
 - a. *First story:*
 - b. *Second story:*
 - c. *Third story:*

Some things to consider in the lessons learned from these parables:

1. *God is always searching for mankind in His desire to save us.*
2. *Sometimes a person does not know that they are lost, and need someone (a witness, a disciple) to help them know their situation and show them the way to Jesus.*
3. *Sometimes a person knows that he/she is lost and needs Jesus but does not know how to find Him. This person also needs that helping hand from a disciple of Jesus like you and me.*
4. *And sometimes the person knows that he/she is lost and knows the way. They also need encouragement and help, for Satan will do his best to keep that person from reaching out to God.*
5. *Like the Father looking out the door of his house hoping to see his son coming back, Jesus is waiting for us, even knocking on the door of our heart. We are the ones who need to open it.*
6. *God always take the initiative on our behalf. We serve a God who never leaves us alone nor abandon us.*
7. *When we don't find God is because we spend most of our time running away from.*

PRAYER

Think of the following quote as you spend time in prayer today:

"The success in finding God is measured by the number of shed tears."

1. *Ask God to take from you any desire to run away from Him, no matter how strong it may be.*
2. *Pray for the strength of the Holy Spirit in your life.*
3. *Today pray for your relatives who are not Christians.*
4. *Pray also for our government and civic leaders.*

DAY 13: HOW TO FIND CHRIST – PART 2

STUDY

OK, someone could say, "yes, its' true, I'm running away from God". What can we do to surrender to the Lord?

First, we most desire something better than what we are currently experiencing. However, this desire can only come from the Godhead; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All three are working constantly with the purpose of bringing us to that realization.

Keep in mind that God does not force the knowledge of His plan of salvation down our throats. God is not aggressive. He remains by our side, without forcing us, not abandoning us. And when we run away, He follows us.

If we take a real look at ourselves, we will acknowledge our sinful condition. God does not work in a vacuum. He helps us confront ourselves, not with the intent rubbing our defects in our faces, but to help us perceive our inability, and not to make excuses for our sins.

We must accept the fact that we are not able to change ourselves, and that we need Jesus in our lives.

"The Lord can do nothing toward the recovery of man until, convinced of his own weakness, and stripped of all self-sufficiency, he yields himself to the control of God. Then he can receive the gift that God is waiting to bestow." [EGW, Desire of Ages, pg. 300]

To find Christ is to take stock of our need of the Savior, which will lead to real surrender and submission to God's will. We cannot find Christ until we do it with all our heart. It is a question of life or death. When we understand and accept our need, then we will truly ask for forgiveness and will truly give in to the Lord.

It is time, if you have not done it yet, to place yourself where God can do His part. Go to your knees before His word and meditate on the life of Jesus. God is willing to give two precious gifts, faith and grace, when you ask for them. God can reach you... if you allow Him to. Give Him the chance.

PRAYER

Besides praying today for the people on your list, pray for...

1. *A full surrender to God and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in your life.*
2. *Repeat this prayer, and make it part of you:*
 - a. *Dear heavenly Father, many of us spend a lot of time imagining that we are trying to find You, when in reality we were trying to escape from You. Thank you because You never stopped following me, for not giving up on me. I pray that each day I get closer and closer to you, that I may find You and find rest for my soul. I thank You also for Your great love and mercy. In Jesus precious name, Amen!*
3. *Read Psalm 92:12-15. Pray that the experience found there becomes a reality in your life.*

ACTION

Have you ever shared with anyone how you found Christ? Try it today. Write down what was the reaction of the persons you shared it with, and how you felt after you did.

DAY 14: GROWING IN CHRIST

STUDY

The new birth is a change of heart by which we are called children of God. It is also compared in the Bible to the seed that is planted and sprouts. And just as newborn children have to grow until they become mature adults, so a new person in Christ must grow and mature.

"Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment," (1 Peter 2:2, NLT)

"Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church." (Ephesians 4:15, NLT)

It is only through God that the spiritual life germinates and grows in the hearts of people. Only God can provide the nourishment for the seed of the new person in Christ to grow and produce fruit. Listen to how the prophet Hosea describes it:

"I will be like the dew to Israel; He shall grow like the lily and lengthen his roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread; His beauty shall be like an olive tree, And his fragrance like Lebanon. Those who dwell under his shadow shall return; They shall be revived like grain and grow like a vine. Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon." (Hosea 14:5-7, NKJV)

And Jesus said...

"Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are." (Luke 12:27, NLT)

Plants and flowers grow, not by their own care and effort, but because they receive what God has provided to give them life. A child also needs the care and nourishment that can only come from loving parents. He or she cannot sustain themselves.

In the spiritual life is just the same. We cannot attain spiritual growth by our own effort. Christ is our light, our sun, our shield. He is like the dew that descends from heaven and gives life to the world. Only by abiding in Him can we flourish.

How do we abide and remain in Christ? The same way we received Him at the beginning.

"And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him." (Colossians 2:6, NLT)

"Now the just shall live by faith..." (Hebrews 10:38, NKJV)

Keys to grow in Christ:

1. *Confess your sins and repent.*
2. *Love Christ, imitate him, depend on Him completely.*
3. *The heart that more fully rests in Christ will be the most ardent and active in working with Him for the salvation of others.*
4. *Remember what John the Baptist said, "He must increase, and I must decrease" (John 3:30).*

PRAYER

Read John chapter 17, more than once if you like. After you have read Jesus' prayer, follow the same pattern for your prayer today:

1. *Pray for yourself, for your spiritual growth.*
2. *Pray for your church.*
3. *Pray for your family and closest friends (members and non-members).*
4. *Pray for those who you know who have not given their life to Jesus.*

ACTION

Read Psalm 1. Analyze it and describe the contrast between the two types of people presented in the psalm.

DAY 15: SAVED TO BE HOLY

STUDY

Today we will reflect on the need to be saved daily by God, to be holy every day. So, this journey is an opportunity for you to establish a real relationship with the Lord by spending the first hour of your day with Him, and that it becomes part of your life.

It is important, then, to understand that:

1. *We are saved by exercising our faith.*
2. *We must seek God the first hour of our day.*
3. *We must walk daily with God.*

Let's review some quotes related to these key points. First, we must believe that we have been chosen by God to be saved by faith in Christ, and we must praise and glorify the Lord for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

"It is the love of God that draws the soul of Christ, to be graciously received and presented to the Father. Through the work of the Spirit the divine relationship between God and the sinner is renewed. The Father says: «I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people. I will exercise forgiving love toward them and bestow upon them My joy. They shall be to Me a peculiar treasure; for this people whom I have formed for Myself shall show forth My praise.»" [EGW, Mind, Character, and Personality Vol. 2, pp. 536–537]

We were created to be saved, and the Holy Spirit will perform that work in us. Just as Jesus received what was needed for the day from His communion with the Father, so can we.

"Christ was continually receiving from the Father that He might communicate to us. «The word which ye hear,» He said, «is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me.» John 14:24. «The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.» Matthew 20:28. Not for Himself, but for others, He lived and thought and prayed. From hours spent with God He came forth morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men. Daily He received a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the early hours of the new day the Lord awakened Him from His slumbers, and His soul and His lips were anointed with grace, that He might impart to others." [EGW, Christ's Object Lessons, p. 139]

What an experience that of Jesus! His growth and life were based on His communion with God. We will not find a better example than His. And this is the plan, the victorious Christian lifestyle; having a daily encounter with the Lord the first hour of our day.

"Every worker who follows the example of Christ will be prepared to receive and use the power that God has promised to His church for the ripening of earth's harvest. Morning by morning, as the heralds of the gospel kneel before the Lord and renew their vows of consecration to Him, He will grant them the presence of His Spirit, with its reviving, sanctifying power. As they go forth to the day's duties, they have the assurance that the unseen agency of the Holy Spirit enables them to be "laborers together with God." [EGW, The Acts of the Apostles, pg. 56]

Finally, the third step in the direction of a special Christian life is the importance of walking with God every day. In the church there are believers and unbelievers. Jesus showed this in the parable of the vine and the branches. Here is what He said of those who followed Him;

"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." (John 15:4-5, NLT)

There is a great difference between just attending church and a real connection with Christ by faith. My prayer is that you make that real connection with Christ during these 40 days and beyond.

PRAYER

Besides praying for those in your list, pray that every member of your church will make that real connection with Christ.

Conclude your communion today with the following prayer:

Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Your property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for You. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Your love can flow through my soul.

ACTION

Enoch is a good example of someone who walked with God. Read about his life in Genesis 5:21-24 and meditate on his life and his walk with God.

DAY 16: A HIGHER EXPERIENCE

STUDY

We need a daily revealing of Jesus, a daily experience that harmonizes with His teachings. High and sublime results are at our grasp. It is God's purpose that we progress continually in knowledge and virtue. And His law is an echo of His invitation: "Go higher and higher. Every day be holier and holier."

There are many who are already part of God's family who know little of what it means to contemplate His glory and being transformed "from glory to glory".

The Holy Spirit works on those who submit to His influence, and molds those who are willing to allow Him to mold them according to God's will. As you begin to really know God, you will notice that..

"...the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day." (Proverbs 4:18, NKJV)

Jesus said, *"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."* (John 15:11, NKJV) Every believer disciple is to participate of this joy. Although we await an indescribable reward on the day of Jesus' return, we can now experience the joy of the Lord by faith.

One way to experience this joy is through our witness. We live in a world filled with spiritual darkness, almost totally engulfed in idolatry. But the day is coming when the battle will end, and we will share in Christ's victory. God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.

So, Christianity is not religion nor philosophy, but a lifestyle. And the essence of that lifestyle, Jesus said, is to care for the salvation of others, and not just think of ourselves.

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8, NKJV)

The Privilege of Prayer

Before Jesus embarked in His daily ministry, He would first spend time alone in prayer. He prayed all night before choosing the 12, before preaching the sermon on the mount, before the transfiguration. He spent time in earnest prayer before being arrested and crucified. Just like our Lord and Savior, we must spend time in prayer, even all night if necessary, when facing a big decision, or a challenge, or if going through difficulties. Prayer and faith will do for us what no power on earth can. Elevate your heart continuously in silent petition for help, for light, for strength, for knowledge. May every breath we take be a prayer.

Our assurance is Jesus in the heart, Jesus in the life. Our spirit can identify with His, so that in thought and purpose we can be one with Him. The more difficult the situation and the heavier the load, the more we need Jesus. The result of everything we do is in God's hands. Whatever happens, hold on to Him in confidence. Pray for humility, for wisdom, for courage, and for an increase in faith, so that you can see the light of God and can rejoice in His love.

Trust

The Lord Jesus knows well what His children need and how much divine power we can assimilate for the blessing of humanity. He will enable us with whatever we are willing to employ to benefit us and others. The work we are to do is not ours, it is the Lord's. All we must do is to submit our will to God. We must learn to be free in Christ. To do so, we must make the scriptures personal to us.

Again, Jesus says...

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me... He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing... If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples... As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love... You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you."
(John 15:4,5,7-9.16, NKJV)

ACTION

Read the following two passages and meditate on them as you answer these questions:

Philippians 3:13-14 and Philippians 4:13

1. *What is Paul's advice? How was he living his life?*
2. *Where did Paul get his strength to continue in his spiritual journey?*

PRAYER

As you continue developing this new habit of seeking God the first hour of your day,

- 1. Thank God for the strength that only comes from an intimate relationship with Jesus.*
- 2. Continue asking for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in your life, in the life of your family and in the church.*
- 3. Pray for the people in your list. Pray that those who have not given their life to Christ yet, would do so, and ask God to give you boldness to be a witness to them.*

DAY 17: VOLUNTARY OFFERINGS

STUDY

Everything we do in church should be voluntary, and that includes bringing our offerings. When we do, it should be with joy and gratefulness, saying to the Lord; "Of what we have received from Your hands, we give voluntarily."

The costliest service we can render cannot compare with the gift God gave humanity, Christ. God gave Him to the world, and He kindly takes the gifts He has entrusted to us and uses them for the advancement of His kingdom. By being cheerful givers, and by allowing God to use us for His cause, we acknowledge that everything belongs to Him.

Grateful Offerings

"The offering from the heart that loves, God delights to honor, giving it highest efficiency in service for Him. If we have given our hearts to Jesus, we also shall bring our gifts to Him. Our gold and silver, our most precious earthly possessions, our highest mental and spiritual endowments, will be freely devoted to Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us." [EGW, The Desire of Ages, p. 65]

Offerings made reluctantly are a mockery to God

God has made us His stewards, partners with Him in the great work of spreading the good news of salvation. But we can choose to follow the example of the ungrateful servant. By doing so, however, we will lose one of the most precious privileges God has to offer us.

"It would be better not to give at all than to give grudgingly; for if we impart of our means when we have not the spirit to give freely, we mock God. Let us bear in mind that we are dealing with One upon whom we depend for every blessing. One who reads every thought of the heart, every purpose of the mind." [EGW, Counsels on Stewardship, p. 199]

The cheerful giver is accepted

"Remember this: a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. «For God loves a person who gives cheerfully»." (2 Corinthians 9:6-7, NLT)

If we live in harmony with the Biblical advice found in this passage, we will understand that we are giving from what God has entrusted us with. If everyone who professes to follow the truth of God's word would return to the Lord what belongs to Him in terms of tithes and offerings, there would be "food in the house of the Lord".

But more than monetary offerings, we must be willing to give ourselves wholeheartedly as a living sacrifice to God.

"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."
(Romans 12:1–2, NLT)

ACTION

Read Malachi chapter 3. Normally you would hear someone read verses 8-10 when tithes and offerings are collected during the church service. But read the whole chapter and answer the following questions:

1. *When God says that the people have robbed Him, is His complaint just about money? What is really behind the people's unfaithfulness?*

PRAYER

1. *As you pray this morning, thank God for all the blessings He bestows on you, and make a pact with Him, if you have not done so already, to be faithful in everything, including the management of your finances so you can learn to be a cheerful giver.*
2. *Continue praying for the people on your list.*
3. *Pray for the leaders of the church.*

DAY 18: TITHES & SPIRITUALITY

STUDY

Much of the debate over tithing has been limited to these questions: Should we pay tithe? Where do we pay tithe? Why should we pay it? In reality, discussion involving those previous questions ignore the real questions that need to be answered for a better understanding of the Biblical tithing system.

1. *Why did God establish the system of tithes?*
2. *Does tithing have a purpose other than the financial support of a church or ministry?*
3. *Will understanding the Biblical concept and system of tithing help us walk closer to God?*

The first accounts of tithing in the Bible of are the encounter of Abram with Melchizedek;

"Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all." (Genesis 14:18–20, NKJV)

And then Jacob;

"And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You." (Genesis 28:22, NKJV)

Through their tithes these men were acknowledging God's hand in the material aspect of their lives. They were not supporting a church nor ministry. There were no such things. They were just worshiping God.

Later on, when God gave Israel instructions for the construction of the sanctuary, the tithes and offerings were brought to the sanctuary, where God dwelled with the people, as part of their worship. The Lord received the tithes and they were used to sustain the sanctuary ministry of the priests and Levites.

"But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks... then there will be the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD." (Deuteronomy 12:5-6,11, NKJV)

So, the true motive for tithing has always been worship. It is the way by which we acknowledge our relationship with the Lord as our Owner & Redeemer. As we return the tithes, we are placing God in first place in our lives, we accept that everything we have comes from Him, and we also accept our role as His stewards.

ACTION

Examine the following six steps to improve our worship experience and our attitude as stewards. Write your comments below each step:

- 1. Accept our relationship with God*
- 2. Accept God as Creator*
- 3. Submit to His dominion*
- 4. Acknowledge the care, guidance, and love of God for us*
- 5. Accept that we must be holy before the Lord*
- 6. Consecrate our life to God*

PRAYER

- 1. Considering what you have learned today about how tithing is part of your worship experience, ask God to help you to trust Him, and to give you a desire to be faithful in your tithes.*
- 2. Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as you manage your finances.*

DAY 19: CONSECRATION

STUDY

God's promise to us is...

"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13, NKJV)

We are to give our heart to the Lord completely, otherwise, the transformation that the Holy Spirit wants to carry out in us will never take place. Remember that by our sinful nature we are in enmity with God, subject to Satan's deceitfulness, and only by giving ourselves to Jesus can we be saved.

"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1, ESV)

"... The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." (Isaiah 1:5, ESV)

"and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will." (2 Timothy 2:26, ESV)

God wants to heal us and give us freedom. But, since this requires a total transformation and renewal of our nature, we must give ourselves to Him completely. A forced submission will not work. We must decide if we want to be free from the slavery of sin to participate of the glorious freedom of the children of God. Jesus said...

"So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:33, ESV)

We must forsake everything that separates the heart from God. We cannot consecrate just a portion of our heart to the Lord and the other to the world. We cannot be children of God until we are so completely.

When Christ dwells in your heart, your life is full of His love, you enjoy communion with Him, you unite with Him, you think of Him, and you forget about yourself. And so, His love reflects from you to those around you. In fact, if you profess to belong to Christ without feeling a deep love for other people, your experience is merely formalism, and you are lying to yourself.

"If anyone says, «I love God», and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother." (1 John 4:20-21, ESV)

ACTION

A consecrated Christian is he or she who has a burden for the salvation of others. God can work mightily through people who, having received the word of truth, consecrate their lives to sharing the gospel with others and who give themselves up to the control of the Holy Spirit.

Reflect on this following:

"And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." (Acts 4:33, ESV)

"Under their labors were added to the church chosen men, who, receiving the word of truth, consecrated their lives to the work of giving to others the hope that filled their hearts with peace and joy. They could not be restrained or intimidated by threatenings. The Lord spoke through them, and as they went from place to place, the poor had the gospel preached to them, and miracles of divine grace were wrought." [EGW, Acts of the Apostles, p. 48]

- 1. Have I personally and fully accepted and embraced the gospel, the word of truth?*
- 2. Have I fully consecrated my life to sharing the hope of the gospel with others?*
- 3. Have I given myself fully to the control of the Holy Spirit?*

PRAYER

- 1. Let us pray for a full acceptance of the gospel of Christ in our lives personally, in the lives of church members and in the lives of those we are reaching out to.*
- 2. Let us pray for a complete surrender to the control of the Holy Spirit and a full consecration to sharing the gospel with others.*

DAY 20: THE PRIVILEGE OF SPEAKING TO GOD -1

STUDY

God speaks to us through His Word, through nature, and through the influence of the Holy Spirit. But is not enough that He speaks to us, we must open our heart to Him. To have life and spiritual energy we must have a true exchange with our Heavenly Father.

To communicate with God, we must have something to say to Him about our life. To pray means to open our hearts to Him as friend. And it is not that God needs for this to happen, so He knows what we are and need, but to help us receive Him in our hearts. Prayer does not bring God down to us, it elevates us to Him.

Jesus' life while on earth is the best example of a prayerful life. He would pray frequently, and prayer was to Him a privilege and a need. He found in this time of communion with the Father the comfort and joy He needed for each day. And if the Savior of the world, the Son of God, needed to pray, how much more we, who are stained with sin, need this communion with God.

Without a vigilant, diligent, and constant prayer life we run the risk of becoming indifferent, and of deviating from the right path. Our adversary the devil is looking for ways to block our way, to detour us, from seeking the power and faith and grace that only comes from an intimate relationship with the Lord.

There are certain conditions by which we can hope for God to listen and answer our prayers:

1. *We must feel the need to seek His help.* *Your heart must be open to the influence of the Holy Spirit, otherwise you will not be able to receive God's blessings.*
 - a. *"God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied." (Matthew 5:6, NLT)*
2. *We must confess our sins.* *When we, with a contrite heart, confess all our known sins to the Lord, we can expect Him to answer our prayers.*
 - a. *"But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness." (1 John 1:9, NLT)*
3. *We must have faith.* *When we don't receive what we pray about exactly as we asked for it, we must believe that God will answer our prayer on His time and when He knows is best for us, and what's best for us.*

- a. *"I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours."* (Mark 11:24, NLT)
4. We must pray with a forgiving spirit. *If we expect our prayers to be heard, we must forgive others as we expect to be forgiven.*
 - a. *"and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us."* (Matthew 6:12, NLT)
 5. We must pray without ceasing. *Perseverance in prayer is a condition to receive an answer. We must pray always and with faith. Pray without ceasing means to maintain an uninterrupted union with God, so that the Lord's life flows through us, and thus flow from us a pure and sanctified life.*
 - a. *"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;"* (Colossians 4:2, NKJV)

ACTION

Read the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 and write down three to five key points you learn from it.

PRAYER

In your prayer time remember to pray for the 10 people in your list. If they are not attending church regularly, or if they have never visited the church, invite them this week.

Continue praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in your life and in the life of each member of the church.

Pray for the church leaders.

Ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of any unconfessed sin that you may have forgotten, so you can confess it to find forgiveness and peace in your heart.

DAY 21: THE PRIVILEGE OF SPEAKING TO GOD -2

STUDY

The following quotes are from the book Steps to Christ by Ellen G. White, from the chapter "The Privilege of Prayer".

"Pray in your closet, and as you go about your daily labor let your heart be often uplifted to God. It was thus that Enoch walked with God. These silent prayers rise like precious incense before the throne of grace. Satan cannot overcome him whose heart is thus stayed upon God."

"There is no time or place in which it is inappropriate to offer up a petition to God. There is nothing that can prevent us from lifting up our hearts in the spirit of earnest prayer. In the crowds of the street, in the midst of a business engagement, we may send up a petition to God and plead for divine guidance, as did Nehemiah when he made his request before King Artaxerxes. A closet of communion may be found wherever we are. We should have the door of the heart open continually and our invitation going up that Jesus may come and abide as a heavenly guest in the soul."

"Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He who numbers the hairs of your head is not indifferent to the wants of His children. "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." (James 5:11). His heart of love is touched by our sorrows and even by our utterances of them. Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice."

Remember the words of the psalmist...

"He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds." (Psalm 147:3, NLT)

"Jesus said, "Then you will ask in my name. I'm not saying I will ask the Father on your behalf," "I chose you... so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, in my name." (John 16:26; 15:16). But to pray in the name of Jesus is something more than a mere mention of that name at the beginning and the ending of a prayer. It is to pray in the mind and spirit of Jesus, while we believe His promises, rely upon His grace, and work His works."

"The life must be like Christ's life—between the mountain and the multitude. He who does nothing but pray will soon cease to pray, or his prayers will become a formal routine. When men take themselves out of social life, away from the sphere of Christian duty and cross bearing; when they cease to work earnestly for the Master, who worked earnestly for them, they lose the subject matter of prayer and have no incentive to devotion. Their prayers become personal and selfish. They

cannot pray in regard to the wants of humanity or the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom, pleading for strength wherewith to work."

"He who shuts himself up to himself is not filling the position that God designed he should... If we thought and talked more of Jesus, and less of self, we should have far more of His presence... It should be a pleasure to worship the Lord and to take part in His work."

"We must gather about the cross. Christ and Him crucified should be the theme of contemplation, of conversation, and of our most joyful emotion. We should keep in our thoughts every blessing we receive from God, and when we realize His great love we should be willing to trust everything to the hand that was nailed to the cross for us."

"The soul may ascend nearer heaven on the wings of praise. God is worshiped with song and music in the courts above, and as we express our gratitude we are approximating to the worship of the heavenly hosts.

"But giving thanks is a sacrifice that truly honors me. If you keep to my path, I will reveal to you the salvation of God." (Psalm 50:23, NLT)

Let us with reverent joy come before our Creator, with "thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." (Isaiah 51:3).

ACTION

Read Psalm 23 and meditate on its words. Reflect on David's gratitude for God's care.

PRAYER

Have you had a day of fasting and prayer yet? If not, plan to do one next week. Ask God to give you the motivation and strength to do it.

DAY 22: WHEN THE PEOPLE OF GOD PRAY

STUDY

The readings for the next four days were adapted from "Praying to make a difference", written by Pastor Mark Findley.

During World War II in 1940, British forces were trapped in the beaches of Dunkirk in France. The Germans were advancing and attacking ferociously and there seemed no way for Britain to get their soldiers out of there alive. But something happened that historians haven't been able to explain. It began to rain, which was unusual for that time of the year. In fact, it rained so much that the Nazi tanks could not advance towards Dunkirk. Then suddenly the fog that engulfed the beach at Dunkirk lifted and Winston Churchill was able to send ships to rescue the soldiers.

The part of the story that is not told by many is that, for several weeks during this ordeal, all the churches in England around the coast of the English Channel kept their lights on all night, and the Pastors invited their parishioner to spend time in prayer, even all night. They were all praying for a miracle to happen so the soldiers could be rescued. But not only were the churches opened and people prayed in them. Every public building was used as a place where people could gather to pray. Schools took time to pray. Even the members of the Parliament took time to pray. Thanks to a powerful prayer moment history was changed.

We can mention other examples of prayer movements that helped change history. In Leipzig, Germany in 1985, a group of Christians began a prayer movement to ask God to bring the Berlin wall down. This movement spread to other parts of Germany. And in 1989 the wall came down. An article published in the *New Republic Magazine* stated; *"There is an old proverb that says prayer changes things. We cannot say for sure the veracity of prayer, but we know that people who prayed changed the course of history in modern Europe"*.

Intercessory Prayer

Intercessory prayer is Biblical. Throughout the centuries heroes of faith believed in intercessory prayer. Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians;

"For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers," (Ephesians 1:15-16, ESV)

Paul believed in the power of intercessory prayer. He did not use prayer as some type of psychotherapy to make him feel better. He believed that he could touch God's heart through prayer. He was convinced that, through prayer, God could work miracles.

Here are some very important points about intercessory prayer:

1. *It is something wonderful to know that a friend is praying for you.*
2. *It is something wonderful to know that your spouse is praying for you.*
3. *It is something wonderful to have children praying for their parents.*
4. *It is something wonderful to know that someone is praying for you.*

There is a passage in the Bible that reveals what happens when we intercede in prayer. It tells us what happens when we pray. It is found in John's first letter to the churches:

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." (1 John 5:14, NKJV)

What John is saying here is that when we pray with faith and trust in God, He will hear our prayers.

When we pray God answers. When we pray the Holy Spirit is given. When we pray God gives us wisdom and power. When we intercede prayerfully for others, heaven's angels descend in answer to our prayers, to bring pure and true light, and protection.

Intercessory prayer is a powerful weapon because;

1. *I am weak, but God is strong.*
2. *I am ignorant, but God is wise.*
3. *I am fragile, but God is omnipotent.*
4. *I cannot, But God can.*
5. *I don't know how to reach my loved ones, but God knows how.*

ACTION

Think about something that is important to you, whether in the community, in your family, or in the church, where prayer is needed to bring about a change. Talk about it with others and begin a prayer movement, asking God to work a miracle. Be willing to share the results at the celebration service March 30.

PRAYER

Continue praying for the people in your list, for our churches, for the leaders, and for our celebration service.

Pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on each life.

Pray for those who are sick and need healing.

DAY 23: THE POWER OF INTERCESSION

STUDY

Intercessory prayer is powerful. It can make a difference. It can change things. This is the reason why: In the conflict between good and evil, God values the freedom of mankind. He can reach anyone even before we pray for them. However, God is limited by our choices. He will never violate our freedom of choice. He influences but never forces anyone. He guides but never imposes.

So, when we pray for someone God pours out His Spirit through our intercession to reach them. Intercessory prayer opens the avenues by which God can work. It gives God the opportunity to act.

"It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which he would not bestow did we not thus ask." [EGW, The Great Controversy, p. 525]

When people pray fervently together it makes a difference. God listens. God answers. God acts. God touches lives.

ACTION

Are you part of a prayer team? If not, why not begin one? If you are already, ask someone who is not part of one to join yours?

PRAYER

God wants to teach us how to live right every day, so we can fulfill our purpose in life. Read the following passage and pray for this to become a reality in your life.

"My child, never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart. If you do this, you will live many years, and your life will be satisfying." (Proverbs 3:1-2, NLT)

DAY 24: PROMISES ABOUT PRAYER

STUDY

For today's reading, I want to share some of the wonderful promises related to prayer found in the Bible. For your action and prayer time, meditate on these passages and how they can make a difference in your prayer life. Continue praying for the people in your list, for any prayer team that you have joined, for any special intercessory prayer you are part of, and for God to bless our churches and our fellow believers.

"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." (James 5:16, NKJV)

"If you see a fellow believer sinning in a way that does not lead to death, you should pray, and God will give that person life..." (1 John 5:16, NLT)

"I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours." (Mark 11:24, NLT)

"I need someone to mediate between God and me, as a person mediates between friends." (Job 16:21, NLT)

"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know." (Jeremiah 33:3, NKJV)

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." (1 John 5:14, NKJV)

"O you who hear prayer, to you shall all flesh come." (Psalm 65:2, ESV)

"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." (1 Peter 3:12, ESV)

"For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way." (1 Samuel 12:22-23, ESV)

"But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!" (Psalm 66:19-20, ESV)

"and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." (Psalm 50:15, ESV)

"But I call to God, and the LORD will save me. Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice." (Psalm 55:16-17, ESV)

"When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles." (Psalm 34:17, ESV)

"Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it." (John 14:13-14, ESV)

"Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:19, ESV)

DAY 25: HOW TO BE A POWERFUL INTERCESSOR

STUDY

When we pray for others, we join Jesus in His powerful work of intercession. Jesus is the only righteous intercessor. The prophet Isaiah describes the Savior's ministry as follows;

"Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:12, NKJV)

The book of Hebrews adds,

"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25, NKJV)

So, we are constantly in His infinite love as He is interceding for us at every moment. Our mind cannot comprehend the dimension of His wonderful love for us.

ACTION

How do we become powerful prayer intercessors with Jesus? Practice the following method:

1. Chose a specific time to pray. In the Gospel of Mark, we read;
 - a. *"Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray." (Mark 1:35, NLT)*
 - b. *If we don't have a specific schedule for our intercessory prayer, the chores of the day can take up all of our time.*
2. *Be specific in your intercessory prayer. It could be a person, an event, an issue that burdens you. The Bible calls for us to pray for one another. And the work of Christ's intercessors is to pray for others, one by one.*
3. *Have a prayer list. If you have not done so, make a list of the people you want to pray for, and spend time praying for each one of them.*
4. *Pray aloud. Many times, Jesus' intercessory prayers were spoken aloud by Him. For example, In Luke chapter 11 we read that the disciples heard Jesus praying aloud and were moved by it. And we are familiar with the prayer in John chapter 17, and His prayer in Gethsemane before He was arrested.*
 - a. *When we pray aloud Satan's agents tremble and flee. Satan and his angels can't stand the sound of the prayers that rise up to God's throne.*

DAY 26: SPIRITUAL FORMATION

STUDY

Spiritual formation is a process that implies a daily relationship with God throughout our life. Today we will look at the key elements of spiritual formation and the ways in which we can improve our vision of God every day.

Spiritual formation, or discipleship, is moving your life in God's direction. It is to open each area of your life to an intimate relationship with the Lord and doing His will. There are four key elements to spiritual formation:

1. Vision: It begins with seeking God the first hour of your day. It implies the search for knowledge and making a covenant to do God's will for that day. It also includes understanding what God wants to do in us and with us.
2. Gospel: It is to accept what Jesus has done and is doing for us. It means that you become a partner with Him in sharing the good news of salvation at every opportunity we have during the day.
3. Lordship: To acknowledge the Lordship of Christ is to submit everything we are and do to the direction and control of God. This is a daily task. It is to deny yourself.
4. Presence: We must begin our day in the presence of God and then leave with Him to take care of our daily things. And we must learn to live in His constant presence. The only way to break away from evil is to be in the presence of Christ.

When these four elements are put together, then we have complete union with Christ, and that union helps us grow and develop in our spiritual life. And the focus of this union always centers on the cross.

"Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour. By prayer, by the study of His word, by faith in His abiding presence, the weakest of human beings may live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold them by a hand that will never let go." [EGW, The Ministry of Healing, p. 182]

The problems in our spiritual life arise when;

1. *We don't integrate the Gospel in our life.*
2. *We fail to submit completely to Jesus.*
3. *We don't seek God to have a clear vision of His will for us.*
4. *We neglect spending time in the presence of God.*

ACTION

Here are some practical applications that will help you improve your spiritual formation.

To improve the Vision element:

1. *Meditate in the life of Jesus. Read the four Gospels.*
2. *Study the lives of people on which God has work; Bible characters, well known Christians.*
3. *Develop a life of prayer, talking to God as to a friend.*
4. *Develop the habit of memorizing scripture.*

To improve the Gospel element:

1. *Accept the fact that Jesus died for you.*
2. *Accept the fact that you are the object of God's love.*
3. *Study the Gospel truths.*
4. *Accept the fact that salvation is only by the grace of God.*

To improve the Lordship element:

1. *Pray that the Holy Spirit will show you what He wants you to do.*
2. *Ask yourself;*
 - a. *What difference does Christ make in my life?*
 - b. *What difference does the Gospel make in my life?*
 - c. *In which way the presence of Jesus in me will influence the decisions I make every day?*
3. *May Christ take priority in all your decisions.*

To improve the Presence element:

1. *Accept the reality of Jesus' promise,*
 - a. *"... I will be with you always..." Matthew 28:20*
2. *Accept the reality of the Holy Spirit in your life,*
 - a. *"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—" (John 14:16, NKJV)*
3. *Set apart a place every day to spend time with the Lord in prayer and study of His word.*

PRAYER

Pray for the Lord to help you live by these four key elements, so you grow in your spiritual formation. Pray for the people in your list. Pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our churches so that every member can experience a spiritual revival.

DAY 27: THE MIND AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH - 1

STUDY

The next two days of readings are a compilation of writings that deal with the relationship that exist between the mind and our spiritual health. There will be no Action Section. As you read them meditate on them and see how they can help you in your new spiritual journey.

The Fruitage of Spiritual Life

"Spiritual life yields to its possessor that which all the world is seeking but which can never be obtained without an entire surrender to God." [EGW, Mind, Character, and Personality (Vol. 2, p. 404)]

Body, Mind, and Soul Benefit from Communion with God

"In a knowledge of God all true knowledge and real development have their source. Wherever we turn, in the physical, the mental, or the spiritual realm; in whatever we behold, apart from the blight of sin, this knowledge is revealed. Whatever line of investigation we pursue, with a sincere purpose to arrive at truth, we are brought in touch with the unseen, mighty Intelligence that is working in and through all. The mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite. The effect of such communion on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate." [EGW, Education p. 14]

Loving for God is Essential for Health

"God is the great caretaker of the human machinery. In the care of our bodies we must co-operate with Him. Love for God is essential for life and health. In order to have perfect health our hearts must be filled with hope and love and joy." [EGW, Counsels on Health, p. 587]

The Health of Your Body is Important for Your Spiritual Health

"God would be recognized as the Author of our being. That life He has given us is not to be trifled with. Recklessness in the bodily habits reveals a recklessness of moral character. The health of the body is to be regarded as essential for the advancement of growth in grace, an even temper." [EGW, Mind, Character, and Personality, Vol. 2 p. 405]

Good Deeds Promote Good Health

"Good deeds are twice a blessing, benefiting both the giver and the receiver of the kindness... When the mind is free and happy from a sense of duty well done and the satisfaction of giving happiness to others, the cheering,

uplifting influence brings new life to the whole being." [EGW, The Ministry of Healing, p. 257]

Godliness is in Harmony with the Health Laws

"Those who walk in the path of wisdom and holiness find that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8)... Godliness does not conflict with the laws of health but is in harmony with them. The fear of the Lord is the foundation of all real prosperity." [EGW, Counsels on Health, p. 29]

Constant Struggle Against Evil Imaginings

"We should meditate upon the Scriptures, thinking soberly and candidly upon the things that pertain to our eternal salvation. The infinite mercy and love of Jesus, the sacrifice made in our behalf, call for most serious and solemn reflection. We should dwell upon the character of our dear Redeemer and Intercessor. We should seek to comprehend the meaning of the plan of salvation. We should meditate upon the mission of Him who came to save His people from their sins. By constantly contemplating heavenly themes our faith and love will grow stronger." [EGW, Mind, Character, and Personality Vol. 2, p. 406]

Injury to Health Weakens Moral Powers

"Whatever injures the health not only lessens physical vigor but tends to weaken the mental and moral powers. Since the mind and the soul find expression through the body, both mental and spiritual vigor are in great degree dependent upon physical strength and activity; whatever promotes physical health promotes the development of a strong mind and a well-balanced character." [EGW, Mind, Character, and Personality Vol. 2, p. 406]

The Body is the Medium for Mind and Soul

"The body is a most important medium through which the mind and the soul are developed for the upbuilding of character... The tendencies of the physical nature, unless under the dominion of a higher power, will surely work ruin and death. The body is to be brought into subjection to the higher powers of the being. The passions are to be controlled by the will, which is itself to be under the control of God. The kingly power of reason, sanctified by divine grace, is to bear sway in the life."

"Intellectual power, physical stamina, and the length of life depend upon immutable laws. Through obedience to these laws, man may stand conqueror of himself, conqueror of his own inclinations, conqueror of principalities and powers, of "the rulers of the darkness of this world," and of "spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12)." [EGW, Prophets and Kings, p.488-489]

Vital Energy Imparted to Mind Through Brain

"The Lord would have our minds clear and sharp, able to see points in His word and service, doing His will, depending upon His grace, bringing into His work a clear conscience and a thankful mind... Brain, bone, and muscle are to be brought into harmonious action that all may work as well-regulated machines, each part acting in harmony, not one being overtaxed." [EGW, Mind, Character, and Personality Vol. 2, p. 407]

Doing Right Is the Best Medicine

"The consciousness of doing right is the best medicine for diseased bodies and minds. The special blessing of God resting upon the receiver is health and strength. A person whose mind is quiet and satisfied in God is in the pathway to health." [EGW, Mind, Character, and Personality Vol. 2, pp. 407–408]

PRAYER

Continue to pray for those in your prayer list, for your church leaders, and for a spiritual revival in each of our lives.

DAY 28: THE MIND AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH - 2

STUDY

We continue the readings on the relationship that exist between the mind and our spiritual health. As you read them meditate on them and see how they can help you in your new spiritual journey.

Christ Illumines the Mind

"The physician is never to lead his patients to fix their attention on him. He is to teach them to grasp with the trembling hand of faith the outstretched hand of the Savior. Then the mind will be illuminated with the light radiating from the Light of the world." [EGW, Mind, Character, and Personality Vol. 2, p. 409]

Truth Has Soothing Power

"The soothing power of pure truth seen, acted, and maintained in all its bearings is of a value no language can express to people who are suffering with disease. Keep ever before the suffering sick the compassion and tenderness of Christ and awaken their conscience to a belief in His power to relieve suffering, and lead them to faith and trust in Him, the Great Healer, and you have gained a soul and ofttimes a life." [EGW, Medical Ministry, p. 234-235]

True Religion Aids Restoration to Health

"Christ is our Great Physician. Why cannot everyone who goes to a doctor for physical help also come to Christ for spiritual help? Why cannot you, my brother, my sister, entertain the hope that if you accept Christ, He will add His blessing to the agencies employed for your restoration to health? Why cannot you have faith to believe that He will cooperate with your efforts to recover, because He wants you to get well? He wants you to have a clear brain so that you can appreciate eternal realities; He wants you to have healthful sinews and muscles so that you can glorify His name by using your strength in His service." [EGW, Mind, Character, and Personality Vol. 2, p. 409]

Counsel when Depressed

"It is your duty to war against oppressive thoughts and melancholy feelings, just as much as it is your duty to pray. It is your duty to counter work the agencies of the enemy, to place a firm hold upon the bridle of your tongue as well as your thoughts. Of all the times in your life when you need a supply of grace, it is when... you are worried and tired out." [EGW, Mind, Character, and Personality Vol. 2, pp. 409-410]

Assurance of God's Approval

"The assurance of God's approval will promote physical health. It fortifies the soul against doubt, perplexity, and excessive grief that so often sap the vital forces and induce nervous diseases of a most debilitating and distressing character. The Lord has pledged His unfailing word that His eye shall be over the righteous and His ear open to their prayer." [Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, p. 270-271]

Connection Between Sin and Disease

"There is a divinely appointed connection between sin and disease... God loves His creatures with a love that is both tender and strong. He has established the laws of nature, but His laws are not arbitrary exactions. Every "Thou shalt not," whether in physical or moral law, contains or implies a promise. If it is obeyed, blessings will attend our steps; if it is disobeyed, the result is danger and unhappiness. The laws of God are designed to bring His people closer to Himself. He will save them from the evil and lead them to the good if they will be led but force them, He never will. We cannot discern God's plans, but we must trust Him and show our faith by our works." [EGW, Testimonies for the Church Vol. 5, p. 444-445]

Gospel Is Cure for Sin-originated Maladies

"When the gospel is received in its purity and power, it is a cure for the maladies that originated in sin. The Sun of righteousness arises "with healing in His wings" (Malachi 4:2). Not all that this world bestows can heal a broken heart, or impart peace of mind, or remove care, or banish disease. Fame, genius, talent—all are powerless to gladden the sorrowful heart or to restore the wasted life. The life of God in the soul is man's only hope." [EGW, The Ministry of Healing, p. 115]

Heaven Is All Health

"The view held by some that spirituality is a detriment to health is the sophistry of Satan. The religion of the Bible is not detrimental to the health of either body or mind. The influence of the Spirit of God is the very best medicine for disease. Heaven is all health; and the more deeply heavenly influences are realized, the surer will be the recovery of the believing invalid. The true principles of Christianity open before all a source of inestimable happiness. Religion is a continual wellspring from which the Christian can drink at will and never exhaust the fountain." [EGW, Counsels on Health, p. 28]

Religion the True Science of Healing

"Religion is a principle of the heart, not a magical word or a trick of the mind. Look to Jesus only. This is your only hope of gaining eternal life. This is the

true science of healing for body and soul. The mind must not be centered upon any human being, but upon God.” [EGW, Mind, Character, and Personality Vol. 2, pp. 410–412]

Love for Redeemer Clears Away Spiritual Pollution

“The mind is befogged by sensual malaria. The thoughts need purifying. What might not men and women have been had they realized that the treatment of the body has everything to do with the vigor and purity of mind and heart.”

“The true Christian obtains an experience which brings holiness. He is without a spot of guilt upon the conscience or a taint of corruption upon the soul. The spirituality of the law of God, with its limiting principles, is brought into his life. The light of truth irradiates his understanding. A glow of perfect love for the Redeemer clears away the pollution which has interposed between his soul and God. The will of God has become his will—pure, elevated, refined, and sanctified. His countenance reveals the light of heaven. His body is a fit temple for the Holy Spirit. Holiness adorns his character. God can commune with him, for soul and body are in harmony with God.” [The S.D.A. Bible Commentary Vol. 7 p. 909]

Christ’s Love a Vitalizing Power

“The love which Christ diffuses through the whole being is a vitalizing power. Every vital part—the brain, the heart, the nerves—it touches with healing. By it the highest energies of the being are roused to activity. It frees the soul from the guilt and sorrow, the anxiety and care, that crush the life forces. With it come serenity and composure. It implants in the soul, joy that nothing earthly can destroy—joy in the Holy Spirit—health-giving, life-giving joy.” [EGW, The Ministry of Healing, p. 115]

PRAYER

As you have spent the last two days reading about the relationship between the health of your body, your mind and your spirit, ask the Lord to, with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, lead you into the right path to take proper care of your body so your mind can function properly, and you can grow spiritually.

DAY 29: THE MIND AND SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE - 1

STUDY

Physical health depends greatly on spiritual health. John wrote in his third letter to the churches;

"Dear friend, I hope all is well with you and that you are as healthy in body as you are strong in spirit." (3 John 2, NLT)

And Paul wrote also;

"So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31, NLT)

Therefore, our personal religion is revealed by our conduct, our words, and our actions. Let me share a few quotes to help us better understand this.

"Pure and undefiled religion is not a sentiment, but the doing of works of mercy and love. This religion is necessary to health and happiness. It enters the polluted soul temple, and with a scourge drives out the sinful intruders... It opens the windows of the soul heavenward, letting in the sunshine of God's love. With it comes serenity and composure. Physical, mental, and moral strength increase, because the atmosphere of heaven as a living, active agency fills the soul. Christ is formed within, the hope of glory." [EGW, Welfare Ministry, p. 38]

God is the fountain of life, of light, and of joy for all mankind, and we were created to live by His will and power. That life is in our Lord and Savior Jesus. He said of Himself;

"No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father." (John 10:18, NKJV)

Now, we have an enemy who has worked incessantly to seduce mankind and lead us away from God. Satan uses on earth the same weapon he used in heaven; the influence of the mind over the mind. Men become tempters of their fellow men.

"Satan has nets and snares, like the snares of the fowler, all prepared to entrap souls. It is his studied purpose that men shall employ their God-given powers for selfish ends rather than yield them to glorify God. God would have men engage in a work that will bring them peace and joy and will render them eternal profit; but Satan wants us to concentrate our efforts for that which profits not, for the things that perish with the using." [EGW, Mind, Character, and Personality, Vol. 1, pp. 28-29]

But glory be to God, for Jesus began His work of salvation as soon as mankind sinned, so that through faith in Jesus and obedience to His word, we can be restored to the image of God. So here is the great controversy: Jesus vs Satan. There are only two choices for us; we either side with Jesus, or we will side with the prince of darkness.

Sin can affect the whole being, but so does the grace of God. If we would learn of Christ, the soul must be emptied of all its proud possessions, that Christ may imprint His image on the soul.

"By looking unto Jesus, who is the Author and Finisher of our faith, all the desire for self-glorification is laid in the dust. There comes, as we see aright, a spirit of self-abasement that promotes lowliness and humbleness of mind."
[EGW, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, Vol. 1, pp. 29–30]

What makes us complete is Jesus in our life through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Our value as God estimates it is through our union with Christ, for God is the only One able to raise us in the scale of moral worth through the righteousness of Christ.

One of Satan's most powerful weapons is selfishness and the fruit it produces in us.

"Selfishness is the essence of depravity, and because human beings have yielded to its power, the opposite of allegiance to God is seen in the world today. Nations, families, and individuals are filled with a desire to make self a center. Man longs to rule over his fellowmen. Separating himself in his egotism from God and his fellow beings, he follows his unrestrained inclinations. He acts as if the good of others depended on their subjection to his supremacy." [EGW, *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 24]

That is why only through Christ can we obtain victory. Through the cultivation of righteous principles, we may gain the victory over the bias to evil. If we are obedient to the law of God, the senses are no longer warped and twisted; the faculties are no longer perverted and wasted by being exercised on objects that are of a character to lead away from God. In and through the grace bestowed by Heaven, our words, our thoughts, and our energies may be purified; a new character may be formed, and the debasement of sin will be overcome.

"... It is for you to hold every emotion and passion under control, in calm subjection to reason and conscience. Then Satan loses his power to control the mind. The work to which Christ calls us is to the work of progressive conquest over spiritual evil in our characters. Natural tendencies are to be overcome.... Appetite and passion must be conquered, and the will must be placed wholly on the side of Christ." [EGW, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, Vol. 1, p. 31]

"The soul that has been misled by wrong influences and has become a partaker of sin through association with others, to do contrary to the mind and character of God, need not despair. «For such a high priest became us,

DAY 30: THE MIND AND SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE - 2

STUDY

While Satan's work is to discourage the soul. Christ's work is to inspire the heart with faith and hope. So, for each kind of temptation there is a remedy. We are not abandoned to fight alone. Jesus is our powerful helper, who never fails. Paul wrote;

"For there is no temptation to discontinue God's treatment that has come upon you except for the fear and selfishness that infects all mankind. God is reliable and trustworthy; He will not allow temptation beyond your ability to resist, but when you are tempted, He will always provide resources, options, opportunities, supports, and alternate ways out so you can stand your ground and overcome the temptation, therefore growing stronger with each victory." (1 Corinthians 10:13, The Remedy New Testament)

Christ blood is the only remedy.

"Jesus ... plainly declared to His disciples that this holy law of God may be violated in even the thoughts and feelings and desires, as well as in the word and deed. The heart that loves God supremely will not in any way be inclined to narrow down His precepts to the very smallest possible claims, but the obedient, loyal soul will cheerfully render full spiritual obedience when the law is seen in its spiritual power. Then will the commandments come home to the soul in their real force. Sin will appear exceedingly sinful.... There is no longer self-righteousness, self-esteem, self-honor. Self-security is gone. Deep conviction of sin and self-loathing is the result, and the soul in its desperate sense of peril lays hold on the blood of the Lamb of God as his only remedy." [EGW, Mind, Character, and Personality, Vol. 1, pp. 32-33]

We all have experienced how Satan comes to us and says, "You are a sinner. There is no way God will forgive you for this". When that happens, our reaction needs to be to go to our knees and pray to the Lord, "Yes, I am a sinner, and I need a Savior. I need Jesus who is the only who can forgive me and cleanse me from all my sins through His blood, which He shed on the cross at Calvary. Praise be to the Lord for my victory in Jesus."

Remember the promise found in John's first letter to the churches;

"If we humbly confess and acknowledge our terminal selfish condition, He faithfully and rightly forgives us from all the mistakes we made while living in selfishness; but more importantly – he heals us from all corruption, decay, and sickness of heart and mind." (1 John 1:9, The Remedy New Testament)

An intimate relationship with Christ through daily communion with Him in study of His word and prayer and witnessing will;

1. Increase our mental faculties

2. *Improve our physical and mental health*
3. *Lead us to live rightly*

Then, the love of Jesus will surround our soul with a fragrant aroma.

"The souls of those who love Jesus will be surrounded with a pure, fragrant atmosphere... Thus, we reveal a love that is heaven born and which will increase as it is freely used in blessing others. Thus, we glorify God." [EGW, Mind, Character, and Personality, Vol. 1, pp. 34–35]

We also must understand that there are evils which we may lessen but can never remove.

"People are to overcome obstacles and make their surroundings instead of being molded by them. They have room to exercise their talents in bringing order and harmony out of confusion. In this work they may have divine aid if they will claim it. They are not left to battle with temptations and trials in their own strength. Help has been laid upon One who is mighty. Jesus left the royal courts of heaven and suffered and died in a world degraded by sin that He might teach people how to pass through the trials of life and overcome its temptations. Here is a pattern for us." [EGW, Mind, Character, and Personality, Vol. 1, p. 36]

Jesus wants to renew our mind and to fill our heart with the treasure of truth.

ACTION

Think about a time when you were tempted and overcame that temptation. Then think also about a time where you gave in to a temptation. What made the difference? What helped you overcome? What led you to fail? How what you just studied can help you be more victorious in your life?

PRAYER

Considering what you read and how you answered the previous questions, what are you biggest needs to pray about? Write them down and pray earnestly about them.

DAY 31: HOW TO HAVE PEACE & A HEALTHY MIND

STUDY

Today I want to share with you, resources that can promote mental and spiritual health. The prophet Jeremiah says:

"But blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit." (Jeremiah 17:7–8, NLT)

We live in the midst of what we may call a "drought of distrust", that sometimes sickens us. However, as believers, we should be, as the prophet Jeremiah stated, like trees that are planted by a riverbank of the living water that flows from Jesus. In the book that I have been quoting in the last few readings, Mind, Character and Personality, are three important points to consider;

1. *Nine out of ten illnesses originate in the mind.*
2. *An egotistic attitude can deteriorate your health.*
3. *Depression and emotional distress can get you sick.*

On the other hand, a life built on trust in God is a resource that brings the peaceful and loving presence of the Lord, which then provides peace and spiritual power. This sense of trust comes as a gift from the Lord and becomes a reality for us when we give ourselves completely to Him. It brings peace of to the troubled mind, will help improve our physical health, as well as increasing our spiritual health. How can God give us this peace when we are sometimes so troubled by the cares of life? Let's look at some causes that create distrust and try to put an end to peace, thus creating mental distress on people. They have been extracted from the chapter Mental Healing in the book The Ministry of Healing.

Healing the mind

"The condition of the mind affects the health to a far greater degree than many realize. Many of the diseases from which men suffer are the result of mental depression. Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust, all tend to break down the life forces and to invite decay and death." [EGW, The Ministry of Healing p. 241]

This was the condition that David dealt with while he tried to hide his sin from God. He struggled daily with the feeling of guilt. Psalm 32 is a recount of his experience;

"When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long." (Psalm 32:3, NLT)

How many times haven't we been in the same situation, with the same ordeal. How many times we have felt sick, some even developing serious illnesses like ulcers, because of hidden guilt and unconfessed sins. But let's listen to the same David, how he felt after he confessed his sins to God;

"Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the LORD." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone." (Psalm 32:5, NLT)

What a contrast and what a feeling of relief for David. He went from a feeling of distrust and depression and sickness, to a feeling of peace, hope, faith and love. What happened to David can happen to you also.

Confessing our sins to God and to those we have sinned against brings health to mind, body and spirit. The greatest benefit is a sense of forgiveness.

Prayer as a Source for Healing

Prayer is the act of opening our heart to God as to a friend. Bring your case before the Lord and leave it in His hands, who says, *"... I am the LORD who heals you."* (Exodus 15:26, NLT). Prayer elevates us to God, who is the source of healing.

"Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven." (James 5:14-15, NLT)

The Impact of Thoughts, Feelings, and Emotions on our Health

Many times, the mental state of a person is conditioned by their culture (beliefs, values, actions), that are learned in the home, in school, and in the community. Culture molds or programs the mental condition of a person, and thus the mind molds the reaction of the body and the immune system.

Because of the power that the mind has over the body, we need to consider the following:

- 1. When the mind trusts and rests in the Lord, it is nurtured by an environment of trust, gratitude, and praise to the Creator, electric currents flow from the brain to the organs, bringing health and strength.*
- 2. All changes in habits and health improving practices require a gradual and patient process of education.*

So, as you spend time closer to God every day, allow Him the time to heal you spiritually, mentally, and physically according to His will.

ACTION

There are 3,565 promises from God in the Bible. How can you claim some or all of these promises in your life? Here are a few of them. Read each one following the guidelines below:

Mark 11:24 / Psalm 37:4 / Psalm 37:5

First: read each one aloud a few times, seeking to understand what God is promising.

Second: Identify the condition that God is asking of you for the promise to be fulfilled and be willing to meet that condition.

Third: Pray and ask for that promise to be fulfilled in your life, and for you to meet the necessary condition. Thank the Lord for hearing your prayer and for fulfilling that promise in your life.

Fourth: Record the results, and if you chose to, share them as a witness to others that can also benefit from the same exercise in faith.

PRAYER

Ask God for courage to share with others how these 40 days have helped you. Provide them with a copy of the workbook if they would like one. You can download it from <http://cantonoh.adventistchurch.org/resources>

DAY 32: JOY IN THE LORD

STUDY

God's children are called to be representatives of Christ in the world, and to always show the kindness and mercy of the Lord. As Jesus reveals to us the true character of the Father, so are we to reveal Christ to a world that does not know His tenderness and compassionate love.

Jesus sends a letter of love to the world through us. If you are a true messenger of Jesus, then you may lead those who "read" this letter to know the Lord's kindness and desire to save them, and they may give their lives to Him. Remember Jesus' words:

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16, ESV)

If we truly represent Christ, then we will show that our service to Him is attractive, as it really is. However, those Christians who fill their lives with sorrow and bitterness, complaints and murmuring, are falsely representing God and Christian life to others. They make people believe that God doesn't desire for His children to be happy, and thus give a false witness of our Heavenly Father.

That is Satan's word, to present God as lacking compassion and piety. Satan always tries to portray the Christian life as one of darkness. He wants to make it look as if it is sorrowful and hard, and when a Christian in his or her unbelief, present their life in the same light, they are basically siding with Satan. A person who is discouraged is filled with darkness, keeps the divine light out of his/her heart, and thus projects darkness in the path of others.

But praise the Lord for the wonderful things He has shared with us through His word and through our daily communion with Him. Jesus left the glory of heaven to come to this world and bring salvation to all.

So, as light to the world, let's share the joys of knowing Jesus with others. We all face trials and afflictions to overcome. We all deal with temptations every day. Jesus said;

"...There will always be temptations to sin, but what sorrow awaits the person who does the tempting!" (Luke 17:1, NLT)

When you are facing trials and temptations and sufferings, don't just share them with others, take them to the Lord in prayer. Then, as the Lord helps you get through them, share with others instead the victories you experience in Christ.

Remember also what Paul wrote; *"For none of us lives to himself..."* (Romans 14:7, ESV). So, through our unconscious influence people can be encouraged and strengthen, or they could be discouraged and pushed away from Christ. Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve; and when His love reigns in our heart, we will follow His example, and be conscious of how we witness for Him at all times.

We must also consider that we must cultivate humility and distrust in ourselves. We must develop tender patience towards the mistakes of others. This will destroy selfishness in us and increase the generosity of our heart. David wrote in the Psalms;

"Trust in the LORD and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper." (Psalm 37:3, NLT)

"Jesus is our friend; all heaven is interested in our welfare. We should not allow the perplexities and worries of everyday life to fret the mind and cloud the brow. If we do, we shall always have something to vex and annoy. We should not indulge a solicitude that only frets and wears us but does not help us to bear trials." [EGW, Steps to Christ, p. 122]

Jesus has promised to help us, that is why He send the Holy Spirit. But we have a part to fulfill in our partnership with Him as His witnesses. When, relying upon our Helper, we have done all we can, we must accept the result cheerfully.

"He knows there are trials and dangers, and He deals with us plainly. He does not propose to take His people out of a world of sin and evil, but He points them to a never-failing refuge. His prayer for His disciples was, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." "In the world," He says, "ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 17:15; 16:33." [EGW, Steps to Christ, p. 122]

ACTION

In the Sermon on the Mount Christ gave His disciples precious lessons with regards to the trust we are to have in God. Read the sermon, found in Matthew chapters 5 to 7. Meditate on His words and write at least three things you learn from it that can help increase your trust in God, and your desire to witness for Him.

PRAYER

Please pray for all who are studying the Bible, and for those who are teaching them. Pray for the guidance and outpouring of the Holy Spirit and may God's will be done.

DAY 33: CHANNELS OF LIGHT AND BLESSING

STUDY

"We are to be consecrated channels, through which the heavenly life is to flow to others. The Holy Spirit is to animate and pervade the whole church, purifying and cementing hearts." [EGW, Instruction for Effective Christian Service, p. 18]

As followers of Jesus we have a work to do as missionaries for Christ, in the family, in the neighborhood, in the town or city where we live. If we are consecrated to God, then we are channels of light. God makes us instruments of righteousness to communicate to others the light of truth.

"Jesus is the friend of sinners; and His heart is touched with their woe. He has all power, both in heaven and on earth; but He respects the means that He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church, which He has made a channel of light to the world." [EGW, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 122]

As the rays of the sun penetrate to the remotest corners of the globe, so God designs that the light of the gospel shall reach every soul upon the earth. If we as the church of Christ were fulfilling the purpose of our Lord, light would be shed upon all that sit in darkness and in the region and shadow of death. What a privilege for us to be part of this great work.

"It is the privilege of every soul to be a living channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that Christ desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Savior's love. All heaven is waiting for channels through which can be poured the holy oil to be a joy and blessing to human hearts." [EGW, Christ's Object Lessons, p. 419]

Think of this, when you commit fully to the service of the Lord, your light shining forth in steadfast piety, in unwavering faith, will prove to the world the power of a living Savior. That is why Jesus calls us to let His light shine through our lives of faithful obedience to His word.

"Church members, let the light shine forth. Let your voices be heard in humble prayer, in witness against intemperance, the folly and the amusements of this world, and in the proclamation of the truth for this time. Your voice, your influence, your time, —all these are gifts from God, and are to be used in winning souls to Christ." [EGW, Instruction for Effective Christian Service, p. 19]

We must remember also that it is not only by preaching the truth, not only by distributing literature, that we are to witness for God. A Christlike life is the most

powerful argument that can be advanced in favor of Christianity, and a cheap Christian character works more harm in the world than the character of a worldly person.

"The work which the disciples did, we also are to do. Every Christian is to be a missionary. In sympathy and compassion, we are to minister to those in need of help, seeking with unselfish earnestness to lighten the woes of suffering humanity." [EGW, The Ministry of Healing, p. 104]

So, every one of us who accept the Gospel has received a sacred truth that we are to share with the world.

ACTION

Remember this quote that I shared at the beginning of the readings? Read it again a few times over and over until you memorize it.

"Those who will put on the whole armor of God and devote some time every day to meditation and prayer and to the study of the Scriptures will be connected with heaven and will have a saving, transforming influence upon those around them. Great thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth and duty to God, will be theirs. They will be yearning for purity, for light, for love, for all the graces of heavenly birth." [EGW, Testimonies to the Church, v. 5, pg. 112-113]

PRAYER

Continue praying for those in your prayer list.

Ask God to give you courage and boldness to be a faithful witness, not only with your words, but more importantly, with your life.

DAY 34: AN INDIVIDUAL CALL TO SERVICE

STUDY

God assigns each one of us a distinct work. He requires everyone to be a worker in His vineyard. You are to take up the work that has been placed in your charge, and to do it faithfully. If each one of us were to be a living missionary, the Gospel message of salvation would be proclaimed speedily in all countries, to every people and nation and tongue.

"Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life." [EGW, The Desire of Ages, p. 195]

As we have come to join the community of believers, we have been instructed in the Gospel truth. God expects personal service from everyone who has received this knowledge for this time. We all cannot go as missionaries to foreign lands, but we can be home missionaries to our families and neighborhoods. It is our individual responsibility to do our part, to make sacrifices, to help others come to the feet of the cross.

"We should all be workers together with God. No idlers are acknowledged as His servants. The members of the church should individually feel that the life and prosperity of the church are affected by their course of action. Every soul whom Christ has rescued is called to work in His name for the saving of the lost. This work had been neglected in Israel. It is not neglected today by those who profess to be Christ's followers?" [EGW, Instruction for Effective Christian Service, p. 10]

There is something for everyone to do. Every one of us who believes the Bible truth is to stand in our place saying, *"Here am I; send me."* (Isaiah 6:8). So, it is our privilege, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"He who becomes a child of God should henceforth look upon himself as a link in the chain let down to save the world, one with Christ in His plan of mercy, going forth with Him to seek and save the lost. All may find something to do. None need feel that there is no place where they can labor for Christ. The Savior identifies Himself with every child of humanity." [EGW, The Ministry of Healing, p. 104]

"There is a world to be warned, and every sincere Christian will be a guide and an example to others in faithfulness, in cross-bearing, in prompt and vigorous action, in unswerving fidelity to the cause of truth, and sacrifices and labors to promote the cause of God." [EGW, Instruction for Effective Christian Service, p. 12]

Therefore, it is our work to reveal to men the gospel of their salvation. Every enterprise in which we engage should be a means to this end.

ACTION

Read the following passages and write what you feel is expected of you as a missionary:

Matthew 28:18-20

1 Corinthians 2:2

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

2 Timothy 4:2

PRAYER

Ask God for the power of the Holy Spirit to be a missionary where you are, with those around you; family, friends, neighbors, co-workers.

Pray for the same power to be bestowed on all members of the church.

Pray for our church leaders.

DAY 35: THE SHAKING

STUDY

In the book of the prophet Amos there is a passage that deserves our complete attention:

*"For behold, I will command, and shake the house of Israel among all the nations as one shakes with a sieve, but no pebble shall fall to the earth."
(Amos 9:9, ESV)*

Through the prophet Amos God sent a warning that there would be a process of shaking or sifting among the chosen people of God to separate the dirt and garbage from the grain. It's an idea and process that comes from agriculture. During the harvest the grains of wheat, barley, or lentils, for example, were collected. But with them came chaff, dirt, pebbles, and other things. So, to clean the grain, it was placed in a sieve or strainer, which was shaken so that only the grain would remain in the sieve, while the junk would fall to the ground. The sieve was first shaken slowly, and then the intensity of the shaking would increase to complete the work. This may be a terrible process for the grain, but it is a necessary one to purify it and clean it.

Going back to Amos 9:9, in order for the people of God to be purified from the garbage of sin, difficult times will come, but the end will be a wonderful one. Let me share the following quotes.

"There will be a shaking of the sieve. The chaff must in time be separated from the wheat. Because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold. It is the very time when the genuine will be the strongest." [EGW, Last Day Events, p. 173]

"The Lord is soon to come. There must be a refining, winnowing process in every church, for there are among us wicked men who do not love the truth or honor God... We are in the shaking time, the time when everything that can be shaken will be shaken. The Lord will not excuse those who know the truth if they do not in word and deed obey His commands." [EGW, Last Day Events, p. 173]

These may be strong statements, but, as we live in these difficult times before the return of the Lord, we must take these warnings very seriously. If there was a time where it would be necessary to fully comprehend our responsibility as Christian witnesses for the Lord, it is now. Satan is not resting. He is working very hard to destroy people's lives, including ours and that of our fellow believers.

"Stay calm and keep a clear head: do not allow your emotions to take charge, because Satan, your enemy, is stalking around, roaring like a lion, seeking to consume you with fear and doubt. But resist him and don't be afraid; keep your trust in God strong, because you know that your fellow

believers throughout the world are also being attacked in the same way.” (1 Peter 5:8-9, The Remedy New Testament)

Many believers think that this shaking is a future event that will begin at a determined time. But this is not so. The shaking is not simply a quick, isolated and future act. It is a process that has already begun and is increasing in intensity for the purpose to test everyone who claims to be a follower of Jesus.

“God is now sifting His people, testing their purposes and their motives. Many will be but as chaff—no wheat, no value in them.” [EGW, Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 4, p. 51]

“The mighty shaking has commenced and will go on, and all will be shaken out who are not willing to take a bold and unyielding stand for the truth and to sacrifice for God and His cause.” [EGW, Early Writings, p. 50]

The first shaking happened during Jesus’ ministry. It is found in the Gospel of John chapter 6. Jesus was in Galilee in the region of Nazareth where He grew up. We find a large multitude following Him because, *“...they saw his miraculous signs as he healed the sick.”* (John 6:2, NLT). Although the motives of many who followed Jesus was just because of the miracles, He still had compassion for them and performed a miracle. He fed them all, some estimate around 15,000 people! The multitude was astonished.

“When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, «This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!»”. (John 6:14, ESV)

They wanted to proclaim Jesus as king, not because of His message, but because of the miracles. However, Jesus did not allow this to happen. He left and went to the other side of the sea of Galilee. When the multitude found Him, they came after Him, looking to be physically fed again. But when Jesus declared what they needed to do in order to be His disciples, their true heart was exposed.

I recommend you read the whole chapter to get the full picture. I will highlight a few passages:

“Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.” (John 6:26)

“Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?” (John 6:28–30, NKJV)

"And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe." (John 6:35–36, NKJV)

"Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." (John 6:53, NKJV)

"Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it? When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:60–63, NKJV)

"From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more." (John 6:66, NKJV)

On that day each of the persons there was shaken. Their spiritual foundation was tested with relation to Jesus and His message. Each one had to make a decision for the truth of the Gospel. It was a terrible day. The day before Jesus had thousands following Him. Now only twelve are left. So, Jesus tested them also...

"Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"" (John 6:67, NKJV)

Jesus had given the disciples an opportunity to reflect on whether they were willing to accept the truth and be willing to follow Him or go away also. Peter answered...

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:68–69, NKJV)

PRAYER

To obey the truth of God's word today is difficult, but it is the most precious thing we can do. And the decisions we make every day will decide if we are on the side of Jesus or not. Pray and ask God to help you with such a life changing decision. Ask the Lord to give you strength and courage to commit your life fully to Him. Ask for the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. Meditate on these words from Paul:

"We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies." (2 Corinthians 4:8–10, NLT)

DAY 36: WHAT CAUSES THE SHAKING

STUDY

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31-32, ESV)

What an amazing text. Jesus tells Peter that he was going to be fiercely shaken by the devil, but at the same time gave him the assurance that, in the midst of this, Jesus would be praying for him to strengthen him.

We can also have the same assurance. In the midst of this shaking process Jesus is with us and does not leave us alone. The story of all those who rebelled against the Lord is being repeated and will continue to be repeated until the end of time. Who will stand on the side of the Lord? Who will be deceived and at the same time will become deceivers?

"We are in the shaking time, the time when everything that can be shaken will be shaken. The Lord will not excuse those who know the truth if they do not in word and deed obey His commands." [EGW, Last Day Events, p. 173]

What causes the shaking? Let's enumerate some causes to help us better understand this topic:

1. *Persecution will come from people that have left the church*

Unfortunately, many people only serve the Lord looking for blessings, and when everything is easy and comfortable. As the situation in the world worsens, when everyone will need to make a stand for God before Jesus returns, many will abandon the church. Paul had to experience this in his days with some of his fellow missionaries. Here is an example;

"Demas has deserted me because he loves the things of this life and has gone to Thessalonica..." (2 Timothy 4:10, NLT)

"As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition." [EGW, The Great Controversy, Vol. 5, p. 608]

2. *Resistance to the direct testimony of the Faithful and True Witness*

There is a powerful message for believers today in the words written to the church at Laodicea in the book of Revelation. Many will not stand it, or they will listen to it only partially. Our salvation will depend on our response to this message. It should lead us to repentance and obedience.

"You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference. "Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne." (Revelation 3:17–21, NLT)

Are you lukewarm? It's time to get hot for the Lord!

3. False theories from church members

"and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them." (Acts 20:30, ESV)

The enemy will present false doctrines through false teachers, and if we are not centered in the Word of God, we will be led astray. They do not believe the Bible doctrines as they are to be preached. They will be zealous in some areas just to introduce their deceit. We must follow John's advice in his first letter;

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1, ESV)

Pray earnestly for God to show you the truth in His word. Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

4. Criticism, Slander, and Falsehood

"Even in our day there have been and will continue to be entire families who have once rejoiced in the truth, but who will lose faith because of calumnies and falsehoods brought to them in regard to those whom they have loved and with whom they have had sweet counsel. They opened their hearts to the sowing of tares, the tares sprang up among the wheat, they strengthened, the crop of wheat became less and less, and the precious truth lost its power to them." [EGW, Last Day Events, p. 176]

Dear brothers and sisters let's be careful with our words and actions, that we don't become agents of Satan and aid in the loss of a soul.

5. Terrible worldliness and lack of sanctification and obedience to God's word.

There is a contention between obedience to God's Law and obedience to what mankind says. We have to stand strong for the Lord.

"The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church." [EGW, Last Day Events, pp. 173–174]

How can we overcome and remain standing firm?

"Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive. By the Bible testimony these will detect the deceiver in his disguise. To all the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation the genuine Christian will be revealed. Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible and the Bible only?" [EGW, The Great Controversy, p. 625]

ACTION

Read 1 Peter 1:13-25. List the things Peter says we must do persevere to the end.

PRAYER

Continue praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in your life and in the church. We are almost there. Keep on going and keep the faith.

DAY 37: THE EXTENT OF THE SHAKING

STUDY

"I love all who love me. Those who search will surely find me." (Proverbs 8:17, NLT)

What a wonderful promise! When we seek the Lord in the first hour of our day, in the quiet place that we have chosen for our communion time, we can be sure that we will find the Lord.

"You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13, ESV)

How can this take place?

"The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning." (Lamentations 3:22-23, NLT)

We need to take advantage of God's mercy, which is renewed each day, with the purpose of confirm our decision of being on the side of the Lord and the truth of His word.

"Those who have had opportunities to hear and receive of the truth and who have united with the Seventh-day Adventist church, calling themselves the commandment-keeping people of God, and yet possess no more vitality and consecration to God than do the nominal churches, will receive the plagues of God just as verily as the churches who oppose the law of God." [EGW, Last Day Events, p. 172]

What will be the extent of the shaking? How many will abandon the Lord?

Many who did not seek to strengthen their faith when difficult times arose, will be like the branches that did not remain attached to the vine... will not produce fruit, and will be cut off.

"He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you." (John 15:2-3, NLT)

"The shaking of God blows away multitudes like dry leaves... Soon God's people will be tested by fiery trials, and the great proportion of those who now appear to be genuine and true will prove to be base metal...." [EGW, Last Day Events, p. 180]

Will the church fall? Never!

"The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place. None but those who have been overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony will be found with the loyal and true, without spot or stain of sin, without guile in their mouths. We must be divested of our self-righteousness and arrayed in the righteousness of Christ." [EGW, Selected Messages, Book 2, p. 380]

The shaking is therefore a process that will result in the purification of the church. The grain remains and the chaff is removed: worldliness, fanatic behavior, false teachings and theories. A faithful people will remain on the side of Jesus, on the side of the truth, to stand in the final events of the earth.

And as many leave their walk with the Lord and the church, others who have been earnestly searching for the truth will join God's people.

"And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd." (John 10:16, NKJV)

"The broken ranks will be filled up by those represented by Christ as coming in at the eleventh hour. There are many with whom the Spirit of God is striving. The time of God's destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who [now] have no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched, His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter. Large numbers will be admitted who in these last days hear the truth for the first time." [EGW, Last Day Events, p. 182]

What should be our attitude?

As I have said already, we must remain faithful and trust that God will see us through in these difficult times. We must be watchful and prayerful.

"When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason." [EGW, Last Day Events, p. 180]

Praise the Lord, because no one who is abiding in Christ will fail or fall. As His followers we must bow in obedience to Christ, our highest authority. While the contempt placed upon God's commandments leads many to suppress the truth and show less reverence for it, the faithful ones will with greater earnestness hold aloft its distinguishing truths.

"We are not left to our own direction.... We should consult His Word with humble hearts, ask His counsel, and give up our will to His. We can do nothing without God." [EGW, Maranatha, The Lord is Coming, p. 28]

We must seek God on the first hour of our day. We must confess and abandon every known sin and ask for the strength to overcome all temptations. We must study the Bible to be fed with the truth, so we are not deceived. We must decide, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to walk in the right path, allowing God to do His will in our lives.

ACTION

Today, read 1 Peter chapter 2 and meditate on His counsel for these days.

PRAYER

Pray for boldness to reach out to others who are searching for the Bible truths, that you may help them find Jesus while there is still time. Pray for those in your list.

DAY 38: LESSONS FROM THE SHAKING

STUDY

You made the decision to seek God on the first hour of your day. I pray that this experience has been a blessing to you. Only by spending time in communion with God every day, and seeking to do His will, can you remain firm in this time of shaking that is increasing day by day. This is the time also to teach others; family, friends, fellow believers, the privilege and blessing of being baptized daily by the Holy Spirit.

Let's summarize what we have learned about the shaking these last few days as we are closing our 40 days of prayer.

Yesterday you learned that many will abandon the faith as trials become more difficult and their faith will be tested. But there is an even greater number that will search for the truth and will join God's people.

"But there are men and women who will receive the truth, and these will take the places made vacant by those who become offended and leave the truth.... The ranks will not be diminished. Those who are firm and true will close up the vacancies that are made by those who become offended and apostatize.... Many will prize the wisdom of God above any earthly advantage and will obey the Word of God as the supreme standard. These will be led to great light. These will come to the knowledge of the truth and will seek to get this light of truth before those of their acquaintance who like themselves are anxious for the truth." [EGW, Selected Messages, Book 3, p. 422]

People who have sincerely yearned for understanding the Bible truths, will adhere to it fervently. They will side with the Lord Jesus disregarding any fear to relatives, or anything that can keep them from giving themselves to the Lord wholeheartedly. They had hunger and thirst for truth.

They will experience what the 3000 people felt on the day of Pentecost...

"Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:36-38, ESV)

And what a privilege and blessing for you and I it is to share with them the wonderful things God has done for us, so they too can be part of God's glorious kingdom. So today, as you spend with the Lord and study His word, you must also reflect on the following:

"As trials thicken around us, both separation and unity will be seen in our ranks. Some who are now ready to take up weapons of warfare will in time of real peril make it manifest that they have not built upon the solid rock; they will yield to temptation. Those who have had great light and precious privileges, but have not improved them, will, under one pretext or another, go out from us. Not having received the love of the truth, they will be taken in the delusions of the enemy; they will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and will depart from the faith.

But, on the other hand, when the storm of persecution really breaks upon us, the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd's voice. Self-denying efforts will be put forth to save the lost, and many who have strayed from the fold will come back to follow the great Shepherd. The people of God will draw together and present to the enemy a united front. In view of the common peril, strife for supremacy will cease; there will be no disputing as to who shall be accounted greatest. No one of the true believers will say: "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas." The testimony of one and all will be: "I cleave unto Christ; I rejoice in Him as my personal Saviour." [EGW, Lift Him Up, p. 211]

Today is the day to make a decision to be on the side of the Lord, on the side of truth and obedience, and of total consecration to God. You do not need to be afraid, for Jesus is by your side. The Holy Spirit is guiding you. Take advantage of this time to study the word, to pray, and to witness to others the Gospel of salvation. Remember that there is no power on earth to separate you from the love of God.

"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39, ESV)

ACTION

Today, read 1 Peter 4:12-19. It's one of my favorite Bible passages. Think about how it can help you when dealing with trials in your life.

PRAYER

It may be a good idea to have another day of fasting and prayer.

DAY 39: THE VOICE OF CONSECRATION

STUDY

When King David was an old man, he appointed by the word of God his son Solomon as his successor to the throne. He then called the people to bring offerings for the temple that Solomon was to build. The people opened their heart and brought generous offerings, which filled their hearts with joy.

"Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the LORD. David the king also rejoiced greatly." (1 Chronicles 29:9, ESV)

In his joy David offered a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord.

"But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you." (1 Chronicles 29:14, ESV)

Our merciful God has blessed us immensely in many ways. His greatest gift was giving Jesus to die for us. Therefore, our worship and gratefulness must include faithfulness in bringing the tithes and offerings to the Lord.

God is constantly pouring blessings upon us, and He asks us to partner with Him as faithful stewards in using of what He has given us to spread the Gospel message.

"God, as the Master Worker, cooperates with men in securing the means necessary for their sustenance; and He requires them to cooperate with Him in the salvation of souls." [EGW, Counsels on Stewardship, p. 47]

We will never reach the position that God desires for us to reach until we join Him in sympathy and compassion for those who are lost.

"Never can the unity for which Christ prayed exist until spirituality is brought into missionary service, and until the church becomes an agency for the support of missions. The efforts of the missionaries will not accomplish what they should until the church members in the home field show, not only in word, but in deed, that they realize the obligation resting on them to give these missionaries their hearty support. God calls for workers. Personal activity is needed. But conversion comes first; seeking for the salvation of others, next." [EGW, Counsels on Stewardship, pp. 47-48]

So, we must empty our hearts from selfishness and be willing to take part in the mission of the church. God is asking for consecration in every area of our lives. When Hezekiah became king of Judah, he wanted to restore the worship to God, He wanted for the people to experience a revival in their lives, which in turn would bring a reformation in the nation. We read the story in 2 Chronicles 29-30. Here is a summary of what took place:

1. *First, he had the doors of the sanctuary restored, the sanctuary cleansed from all filthiness and idolatry, and he restored the sanctuary services.*
2. *Then the priests sanctified themselves and the people, offering sacrifices for the forgiveness of sin. They sang and restored the worship among the people. They made atonement and renewed their pact with God.*
3. *He called the people from all over to come to celebrate the Passover. His message to the people was;*

"O people of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that he may turn again to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. Do not be like your fathers and your brothers, who were faithless to the LORD God of their fathers, so that he made them a desolation, as you see. Do not now be stiff-necked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the LORD and come to his sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever, and serve the LORD your God, that his fierce anger may turn away from you. For if you return to the LORD, your brothers and your children will find compassion with their captors and return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him." (2 Chronicles 30:6–9, ESV)

4. *However, not all accepted the message and came to join the celebration. And not all who came were sanctified. Still, the Levites made sacrifices for them, and Hezekiah prayed for them.*
5. *The result was that God heard Hezekiah's prayer and he healed the people. And God also prospered Hezekiah's tenure as king and blessed the nation.*

"And the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people." (2 Chronicles 30:20, ESV)

And the people brought their tithes and offerings. They brought so much that the priests had to tell them not to bring anymore! Spiritual prosperity is linked to a giving heart. God loves a cheerful giver. Let us make a covenant with the Lord, to be faithful in everything, including our stewardship. And let us truly consecrate our lives to Him.

PRAYER

Meditate on the words of Paul in Philippians 4:8-9. Pray that God removes all selfishness from your heart, and trust in His promise to bless you abundantly.

DAY 40: THE END OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN CHRIST & SATAN

STUDY

You have made it. You made the commitment to spend the first hour of your day with the Lord for the past 39 days. If your experience was like mine when I first did it, you are not the same person that began this process 39 days ago. Because when God is first, your life has a different meaning.

So, as of tomorrow, you will be ready to begin a new journey and continue this new habit. You can read the devotions again or use other materials available. So, tell the Holy Spirit in prayer that you accept the challenge and are ready to go on in faith.

As we close these 40 days, I want to share some scripture and quotes that I pray will encourage you and increase your faith and hope as we labor for the saving of souls and wait for the return of our Savior.

Goodbye death and pain.

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4, ESV)

Satan and his followers will be destroyed forever.

"For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." (Malachi 4:1, ESV)

"The fire that consumes the wicked purifies the earth. Every trace of the curse is swept away. No eternally burning hell will keep before the ransomed the fearful consequences of sin." [EGW, The Great Controversy, p. 674]

We will inherit a new heaven and new earth.

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more... The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son." (Revelation 21:1,7, ESV)

"One reminder alone remains: Our Redeemer will ever bear the marks of His crucifixion. Upon His wounded head, upon His side, His hands and feet, are the only traces of the cruel work that sin has wrought." [EGW, The Great Controversy, p. 674]

Jesus will shepherd the flock forever.

"In the Bible the inheritance of the saved is called "a country." Hebrews 11:14–16. There the heavenly Shepherd leads His flock to fountains of living waters. The tree of life yields its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the service of the nations. There are ever-flowing streams, clear as crystal, and beside them waving trees cast their shadows upon the paths prepared for the ransomed of the Lord." [EGW, The Great Controversy, p. 675]

All faculties will be enhanced.

"There, immortal minds will contemplate with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. There will be no cruel, deceiving foe to tempt to forgetfulness of God. Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body." [EGW, The Great Controversy, p. 677]

We will always sing praises to the Lord.

"And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, «To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!»" (Revelation 5:13, ESV)

The universe will declare forever that God is love.

"The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love." [EGW, The Great Controversy, p. 678]

And on that great day, when Jesus returns, we will receive the crown of victory. Praise the Lord for His mercies!

"Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:8, ESV)

May God bless you richly.