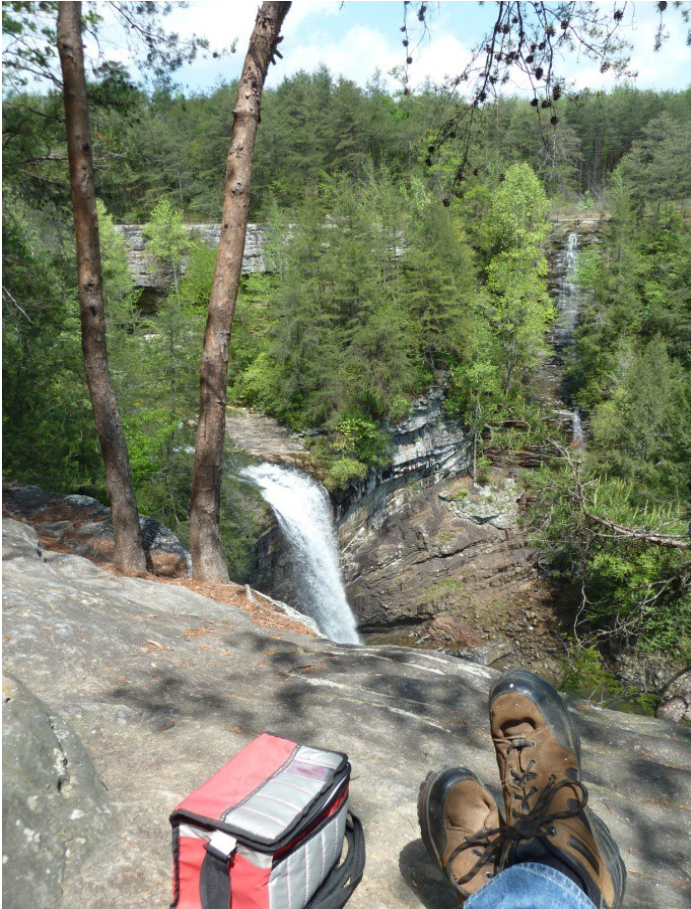


Get Closer to God in 40 Days



Devotions for your walk with Christ

Rob Beard

Get Closer to God in 40 Days

**Devotions for your
walk with Christ**

Copyright © 2022 by Rob Beard

Would you like to be closer to God?

Eight months after our last child left the nest, my father went to heaven on January 4th, 2007. That was a wake-up call for me. It made me consider my own mortality. What should I do with the time I had left? I thought I should ask God about that, but didn't know how to hear from him. Then it dawned on me. I knew *about* God but didn't *know* him. I *professed* Christ but didn't *possess* him and I'm not sure how much of me *he* possessed, either. Could I get close to him? Does he even want me to? To find out, I read every book and article I could find on getting to know God. I also discovered quite a bit of scripture on the subject that I somehow missed before. I had always heard that Christianity was not just a religion but a relationship, but had never seemed to be able to do more with God than just reading my Bible occasionally and praying to him when I needed something.

I came to see that God made us to love us and for us to love him, not just to serve him. He wants us to work *with* him, not just *for* him and to work *closer* with him, not just *harder*. But he won't force himself on us. He's waiting for us to make the first move:

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. (James 4:8).

We've been taught about Jesus and we talk about Jesus but how many of us really *know* him? Is that even possible? Absolutely! He says to abide in him and he will abide in us and out of our hearts will flow rivers of living water. And it's not just a private benefit; as we keep company with Jesus, he infuses in us more compassion for others. We'll move out of our passivity as we courageously step out in faith to become the leaders our families and communities need us to be.

If you want more of God or want to want him more, come along with me on these daily devotions to get closer to him. They are based on truths I have gleaned from several years of walking with Christ and learned from others who know him well. Getting close to God is not just part of the Christian life, it is THE Christian life. If we get this right, everything else will fall into place. And when we live with the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, he gives us the assurance and abilities to become all that we were created to be!

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

- Jesus, John 10:10

Contents

- Day 1: God is close and he wants you to know him
- Day 2: Eternal life begins NOW!
- Day 3: The Power of Continuity
- Day 4: Timing is Everything!
- Day 5: What my tree taught me about abiding in Christ
- Day 6: Life is like a fleeting sunset
- Day 7: Don't let your spirit get dehydrated
- Day 8: Is it too good to be true?
- Day 9: Are you hungry for God?
- Day 10: Mere Hope vs The Joy of the Lord
- Day 11: Was that you, God?
- Day 12: Keep in Touch
- Day 13: Want to be happy? Be grateful!
- Day 14: Live in the Vine
- Day 15: Look at Jesus instead of the waves
- Day 16: Sit Still!
- Day 17: Giving credit where credit is due
- Day 18: Come to the table
- Day 19: God uses our shipwrecks
- Day 20: Prime your Spiritual Pump!
- Day 21: Give yourself a Break!
- Day 22: Can you see what is unseen?
- Day 23: Proclaiming & Acclaiming the Glory of God
- Day 24: Transaction or Interaction?
- Day 25: Can you read just one page from your Bible every day?
- Day 26: Don't be a stranger!
- Day 27: Our minds are like a raging river
- Day 28: What will you wear today?
- Day 29: Why should we memorize Scripture?
- Day 30: Can People tell if you've been with Jesus?
- Day 31: Believe BIG!
- Day 32: Devotion
- Day 33: Pack light!
- Day 34: Who do you smell like?
- Day 35: What's between you and God?
- Day 36: Is it time you took a leap of faith?
- Day 37: Really God?
- Day 38: Not Perfect, but Persistent
- Day 39: Don't keep The Secret Place a secret!
- Day 40: Information vs. Transformation

Resources

Day 1: God is close and he wants you to know him



What comes into your mind when you think about God? A. W. Tozer says that is the most important thing about you. Do you know God personally? Do you think that's possible? Have you ever wondered why God made people? The Bible explains in Acts 17:26-28:

"From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being."

We spend our entire lives feeding and maintaining the outward, physical vehicle that our souls reside and travel around in, but out of ignorance many neglect the most important thing of all—the needs of the human spirit. They may believe there is a God or some type of a spiritual dimension, but since they can't see or touch him, they really don't give him much thought. That is the biggest tragedy in life. Because just as gold requires digging to be found, God and all his wonders can be discovered only if we take the time to learn how to seek him. The tools of faith may be different than the usual scientific methods, but then again, there are things that science cannot explain.

Seek the Lord and His strength; Seek His face continually.
(1 Chronicles 16:11).

The Christian religion promises a joy-filled life, but not all Christians experience that. Marriages still dissolve, anxiety still reigns and depression still weighs down the souls of many.

So, what's wrong? Why is heavenly peace so allusive? It's not that we haven't tried to serve God. But keeping busy, even helping others can leave us feeling used, empty and burned out. Maybe things are going well for you but the distractions of this world have kept you distant from God and his will for you.

“Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)

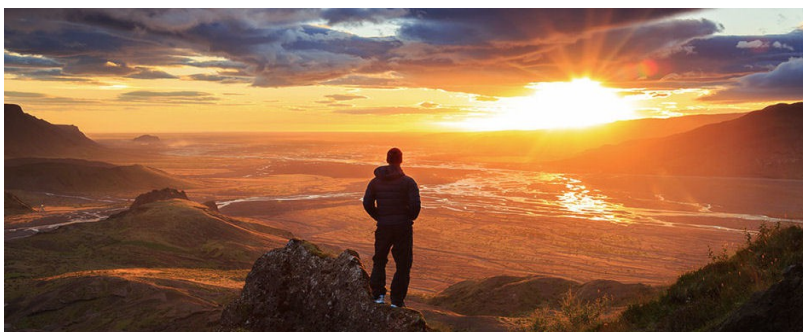
Once a month, the moon appears hidden, even though it's there. That's because during the New Moon phase, the moon comes between the earth and the sun, blocking the reflection. When we go through dark times in our lives, we may question if God is real or if he cares about us. But the most frequent promise in the Bible is “I will be with you.” Jesus is called Immanuel, which means, God is with us. God is not watching us from a distance. He is up close and personal. He not only wants us to know him, he wants us to invite him to help us thrive, and not just survive. He's ready and willing to supply everything we need as well as satisfy the deepest longings of our heart.

So, what does God want from us? Does he really need us to do anything for him that he can't do for himself? Yes, there is something he wants from us: our love, our time, and our devotion; not just to serve him but to be with him and know him. What are some things people brag about? Their intelligence, their accomplishments? Is God impressed with that?

This is what the Lord says, “Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let him who boasts boast about this; that they have the understanding to know me.” (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

God wants us to know him intimately and experience the peace and joy that only comes from a close walk with him. No matter where we are in that relationship, we can always be closer. Stay with these devotions and we'll discover how to do that together!

Day 2: Eternal life begins NOW!



Here is a tragedy: many Christians do not experience the abundant and joyful life Christ wants to give them. They may go to church, read their Bible, pray, and try to serve God, but at the end of the day they wonder if it's worth the effort. They don't seem to be any happier than their non-Christian friends. So they convince themselves they are not supposed to be happy; their purpose in life is to be as good as they can while they are still in this miserable world. When they get to heaven, then, and only then, will everything be OK.

I'm here to tell you some good news. You don't have to wait until you die to start tasting heaven! Did you know that eternal life can begin *now*? Jesus explained this in John 17:3: ***"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."*** Not just *eternal* life, but eternal *life*!

You are born again (*now*), not just for later

Here's how important the apostle Paul felt about knowing Jesus: ***"I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them mere rubbish, so that I may gain Christ...I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings."*** (Philippians 3:8, 10).

So, is there any work for us to do? Of course there is. As James says, ***"faith without works is dead."*** (James 1:26) We just have to remember not to go it alone: ***"Without faith it is impossible to please God."*** (Hebrews 11:6). In other words, if you do it without trusting God to help you, it doesn't count. So, works without faith is dead, too. But when ***"it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure"*** (Philippians 2:13,) and we do it for the glory of God, we can

give it all we've got! God is all powerful. He doesn't need us to do anything for him. But he takes pleasure in helping us do things for others. The same way a parent enjoys teaching their child a new skill or a coach seeing his team win a game. I think this verse from Colossians 1:29 describes perfectly the partnership we have with the Lord:

***“I labor, striving according to His power,
which mightily works within me.”***

We don't work so God will love us. We work *because* he loves us.

When we really get to know Christ and personally experience his love, serving him is not a duty, chore, or obligation. It is a privilege. We will want to share him with others, not only because we've encountered the incredible joy and peace that passes understanding, but because Christ begins to freely love through us. Jesus saves. Not us!

Does God really want a personal relationship with you?

The Lord delights in a man's way...O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. (Psalm 37:23, 139:1-3).

Jesus said, ***“Abide in Me, and I in you.”*** (John 15:4).

The real question is: Do you really want to know God?

I'm finding that getting and staying close to God is not easy. I can't just be myself or do what's natural if I want to live a supernatural life. In fact, I am my biggest obstacle. I can't be filled with the Spirit if I'm full of myself, my plans, and my interests. I have to let God be the pilot, not the co-pilot. It's not that he wants us to be his puppets. Rather, he wants to enhance and empower the unique personalities he gave to each of us. We can only go so far with our own abilities. With Christ, there are no limits! Rick Warren said, ***“Nothing is more powerful than a surrendered life in the hands of God.”***

The kind of eternal life Jesus is talking about is the kind of life we can have right here and now. The degree we experience it is directly proportional to how fiercely we pursue Christ and desire to know him. His kind of love gets us through any hardship, and when we get to heaven, being with him will even beat walking pain-free on the streets of gold. His love moves us to say, **“Just give me Jesus!”**

Day 3: The Power of Continuity



My wife is the most consistent person I know. She starts her day with Bible reading, prayer and stretching exercises. Then she has the same breakfast every day – Honey Nut Cheerios. When she comes home from work, she runs on the elliptical. Every night she relaxes with a card game on her phone before going to bed. You might say she has some predictable routines. But she has one more routine that I love the most: she faithfully demonstrates a continual devotion to me and our family and friends. I know that I can always count on her to come through for me when I need her to and she knows I will do the same for her. That's the power of continuity. Not sporadically, not just when we feel like it, but continually.

Continuity is achieved when you have an uninterrupted and unbroken operation of something over a period of time. Decades of fixing electrical machines on my job and appliances around the house has shown me the most common cause of their breakdowns: open circuits. A wire has come loose, a component has failed or a fuse has blown. When the connection is repaired, continuity is restored. A simple example of closing a circuit is turning on a switch.

My life verses are Psalm 16:8 & 11:

I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken... You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever. (NASB)

I like the NASB version the best because it uses the word “continually.” Most of the other translations use the word “always.” The Hebrew word is *tā-mîd*, which means continuity.

What is the difference between “Always” and “Continually”? A person may say, “I always brush my teeth.” Does he brush them all day long? Of course not. But when you do something continually, like breathing, you don't stop (hopefully!).

I find it interesting that David said that he *set the Lord continually* before him. He didn't just say the next line, “*Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*” This tells me that even though God is always with us, there is something we need to do to experience the joy and pleasures that come when we are aware of his presence and walk with him.

Isn't it funny that most of the time when you get on an elevator with other people they all stand facing the door and nobody talks? No connection is made, even though you are right next to them. This is the way it is with many of us Christians. We know the Holy Spirit is in us but we really don't pay much attention to him. We receive more and more information about God week after week in church but it rarely travels from our heads to our hearts. So, what can we do to improve our connection to him? Let's take a look at how the early church did it:

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2:42).

What does it mean to be steadfast? It means to be stubbornly persistent and determined to carry on a task. That takes discipline and devotion, which are necessary to achieve anything worthwhile. Those things don't come easy for me. But when I tell the Lord that I love him as I crawl out of bed in the morning, listen to him as I read and memorize his words, stay in touch with him and thank him for getting me through another day as my head hits the pillow, I become more aware of his presence. It also motivates me to live right, knowing he is right next to me no matter where I go or how I drive! That verse also includes the value of ongoing fellowship with believers, to encourage us and keep us accountable.

***When You said, “Seek My face,” My heart said to You,
“Your face, LORD, I will seek.”*** (Psalm 27:8).

There's no better way to communicate with someone than sitting down with him face to face. That's when I can *set him before me*. The more I do that with the Lord, the more I experience the power of continuity!

***Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and
perfector of our Faith.*** (Hebrews 12:1).

Day 4: Timing is Everything!



Did you know how critical it was to time the landing of the astronauts on the moon? It had to be done as soon as the sun was starting to come up so the craters and boulders would cast their shadows to enable Neil Armstrong to find a smooth surface to land the lunar module. They had missed the landing site by about 4 miles. He finally found a safe spot with only 15 seconds of fuel left.

Did you know why we only see the same side of the moon no matter what time of the year it is and no matter where you live on the earth? That's because the time it takes for the moon to rotate on its axis is the same amount of time it takes to rotate around the earth. It's called tidal locking.

It's hard to believe that even though our moon is only $\frac{1}{4}$ the size of earth and is 239,900 miles away, its rotational and orbiting timing has an enormous effect on our weather and ocean tides, which are affected by the gravitational tug from the moon and sun.

Since the earth takes 24 hours to complete a rotation, it's hard to fathom that it needs to spin at 1,000 mph to accomplish that. If it spun at twice that speed and our days were only 12 hours, you would have a plot for a disaster movie. The centrifugal force would pull hundreds of feet of water toward the equatorial region and everything there would be flooded except for the highest mountains in the Andes.

When you consider all the conditions that are necessary for life to exist on a planet, such as just the right distance from the sun so we don't fry or freeze and a protective atmosphere to shield us from its radiation, and water needing to be not too cold or too hot so it doesn't freeze or vaporize, it's very hard for me to believe that all those things just happened by chance.

Why is our planet an ideal place to live compared to the moon, where the temperature varies from 224° during the day and -298° at night? That's another reason the astronauts wanted to land before the sun had risen to a point that it would overpower their liquid cooled spacesuits! The oxygen level on the planet Mars is only 1%. Venus is the same size as Earth but has a toxic atmosphere full of carbon dioxide and is covered with yellowish clouds of sulfuric acid. At 850°, it's the hottest planet in our solar system, even though Mercury is closer to the Sun. Finally, only the Earth is covered with water. How did that come about?

The only reasonable explanation I can come up with is a very intelligent and powerful Creator who masterfully wove everything together from our incredibly complex DNA to the mind blowing vastness of the universe!

But what is even more amazing to me is that he not only designed our bodies but he also cares about us enough to work out everything in our lives for the best. It doesn't always look that way and it may not be according to *our* time table. The writer of Hebrews recounts heroes ***“who were commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.”*** (Chapter 11, verse 2). Jesus explained, ***“Many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”*** (Matthew 13:17).

I am so grateful that I was born after Jesus came to explain the things of God and to offer his life for our eternal salvation and an abundant life until then, even while we go through hardships and disappointments.

The older I get, the more I have come to see that I can trust God to get me through anything until that day when I will see him face to face in a place that will support life forever. I just need to let him take the wheel and let him choose the speed because his timing is always perfect!

***To everything there is a season,
And a time for every purpose under heaven.***

Ecclesiastes 3:1

Day 5
What my tree taught me about abiding in Christ



My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:8).

Do you see something unusual in this picture? This weeping willow tree in my back yard is exhibiting a phenomenon known as inosculation. The bottom branch actually grew back into the trunk further up in the tree. How did that happen?

When the branch was growing up, instead of going its own way, it worked its way back to the trunk. As the tree moved in the wind, the bark on the touching surfaces gradually abraded away as they rubbed against each other, exposing their cambiums, the growing part of the tree. This caused the branch to graft into the trunk as they expanded in diameter.

After observing this, I thought, what a great way to illustrate how to abide in Christ. When God gives us life and we begin to grow, we have a decision to make. We can hang out on our own and hope we will hold up under the winds of our tribulations or we can stay close to Jesus, relying on his strength to hold us up through the storms of life.

This tree has lost some of its branches over time. Some of them dried up and some have been ripped off during storms. But the branch that grew back into the trunk has continued to be nourished and held secure under the protection of the trunk that won't let go of it. That's because the roots are actually further out than the tree is tall. It's good to know that we have a Savior that won't budge and won't let anything or anyone snatch us out of his hands.

It is such a wonderful mystery, how God is in us and we are in him and how he works through us. I don't understand how he does it, but it's good to know that:

God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 1:27

**Day 6: Life is like a fleeting sunset.
Cherish what you have before it's gone.**



Sharon and I were walking with some friends in their neighborhood recently when we were enveloped by a luminous orange glow as the sun and the clouds danced in sync to enthrall us with a beautiful sunset. After changing its shape and color, it vanished as it succumbed to the darkness. The entire process took only a few minutes. It reminded me of how fleeting life is, and how if I'm not careful, I will miss out on enjoying experiences that are here today and gone tomorrow.

***You do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life?
For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.***

James 4:14

Time and change take their toll on us. Growing old, ailing health, death, and hardships rob us of our favorite pleasures and relationships one by one. No one I know has experienced this more than my mother, who has seen her husband and all eight of her brothers and sisters leave her behind on this side of heaven. Yet at 91 years of age, she is still a blessing to everyone she meets.

I'm not reminding us of our short time on this earth to depress us, but to wake us up. So we will enjoy and appreciate what we have before it's too

late. We can stay so busy in the rat race of life that we rarely slow down long enough to smell the flowers. We work so hard trying to give our families a good life that we don't have any time left over to *live* with them. That's a real shame, since our children's early years pass us by so quickly and we cannot go back and do them over again.

We made some great memories with our kids, Brian and Stephanie. We invented a lot of games. Brian and I had one we called "3 on You." It involved throwing a Koosh ball as hard as we could down the hall to bounce it off each other. We recently reenacted that to demonstrate it to our 5 grandkids. This old man can still let it rip! But these days, we mostly play ping pong. Stephanie and I are history nuts, so we like to visit historic sites. When they were in grade school, I took them out after lunch on their birthdays to grab some ice cream.

I say all this to encourage young parents to resist manicuring a perfect lawn or keeping a squeaky clean house or working longer hours. Why? So they will have enough time left to engage with their kids, who need to be with their parents more than they need things. They will eventually quit asking them to "play with me, Daddy!" Oh, how I would love to sing lullabies to my little ones again as they fall asleep on my chest!

I danced with my daughter at her wedding while James Taylor sang, "*I just want to **stop**, and thank you, Baby. How sweet it is to be loved by you.*" There's a lot of wisdom in that song when you think about it. We need to stop and tell our loved ones how we feel about them.

Tarry awhile longer with your little angels as you watch them sleep. It will help you deal with them when they act like little devils during the day! Reconcile and restore your broken relationships. Don't let your pride deprive you of good friendships. Don't wait until you retire before you try things on your bucket list. You may kick the bucket before then!

It's easy to stay focused on what's wrong with the world these days or to let a problem you're dealing with consume you to the point that you can't enjoy the good things in your life. We need to reverse that trend and not take for granted what God has blessed us with. Don't wait until your well runs dry. Enjoy your job and your stuff and your pets but most of all enjoy your people because life is fragile and heaven may be a long way off before we see them again.

Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Psalm 90:12

Day 7: Don't let your spirit get dehydrated



On New Year's Eve in 2020, I took a walk on the Nashville Greenway. It was pretty cool that day and I didn't intend to go very far so I didn't bring water along. But it was a trail I had not been on before so my curiosity kept me going further and further to see what was around one bend after another. By the time I got back I was utterly exhausted. I took a drink but didn't feel overly thirsty. Later that night as I was about to play a game with my family, I asked them if they thought it was cold in there. They said no. I then started to shake uncontrollably. Since that was a symptom of COVID 19, Sharon quickly got me out of there and drove me home. I had a fever for a couple of days and got tested for COVID but it was negative. Turns out I was suffering from dehydration and didn't even know it.

We need to take care of our souls as well as our bodies. If we don't, we will suffer from *spiritual* dehydration.

Soon after I moved from Chicago to Huntsville, I was in church hearing a lady talk about the woman at the *whale*. I was confused, so I asked, "You mean *Jonah* and the whale?" She said, "No, silly, the *woman* at the whale, not *Jonah*. And Jesus was there, too!" It took me awhile, but I eventually learned to understand southern talk, which included cutting out the vowel "i," adding syllables to words like ambulance (ambulayance,) and changing my bub (bulb) and my o (oil). And don't forget to put out that "far." But to be fair, they had to learn my Yankee talk, too!

When the Samaritan woman met Jesus at the well, she perceived that he was a prophet, and immediately brought up the subject of where to worship:

“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” (John 4:20).

If we're not careful, we will limit our worship to where we go to church and miss out on what Jesus was trying to teach her...and us:

Jesus said to her, ***“Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father...But a time is coming, and even now has arrived, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.”*** (vs. 21-23).

Jesus was offering her something much better than the water that was in that well: ***“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*** (vs. 14).

We humans need food and water to stay alive and we need to worship God in spirit and truth to keep our faith alive. Striving to love him with all our heart and soul enables us to worship him in spirit, and loving him with all our mind and strength allows us to worship him in truth. The connection between our spirit and his Spirit produces the living water that quenches the deepest need of our souls. And seeking him and obeying his truth, which is found in scripture, is also a part of worship. This can be done all throughout the day with everything we do.

Are you thirsting for God right now? If not, taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8) and take a sip from his living water. It will keep you coming back for more!

“On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” (John 7:37-38).

Day 8: Is it too good to be true?



I have seen some amazing things invented in my lifetime: space travel, computers, the internet and smart phones, just to name a few. These would have been considered miracles to those who lived before I was born. Why? Because they would have had no idea how we did it. This is the same reason some people have for not believing that God parted the sea or calmed the sea or raised the dead or even created the world – they don't know how he could possibly have done those things, not to mention all the other miraculous events recorded in the Bible. Their view of God is one with limited power, apparently.

Many of us don't understand how tiny computer chips control almost everything. We just trust them to help make our lives a little easier. We don't choose to stop using them because we don't understand them. I was a technician back when fax machines first came out, and I went on a service call where the user showed me what was wrong. She dialed the number and the document went through the scanner. She then said, “Do you see what's wrong? It's still here!” I guess she expected it to somehow shrink through the phone line!

Why does it seem incredible to any of you that God can raise the dead? (Acts 26:8).

So, why can't more people believe that God can do supernatural things? Or trust that he knows what he is doing, even when they don't understand why he does what he does or allows what he allows? Even the very existence of God is beyond the comprehension of some since they can't see or hear him. But not believing in God doesn't change reality. For a long time, people didn't believe the world was round!

I know it's hard to imagine that any kind of being, even a god, can do anything he wants and make something out of nothing just by speaking it into existence. This is because we live in a world ruled by natural laws

and limits that can't be broken. But the same God who set the laws in place can change them or make new ones up as he pleases. It appears supernatural to us but to the Creator of the universe it's perfectly natural and I expect nothing less from him. He may even be using natural laws that we are not aware of on this side of heaven.

Is God still doing his cool stuff today? I believe he is. Lee Stobel is a former atheist who set out to prove that the Bible was false but ended up believing it instead. He hired the Barna Group to survey Americans about their attitudes toward miracles, the results of which he discloses in his book, *The Case For Miracles*. He said that 38 percent of respondents recounted having an experience in their lives that they could only attribute to a supernatural act of God. "*When you extrapolate that, that's almost 95 million miracles among Americans,*" Strobel said. "*Now, discount 95 percent of those, let's say, as being strange coincidences. You still have 5 million examples of people saying 'I've had an experience in my life that I can only explain by saying it's a miracle of God.'*" He also adds a statistic that shows that 55% of physicians in the US say they have seen an incident in their practice that can only be explained as a miracle.

Personally, I have seen the Lord constantly rescue me on my job; one time I had lost thousands of medical records due to the system crashing and then I discovered the backup system had not been working. I was about to update my resume for a new job when the system miraculously came back online!

We lived in Fort Payne, AL, in 1983, the only year we lived in a mobile home. I remember looking out our living room window and seeing a lot of dust and debris flying around and people running for their lives. The only thing I could think to do was grab Sharon and huddle under the kitchen counter. Seconds later our trailer was pelted by "missiles" that knocked out the windows. The scariest part was when the entire home moved and shifted, falling off its blocks. When we ventured out to survey the devastation the tornado left in our neighborhood, we discovered that all the homes uphill from us were no longer there. We then noticed some trees had fallen over our home, which may have held it down. We prefer to believe it was the hand of our Lord, who said: "You're not taking *this* home-my children are still in there!"

Dare to believe in a BIG God. Once we arrive at the place where we believe that God can do *anything* and that he can enable *us* to do anything, exciting new possibilities come alive for us, more wondrous and amazing than what fairy tales, science fiction or Santa Claus can come up with. And it's for real. It sounds too good, but it's true!

How cool is that?!

Day 9: Are you hungry for God?

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” (Psalm 81:10).



We all hunger and thirst for many things, don't we? And it's not just for food and water. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, once our basic physiological needs are met, we then aspire to satisfy our psychological and self-actualization needs, such as intimate relationships and feeling of accomplishment.

While all these needs can be met to a certain extent, there is a need that spans across all the levels, and if recognized and satisfied, it fulfills our deepest longings far beyond what we dream is possible.

Unfortunately, it's a need that many people don't even know they have, so it gets neglected. And like any need that's unmet, it can lead to frustration, boredom and depression, which is not what we were created for. When created things don't fulfill their destiny, like cars that won't start or refrigerators that won't cool, that can be pretty aggravating. But when people don't get to experience the joy, excitement and contentment of living the kind of life that they were created for, then that's a tragedy. There's a hole in our heart that only our Creator can fill.

Do you enjoy God?

What is your view of God? We're supposed to love him, but do you *like* him? Or do you think of him as an impersonal force? Or a judge that doesn't approve of you or have time for you? Here's the truth: God is crazy about you!

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1).

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16).

But he doesn't stop there. Did you know that he enjoys hanging out with us?

A man's steps are established by the LORD, and the LORD delights in his way...the LORD takes pleasure in his people... he rescued me because he delights in me. (Psalm 37:23, 149:4, 18:19).

God enjoys us and we can enjoy him, too:

Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4).

I think that a lot of us don't expect much from God. Maybe he hasn't answered our prayers the way we wanted him to or we have become so accustomed to living mediocre lives that we don't ask him for much anymore. If that's the case, my friends, then we have set the bar way too low. We have let our faith lie dormant. Jesus said that "*the Kingdom of God is within you*" and the Apostle Paul said that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in us. Let's tap into those amazing resources!

Brother Lawrence was a lay monk in 17th century Paris. He was assigned to the monastery kitchen, where, amidst the hectic chores of cooking and cleaning, he honed his intimate walk with God. Eventually he came to see that:

"there is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God. Only those can comprehend it who practice and experience it...If, at any time, my thoughts wander from this state from necessity or infirmity, I am presently recalled by inward emotions so charming and delicious that I cannot find words to describe them." I highly recommend reading his letters in *The Practice of the Presence of God*, a PDF available online.

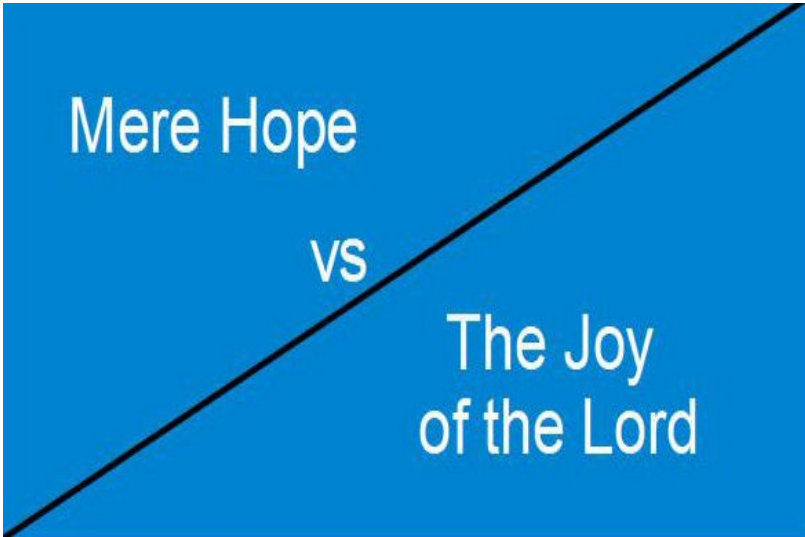
"God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him."

John Piper

The more time you spend with Jesus, the more you'll begin to delight in being with him, and before too long, he will give your heart the desires it *should* have. You will no longer serve him out of duty; you'll *want* to please him. And you'll begin to have an unquenchable love for him. You may even find yourself break down one day as you weep for joy, overcome by the goodness of God toward you!

I pray that you...may have power...to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:17b-19).

Day 10



I wanted a Pontiac Fiero ever since it first came out in 1984. I finally got one last year, and although it looked cool, it was not fun to drive. It wandered all over the road, vibrated horribly and wouldn't brake straight, along with other issues. But I got a good deal on it and I saw potential in it. So I struggled to fix the 33 year old car and had to learn some new skills in the process. When I finally got it restored, it hugged the road so well that it made me smile.

This is kind of like when we become Christians. Everything seems cool at first, but like an old car that needs attention, if we don't work on our walk with Christ and learn some new skills along the way, he will leave us alone and all we will be left with is a Sunday morning tradition and the hope of heaven. That kind of life is not fun to "drive." I want more than that. How about you?

Some of the warning lights of our faith are: increasing anxiety, depression, and a lack of love toward others. Just as our cars need regular maintenance to run at their best, we need to regularly practice the spiritual disciplines of prayer and worship while referring to our shop manuals for guidance, our Bibles. We also need to give our souls a rest at the service station of our quiet times, where we can fill up our tanks with the Holy Spirit.



There are two types of drivers. Some just want to get from point A to point B. Their cars are simple appliances that don't require much maintenance. They're not fun to drive but they don't care. And there are those that enjoy the drive, have a special connection with their cars, know them inside and out and keep them running right. They spend time and money installing modifications to boost performance, but they don't mind because they get rewarded with a car that is a blast to drive. There are Christians like that, too. Those who don't pay that much attention to God but just need him to chauffeur them to their destination, which is heaven. And those who enjoy their close connection with God, know him well, and do what it takes to live right in his sight. Those are the ones who enjoy the journey as well as the destination!

The joy of the LORD is your strength. (Nehemiah 8:10).

Day 11: Was that you, God?

My sheltered Christian upbringing was suddenly challenged when I got to college and took classes on world religions, philosophy, psychology and sociology. It made me question the very existence of God. Finally, after a long period of confusion and desperation, I cried out to God through my tears, “Are you really there or am I wasting my breath shouting at this ceiling?” What happened next is hard to describe. I felt like I was lifted out of my body, and the most incredible sense of freedom, joy and peace came over me. I've never taken drugs, but I was immersed in an intense euphoria and a love stronger than anything I've ever experienced before or since. God had spoken. To me. Unmistakably. I thought, “Wow, so this is what heaven must be like.”

Not everyone needs a spectacular experience to be convinced of God's reality in their life. For some, everything changes the minute they surrender their lives to Jesus. For others, it happens gradually as they learn to walk with him. A good friend of mine recently reminded me that our Savior comes to us in individual ways, depending on what we need. If you have doubts about God, I'd like to encourage you to ask him to show himself to you in some way. He has promised to do that in Jeremiah 29, verses 13-14:

“You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord.”

As for me, it's not enough to simply believe that he exists. It's not even enough to see him answer my prayers or to know that I will see him in heaven one day, as wonderful as those things are. I want, no, *I crave* for feedback from God, to hear from him, to experience a relationship with him. Some might say that is not possible, that God doesn't work that way; that I just need to trust him. Or that he stopped speaking to us after the last word was penned in the Bible and those words are all we'll ever need.

While I cherish my Bible and believe that scripture is the primary way he speaks to us, I don't think God cuts off communication the minute we close our Bibles and head out the door to face our day. When Jesus said to abide and remain in him, I don't think he meant that would only happen when we have a Bible in front of us. We are told to pray without ceasing and I believe that prayer works both ways.

What's keeping us from hearing God?

The first thing we need to ask ourselves is, “What is my motive? What

do I want to do with the information the Lord gives me? Is it to serve him better or to get something I want? Am I willing to obey what he tells me to do? Is there a persistent sin that is keeping me distant from him? If a self-examination has revealed pure motives, then perhaps our signal bars are too low and the static is too loud (distractions) and we need to improve our reception. We have to prepare ourselves to listen to God. My cousin, Curtis Coleman, wrote a devotional book called *Stop, Look, and Listen*. He describes an African safari where the natives carrying the gear would not go out on the seventh day. They said, “We do not go today, we rest today—we must let our souls catch up with our bodies.”

How does God speak to us?

God uses many ways to communicate with his people. So far in my life, God has not spoken to me audibly. God speaks to us through the Bible, but I believe he also uses people, events, and circumstances to get through to us, as well. Have you ever had a thought so profound and powerful that it would not be any clearer if someone spoke it to you? Or a persistent inclination that won't go away? Has God ever given you words to say to help or encourage a friend?

How God led me to my wife

One of the strongest promptings I've ever encountered from the Lord was after I had turned down a disc jockey position at a contemporary Christian music station in Huntsville, Alabama, because the pay they were offering me was ridiculously low. Driving back from the interview, a heavy feeling of remorse and depression washed over me. My emotions were confusing. I clearly made the right decision, I told myself. How was I supposed to live on that salary? So, where were these dreadful feelings and thoughts coming from that were telling me to go back to that little station and join that ministry and trust...OK, God, I'll do it, I'll do it already! Immediately, the darkness left me, and peace and excitement filled my soul. This was going to be an adventure - fun, but scary.

When I came to work at the station on my first day, the most beautiful receptionist I had ever seen greeted me when I walked in. She worked in the afternoons so I didn't see her on the morning of the interview. Before long, I realized why the Lord made me turn my car around that day to head back to that little radio station. 43 years later she is still greeting me when I come home. I am so glad the Lord got through to me in 1978!

The longer you experience a close walk with Christ, the better you'll get at recognizing the distinctive characteristics of his voice amidst all the other thoughts coming at you. As Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice.”

Day 12: Keep in Touch

As for me, it is good to be near God. (Psalm 73:28).

My dad's favorite hymn was *In the Garden* and he sang it quite often. Charles Miles composed it back in 1913 to describe the fellowship he enjoyed with his Savior which began at dawn and was so sweet and delightful that even as night was falling he didn't want it to end:

And He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own; And the joy we share as we tarry there, None other has ever known.

Dad didn't just sing those lyrics – he lived them. I remember back when I was a little guy I would sometimes hear him talking to someone while he was in the bathroom with the door shut (before cell phones!) I later found out that it was his prayer closet. He liked psalm 91 so much he put a couple of the verses to a tune he made up. I'll never forget the last words we heard him utter. When he could no longer communicate with us in his weakened condition, we sang his song over him,

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”

From seemingly out of nowhere, we heard him finish the song with us, *“shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”*

I know that sounds incredible but I'm telling the truth. His body was almost gone but his spirit was still very much alive and would soon be in the presence of the Almighty, no longer just in his shadow.

Is prayer your first resource or your last resort?

I have been guilty of prayerlessness, squandering this precious gift, resulting in blessings withheld and needs unmet. Too many times I have prayed without passion instead of crying out to God on behalf of others. The best way I can watch your back is to cover you with prayer, but I don't do that nearly enough.

“As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you.” (1 Samuel 12:23).

If you don't take time to pray, power is wasted that could have helped you or someone you love. When you do pray for someone, you may be the only one praying for him/her that day. One of the best ways you can love people is to pray for them.

Trust and Obey

I've heard it said that in order to get close to God you must obey him. But trying to do that in our own strength is doomed to fail. Why not strive to obey him *while trusting him*? I have heard it said that you can do all sorts of things *after* you've prayed. But you can do nothing of significance *until* you've prayed.

When The Holy Spirit is mentioned as working powerfully in people's lives in the Bible, it usually refers to them as being *filled* with the Spirit. The little books of Galatians and Ephesians mention "the Spirit" 30 times. He comes up in the book of Acts over 40 times. Even though Christians already have the Holy Spirit, we are advised to walk by, be led by, live by, pray by, keep in step with and be filled with the Spirit. That is how we can defeat sin in our lives, as explained in Galatians 5:16:

Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.

The Holy Spirit is responsible for producing spiritual fruit within us and he empowers us to boldly share Christ. He also gives us supernatural abilities, called spiritual gifts, to serve one another. We need to keep filling up with the Spirit, though, because we "leak." How is this done? Scripture records elders laying hands on people and on other occasions the Holy Spirit filled people without human intervention. I believe you can ask God to fill you, as well. If we want to live like we should all day long we need to keep in touch with Jesus all day long. That's how I get refilled!

In order to maintain a continual conversation with God we need to move beyond formality and invite him into everything we do. Engage in small talk with what's happening, what you like or don't like, and your fears. Don't wait until you have exhausted all options on your own to solve a problem; involve the Lord from the very beginning. I once heard a pastor say he offers up a quick prayer before every new activity, whether it's a phone call, a meeting, or anything, big or small.

As you become aware that the Holy Spirit is always with you, you can carry on a conversation with him, in words or in your mind. You can shoot up quick prayers, such as "Help me Lord," or, "Thank you, Lord." Praying scripture out loud throughout the day will also help keep you connected to Jesus through the Holy Spirit. I believe this is what Paul meant when he said we are to pray without ceasing.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25

Day 13: Want to be happy? Be grateful!

There are many things that can rob our joy on any given day but there is one thing that can bring it back, even on a bad day. We've been told quite often in scripture to be thankful, but that's not just a Biblical concept. More and more studies in the field of psychology has shown that being grateful helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal better with adversity, stress and depression, and build strong relationships. It also diminishes feelings of fear, anger and bitterness.

Thankfulness is the key to Happiness

I've heard it said that it's not happiness that brings us gratitude. It's gratitude that brings us happiness. That's because when you enjoy what you already have, you won't be as quick to be dissatisfied with it and won't be as prone to notice things that may look bigger and newer and "better." You won't be as vulnerable to advertising, whose sole purpose is to make you want something else. You also won't go broke trying to keep up with the Joneses. Gratitude is the key to contentment and the cure for envy and greed, the twins that enslave us with perpetual DIScontentment. When I begin to thank God throughout my day for all the good things in my life, like food, home, clothes, family and friends, it gives me a lift and I'm not so preoccupied with that one thing that I think is keeping me from being happy. You know that questionnaire they make you answer when you go to the doctor's office? It makes me count my blessings when I answer "No" to all the diseases that I could have, but don't. When something breaks down, like our refrigerator or car, Sharon and I remind ourselves, "That's a first world problem. At least we *have* a refrigerator and a car."



Being Thankful for the Kodak Moments

"You Press the Button, We Do the Rest."

Those were the words coined by George Eastman, Kodak's founder, for his first advertising slogan back in 1888. Whether it's capturing your child riding her bike for the first time or feeding the seagulls at the beach, we all strive to preserve those moments, don't we?

For most of the history of mankind, cameras were not invented yet, so they had no way to preserve memories except by the slow process of painting on canvas. Cameras were not affordable until the turn of the 20th century so only a handful of pictures were taken of my parents when they were young. They took about 50 pictures of me growing up, all in black and white. Thanks to my uncle Bill there are a few scenes of me around 6 years old that he recorded on his 8mm movie camera (but without audio.)

Sharon and I took enough pictures of our kids to fill 10 photo albums and we shot over 100 video tapes, the first ones were recorded on a heavy shoulder mounted VHS camcorder. That was a new invention back then and it was exciting because you could actually record video to watch instantly! But now we already have 10 albums full of our grand kids and our oldest is only 10 years old! Part of that is due to no longer having to buy film and having an almost unlimited supply of photos and videos to shoot on our digital cameras and phones. Kids today will have their lives well documented from the thousands of pictures and videos taken of them every year of their lives.

We like the old fashioned way of printing our photos and viewing them in albums. Sharon does a great job of arranging them on the pages. But I also like how the the Facebook Memories feature lets me recall the fun times we had in years gone by.

Being thankful for the Kodak moments

Did you ever stop to think that the very fact that we take a lot of pictures is testament to the cool things we get to enjoy in our lives? We need to browse through our photos every once in a while to remind ourselves of how blessed we are. It will help us to build a thankful heart!

How can we become more grateful? Try:

1. Throughout your day, thank God for EVERY good experience.
2. Start a gratitude journal. At the end of the day, record those blessings.
3. Think of a person who has helped you in life and thank them.
4. Take a walk outside and savor the fresh air and the beauty of nature.

Happiness is not getting what you want. It's wanting what you have.

Day 14: Live in the Vine!



“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser...Abide in Me, and I in You. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

-Jesus, John 15.

After trusting God for salvation, many of us think that it's all up to us now to obey and serve him. As Andrew Murray explains in *Abide in Christ*,

“The idea they have of grace is this-that their conversion and pardon are God’s work, but that now, in gratitude to God, it is their work to live as Christians, and follow Jesus. There is always the thought of a work that has to be done, and even though they pray for help, still the work is theirs. They fail continually, and become hopeless; and the despondency only increases the helplessness.”

God doesn’t save us and then say, “OK, show me what you can do now!” The reason we try to do it on our own is that we have just enough natural abilities that lead us to think we are self-sufficient, so we tend to only call on God when we really need him. This is even more prevalent in our affluent society that makes our lives easier and gives us a false sense of

security. But no matter how hard we try, we will never be able to follow God's standards on our own. It's just too hard without him. My slogan used to be "Do your best and trust God for the rest." I'm beginning to see that I must trust him *first*.

The vine doesn't have to try and produce the fruit - it just happens when the right combination of sun, water, and nutrients are brought together. The same thing happens with us when we are connected to the Vine, which is connected to the Root for a firm foundation that sends up the life-sap of the Holy Spirit. Add some light rays from the Son, drink in his living water and we are transformed into living examples of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Compassion for lost souls is also kindled, "bearing fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." (Mark 4:20). Trying to produce this spiritual fruit on our own is no more possible than a branch surviving on its own apart from the vine. As a friend of mine explained to me recently, "We don't *produce* the fruit; we *bear* it when we cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Another friend put it this way:

"Like a fruit tree, we must have the seed of our life planted in fertile ground. And as we grow and are nurtured, we need to have our limbs extended to heaven to receive the sun light. And it will take some painful pruning as limbs grow in the wrong direction. And we have to be careful of finding ourselves in the shade (wrong influence) where our growth can be stunted and/or severely deterred."

It is such a wonderful mystery, how God is in us and we are in him and how he works through us. I don't understand how he does it, but it's good to know that:

God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 1:27

Day 15: Look at Jesus instead of the waves



Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. (Hebrews 12:2).

The apostle Peter was a fisherman and knew how to swim. One time he got out of the boat to go to Jesus, only that time he did it on *top* of the water instead of in it! Scripture records that the disciples were straining at the oars, battling the waves because a strong wind was blowing and the waters were rough. That didn't seem to faze Peter, because he got out of the boat when Jesus said, "Come!" and he began to walk toward Him. But when he took his eyes off Jesus and let

the fear of the wind and the waves overwhelm him, he began to sink and cried out to the Lord to save him. This was not the serene scene on a calm day that many have illustrated. If it was, Peter could have simply swum back to the boat.

All of us have, are, or will be battling the wind and the waves of fear, frustration and failure. I have a habit of asking the Lord for help and then going right back to tackling the problem myself.

Have you ever been told to simply trust God whenever you are faced with challenges beyond your control or when you experience anxiety over them? How does that advice work for you? For many of us, that's easier said than done, isn't it? Trust is not something you can just turn on whenever you need it, unless you're trusting in someone that you know won't let you down. Think about someone you know that has your back and has always been there for you and you can count on. Do you have doubts or fears that they won't come through for you? Of course not. That's because you know them. But you can't trust someone you don't know.

Our level of fear and worry and anxiety are directly related to our degree

of trust or lack of trust in God. So, if we are professional worriers instead of prayer warriors, that is a good indication that we don't really know him, that we are not close to him.

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33).

On Mother’s Day, 2012, my voice suddenly went dead while singing in church. The cause was a nodule that had grown on my thyroid and had pressed down upon the nerve and shut it down. What my ENT told us sent shivers down my spine. He said that in his 20 years of practice he had never seen a non-cancerous nodule take out a vocal cord. When they wheeled me into the operating room, I was stripped of everything (literally!) except the prayers of my family and friends. But that was enough. I had a peace that didn’t make sense. When no cancer was found, I was elated but I was not given much hope that my nerve would come back alive. But God was pleased to restore my voice!

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7).

The world’s definition of peace is the absence of conflict but the peace of God is most often felt in the worst of circumstances. To experience the kind of peace explained above in Philippians, however, we must come to understand the previous verse that is often overlooked: ***The Lord is near.*** (Philippians 4:5b).

When I continue to stay in touch with him through a trial and trust him to work everything out according to his timing and His glory, I experience a calm during the storm. It's like he's saying to me like he did to the disciples in the boat, ***“Take courage! It is I; do not be afraid.”***

“God’s peace is not something finished and done with...not ours to keep forever. God’s peace is won by accompanying God into battle. It is then that it grows, becomes new and real. It is in battle that we feel the peace.” - Bishop Berggrav.

Let’s start getting out of the boat when Jesus says “Come!” even when it is inconvenient or frightening to do so. Then keep our eyes on Him and watch Him do amazing things through us no matter how strong the wind blows!

Day 16: Sit Still!



Have you ever been left behind? Has anyone ever made plans without you, or forgot to include you, and then wonder why you didn't show up? How did that make you feel? Well, guess what? We do that to God. We leave him behind, make our plans without him, and forget to include him, then wonder why he doesn't show up when things fall apart. How do you think that makes *him* feel?

It's actually to our benefit to include and wait on God:

Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord. (Psalm 27:14).

I don't know about you, but I don't wait well. Maybe that's because that requires another attribute I don't do very well, either: patience. Have you ever regretted making a hasty decision? I have and so did King Saul. The Philistines showed up for battle with 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and soldiers like the sand is on the seashore in abundance. Saul was vastly outnumbered since he could only muster 6,000 warriors. He was supposed to wait seven days for the prophet Samuel to arrive and offer the sacrifice. When the seventh day came, Samuel was not in sight, so the king took the matter in his own hands. Samuel arrived as Saul was finishing the offering. That act of impatience cost him his kingdom.

How many times have we taken matters in our own hands without waiting for God? I don't think waiting on the Lord to show up and serve us is quite what he has in mind. After all, isn't the waiter supposed to be the server? A good server gets to know the preferences of her regulars.

Just as a close friend knows what you like or dislike, we need to spend time with our Savior to get to know him intimately before we can expect to be able to please him.

“Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10).

Back when I worked on multifunctional office machines, I learned the value of preventive maintenance. Those workhorses could copy, print, scan, and fax all day long, week after week. But if they were not allowed to go off-line long enough for a good cleaning, calibration, and replacement of worn out parts, pretty soon their performance would suffer and they eventually broke down before their time. We are also multifunctional in our roles as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, friends and employees, aren't we? We are constantly pushed and pulled in many directions and after a while we begin to wear down. Doing our best is important, but if we don't take scheduled maintenance breaks to let our heavenly Technician clean, adjust our focus and energize us, we will break down before our time.

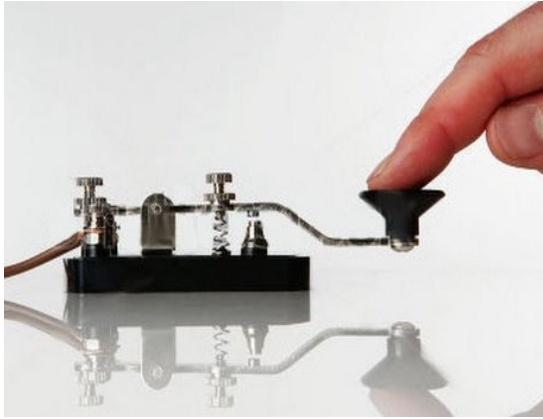
Don't leave home without Him!

Serving God and trying to live right is very important, but how many of us prepare properly before we go out? How many of us just wing it without first putting on the full armor of God? How can we take up the shield of faith or swing the sword of the Word if we're not prayed up or filled up with scripture? Tackling your day without that protection is like going into battle without a weapon. Reading your Bible and praying may seem like a counterproductive use of your time at first. But if you stick with it, you'll soon acquire a taste for your "daily bread" and your soul will begin to crave spiritual food.

Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. (Psalm 37:7).

I think one of the reasons it's called the secret place is because so many of us never find it. Our *restlessness* keeps us so busy we don't slow down enough to become *restful*. We need to go off-line and get alone with God, rest for a while and quit trying to figure everything out on our own. We don't have to pray long, elaborate prayers. Sometimes I don't know how to pray or even have the energy. That's when I just sit down with my hands open and relax in his presence. I usually don't hear or sense anything from the Lord, but that's OK. He knows I'm surrendering some time to be with him and I usually come away refreshed and confident to tackle whatever the day will bring because I know he'll be with me.

Day 17: Giving credit where credit is due



The first 50 years of the 19th century saw more expansion in territory and more advances in communication and transportation than any other time in US history. In 1803, the size of the United States was doubled with the Louisiana Purchase from France for a few pennies per acre. In 1845, Texas joined the Union and in 1848, California and much of the Southwest was acquired from Mexico.

Today we have airplanes and spaceships, but before passenger train service started in 1830, you could only average 5 miles per hour in a stagecoach. By 1850, 9,000 miles of railroad lines had been built, propelling people at speeds up to 30 miles per hour. Horses can match that speed but can only keep it up for a few miles. President Andrew Jackson traveled to his inaugural in 1829 in a horse-drawn carriage and left the capitol at the end of his term 8 years later by train!

But even more remarkable was the invention of the telegraph. Today we have phones and email, but for most of the history of mankind, the speed of communication was limited to how fast horses could deliver it; the Pony Express being the most famous. News took much longer to cross the Atlantic Ocean. The Battle of New Orleans in 1815 was fought two weeks after the peace treaty was signed in Belgium.

In 1844, *instant* communication was born when a historic message was sent from the Capitol building in Washington to a railroad office in Baltimore. The dots and dashes spelled out the words, **“What hath God wrought,”** a Bible verse from Numbers 23:23 that a girl had chosen for Samuel Morse to use. I wonder if they knew how appropriate using that scripture was, that in the midst of all that was being accomplished by

man during that period of history, God should be recognized as the supreme source of all knowledge and power.

You would think that people living back then would have been so amazed by the growth in size of their new country, their expanding influence in the world and the corresponding advances in technology, that self-reliance would have diluted their dependence on God. But that was not the case, as witnessed by the Second Great Awakening during that time, which spawned enormous gains in church membership through the many revivals that attracted thousands of people.

When Balaam was asked by Balak, the king of Moab, to put a curse on Israel, God told Balaam to relay this message to the king. Here's part of it:

“I received a command to bless; God has blessed, and I cannot reverse it! He has not beheld misfortune in Jacob, nor has he seen trouble in Israel. The LORD their God is with them, and the shout of the King is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; they have the strength of a wild ox. For there is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel; now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, ‘What has God wrought!’” Some translations say, “See what has God done!” (Numbers 23:20-23).

Most of us are wired to be independent. One of the first things my daughter, Stephanie, learned to say was, “Me do it, Daddy, me do it!” It's as if we are born with an inferiority complex that we have to fight to prove to ourselves and to others that we can accomplish things on our own. While it's good to strive to do our best, we need to remind ourselves that even our talents and abilities are gifts from God. Yes, it is our responsibility to hone them and put them to use, and I think it's OK to feel good about our achievements, but we need to give credit where credit is due - to the one who we depend on for every breath we take. We are to be like paint brushes in the hand of the Lord. A paint brush cannot claim the credit for a painting. The glory goes to Him and we are to be instruments of His righteousness. I need to swallow my pride and thank God for every gift he bestows on me, and depend on him to help me make the most of them!

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 5:16

Day 18: Come to the table



Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

Psalm 119:97

I am now retired, but most of my career was in the technical field, which relied heavily on calibration. We had to make sure our measuring instruments were accurate in order to produce products that were able to perform to the specifications our customers demanded.

Our spiritual lives need calibration as well. Otherwise, we could end up following a worldview that looks enticing but may not lead to God's best for our lives. We would be like pilots who crash because they relied on their gut instinct instead of their instruments. Our inner compass may not be calibrated with the truth. So, what should we base our beliefs and values on? Where do we get the truth? Well, I trust the words of the God who made me and knows me and wants the best for me. And the vehicle he uses to reveal his words to us is the Holy Bible.

I used to try to get in my daily quota of scripture, but didn't get a whole lot out of it until I learned to approach it differently. Once I realized that the Bible is the primary way that God speaks to us and is the best source for getting to know him, I began to dig into it like never before. I've heard the Bible described as the manual for life, but it's much more than that. The Holy Spirit uses it to speak into every situation we face today. As Tim Chester explains in his book, *Enjoying God*,

“The Bible is a relational book. Its purpose is to create and deepen our relationship with God. It's not a quick reference tool. It's a place in which we hang out with God and get to know him...It's not a book to raid for a few facts about God. It's a means of communion...We go to the word to hear our Saviour speak to us.”

When we read a book, it is a one-way communication. When you read a letter or email that was meant for you, that's more personal. When you are texting someone back and forth, that's even more engaging because you are interacting with that person. Did you know you can experience two-way communication with the Bible? In Hebrews 4:12, it is described as being living and active and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart. How does that work? That's where the Holy Spirit comes in.

Savoring

The goal is not simply to stuff as many verses into your brain as you can, but rather, to take your time with smaller portions; contemplating, meditating and asking the Holy Spirit to speak to you. He is our teacher and counselor and he uses scripture to speak specifically to *you*, right now where you are. But you need to invite him to do so before you start reading, then ask him to show you what he wants you to know as you read or listen to the words. The Holy Spirit may give you a unique application but the truth is the same for everyone. Bible dictionaries and commentaries can help shed some light on hard to understand Bible passages. Web sites, such as Biblehub.com show parallel translations that can help as well.

Don't be in a hurry. Ask God questions. Take time to reflect on what he may be trying to teach, encourage, or nudge you to do. No one can spoon-feed the Word to you. This is a discipline you must practice on your own.

Have you heard from the Lord, lately?

When we don't read our Bible, we are saying to God, "I really don't want to hear what you have to say. I would rather sleep in, watch a show or do anything else that I consider more important." Then we wonder why He seems so distant.

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

Psalm 119:18

Day 19: God uses our shipwrecks



Luke's account of the storm and subsequent shipwreck with the Apostle Paul would make an exciting adventure movie. Paul was a prisoner, bound for Rome, and the plan was to sail along the coast of Asia on the way. When they landed in Myra, they changed to an Alexandrian ship. Those ships were big, with three masts, 180 feet long and could carry up to 400 passengers and many tons of cargo.

When they left Myra, the winds were against them, slowing their progress, but they finally arrived at Cnidus. That was the last port they would reach on the coast, for the winds pushed them off course, forcing them to Fair Havens on the island of Crete. Much time had been lost and it was now the middle of October, during storm season and making it difficult to navigate by the stars under the overcast weather.

Paul warned them that their voyage would be disastrous if they continued on, but the harbor they were in was unsuitable to winter in, and besides, Phoenix, with a good harbor was only 50 miles away. But shortly after they set sail, a wind of hurricane force swept down from the island and pushed them out to sea. After many days in a raging storm that would not relent, and their ship about to tear apart, they thought they were doomed. But God had other plans and brought them to the island of Malta and eventually to Rome. How did God use that shipwreck? For three months the people on Malta heard the gospel and their sick were healed through Paul's ministry.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28

Maybe you have been in a seemingly hopeless situation or are in one now and you see no way out of it. You need to know that God loves you and has not forgotten you and will carry you through it. When I was laid off from my job of 15 years as an office equipment tech, I struggled to make ends meet by working 3 part time jobs. But then I got a new career with a new boss who believed in me and my life began to change.

My manager took me under his wings and constantly pushed me to attempt things I had no confidence or clue on how to accomplish. But that wasn't enough for him. He wanted to develop my character, as well. He noticed I was a pretty compliant and timid guy, so one day he accused me of something unfairly and it made me so angry I came across his desk with such a furious temper it surprised us both. I'll never forget what he did next. He leaned back in his chair and a big smile slowly formed on his face as he said, "Now *that's* what I'm talking about!" His sneaky plan to make me more assertive, worked.

What stood between me and a better life for me and my family was a piece of paper that contained these words: Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer. The only catch was that my name needed to be on it as well and that wasn't going to happen until I passed 7 grueling exams that would test my ability to design and maintain computer networks. Up until that time, I had only tinkered with my own little computer but didn't have a clue how to support servers and firewalls and all the programs it took to keep a network going. I learned that Microsoft had created the cert to determine if network professionals knew their stuff. I was doomed!

This is when I learned the power of encouragement and affirmation. When my manager looked me in the eyes and told me that he thought I could do it, he was so sincere and convincing that I began to consider that perhaps he saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. My family lost me to the books for the next nine months, but by the grace of God, on a glorious day in December, 2004, I did a praise dance in the testing room after passing my final exam! I was just a paper tiger at that point, but it was enough to get a promotion and drop my part time jobs and be a family man again.

Whether we wreck our ships by our poor choices, get run aground by the actions of others or get blown around by the winds of adversity, God wastes nothing and will bring you safely ashore. Just hang on!

Day 20: Prime your Spiritual Pump!



Do you ever feel like your get up and go has got up and gone? Many things can cause that – working long hours, difficult relationships, health issues, disappointments, loss of a loved one, depression, boredom - you fill in the blank. Sometimes God seems distant and we wonder if he is listening to our prayers or if he even cares. That's when our spiritual well runs dry.

Have you ever tried to get water out of a hand pump and no matter how many times you pulled down on the lever no water would arrive to reward your effort? That's when it's time to prime the pump by pouring a little water into the cylinder. It just needed a little help to get things started.

The word “Prime” can be used as a noun, such as someone in their prime of life; a verb, like preparing someone or something to behave in a particular way; and an adjective, to describe the best possible quality or the primary concern or directive. Any Star Trek fans reading this?

Sometimes we get discouraged or distracted, and if unchecked, our faith can grow static, which results in stagnation. That can happen to any relationship and the one we with have with the Lord is no different. If this is happening to you now, don't lose heart. You just need some living water to prime your spiritual pump!

In 1 Samuel 30, when David and his men returned from fighting a battle, they found their city burned to the ground and their wives and children had been taken captive. It says that David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was

bitter in spirit because of the loss of their families. I guess we can say he was having a bad day, huh? So what did he do? Verse 6 tells us that he strengthened himself in the Lord his God. The King James Version says he encouraged himself in the Lord. He then asked him, "Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?" "Pursue them," God answered. "You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue."

What can we learn from this account? We should follow David's example by reaching out to God in the middle of our struggles for strength and encouragement. But there's more to it than that. David had been priming the pump of his walk with God his whole life up to that point so when a crisis came up (and there were many,) he already had a dynamic relationship with the Lord that enabled him to trust him through any trial.

Anxiety in a person's heart weighs him down, but an encouraging word brings him joy. (Proverbs 12:25).

We can also prime other people's spiritual pumps. It's amazing how powerful encouragement can be. Life can be so hard with so many failures and setbacks that we become discouraged. That word means deprived of courage. We also tend to be our own worst critic, which fuels our feelings of inadequacy. There are people all around us who outwardly appear to have it all together but are tearing up inside with fear, hopelessness, and anxiety. They are starving to hear a kind and encouraging word or to feel a hand on their shoulder or to be embraced with a warm hug. My dad always told me how proud he was of me and my mother still does and that means a lot to me and builds my confidence.

Those of you who know me will not be surprised that I came up with an acronym to help us remember this lesson:

PRIME:

Pray often

Read God's Word daily

Invite the Holy Spirit into everything you do

Memorize God's Word

Encourage yourself and others to draw closer to God

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:16

Day 21: Give yourself a Break!



The noise and beckoning call of the Internet, TV, and smart phones have hijacked our opportunities to rest, reflect, and recharge. Staying in touch with social media from dawn until dusk camouflages our need to deal with how *out* of touch we are with God and how spiritually shallow our lives have become. We eat on the run and pray on the run. We keep the radio on to keep out the quiet because the silence makes us notice and feel things, like sadness or anger or loneliness. Praying while we work or drive is great, but we can connect more deeply with God when he doesn't have to compete with other drivers or interruptions. He can get our attention when we put our agenda on hold for at least a little while to hear from him. Then we can exchange our hurts and fears for his joy and peace.

Our increasingly busy and hectic lifestyles have been driving more and more people to seek spiritual solutions to combat stress. Eastern meditation attempts to empty the mind and escape from the world by breathing techniques and chanting mantras, hoping to find one's inner self. Christian meditation redirects our minds and hearts away from ourselves and into an intimate relationship with God our Father and Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit, who fills us with the kind of peace and fulfillment that surpasses what we can work up out of our own efforts. I've heard it said that if worrying ever keeps you up at night, you already know how to meditate! God is at the door of your heart, calling out to you, like he did to Samuel in the Bible. We just need to get ourselves in a position to hear him, so we can say to him like Samuel did, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

There is a time to bring requests, intercede for others and cry out to God in times of trouble. Prayerfully meditating on scripture is also fruitful. But when is the last time you really connected with him and enjoyed his presence? Praying throughout the day is important, but I have come to realize that setting aside a few minutes daily to experience a deep communion with God is highly beneficial.

How annoying it is to have someone talk nonstop at you to where you can't get a word in edgewise? You're not going to have a deep, meaningful conversation with that person, are you? I wonder if that's what it's like for God when all we do is tell Him what we want from him.

"If a man wants to be used by God, he can't spend all his time with people." - A.W. Tozer

Jesus needed to get away from the crowds and find a secret place to talk with his Father. The gospels record him getting up before dawn and spending the night in prayer before he chose his disciples. So, if it was important enough for Jesus to get alone with his Father, we should, too! God is jealous for *us*. Isn't that amazing?

Solitude is hard work!

Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to do nothing. The second hardest thing is to let someone do something for you. For some of us, solitude feels like solitary confinement. I was a troubleshooter by trade, so fixing things is hard coded into me. I have to remind myself that there's a time to act but there is also a time to rest and I need to learn how to get away from it all and wait on the Lord.

***This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says:
"In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength." (Isaiah 30:15)***

Find a quiet place to relax, be still and listen without interruptions. Rest in the presence of God. Completely submit and surrender your will, your thoughts, your fears and concerns up to him. Spend some time in silence. This is not easy; it takes practice, because our thoughts like to run wild about anything and everything. Doing it for just one minute is difficult at first. When your mind begins to wander, you can praise him or thank him with brief sentences. Don't rush it. Enjoy your time with the Lord. It's hard to describe, but when I do this, I feel a close connection to him even if no words are spoken between us. It's like I broke through the barriers of the material world and entered into the spiritual dimension!

Day 22: Can you see what is unseen?



We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
2nd Corinthians 4:18

How can we see what is unseen? This is actually accomplished in many ways. People once thought that grains of sand were the smallest thing there was, until optical microscopes enabled us to see smaller objects, like cells. Today, electron microscopes let us discover things that are 100 million times smaller, like bacteria, viruses, molecules and atoms. We once thought that atoms were indivisible, until we split them - revealing protons, neutrons and electrons inside. Then we found even smaller things inside them! But what about things that are further away than we can see? Astronomers have found more than 500 solar systems in our Milky Way Galaxy in addition to our own and they're discovering new ones every year. What really blows my mind is how fast our galaxy is hurtling through space - 1.3 million miles per hour! It doesn't just hang there in space, as the pictures show. The fact that it hasn't yet collided into another galaxy is a testament to how huge the universe is.

Do you see a pattern here? The closer we look, the more intricate and complex our world and universe appears, which points to an intelligent Designer, who is more intricate and complex than we will ever comprehend. Just like the universe he fashioned, there is no limit to what our Creator can do, so why should our perception of him be limited only to what we can observe with our puny senses?

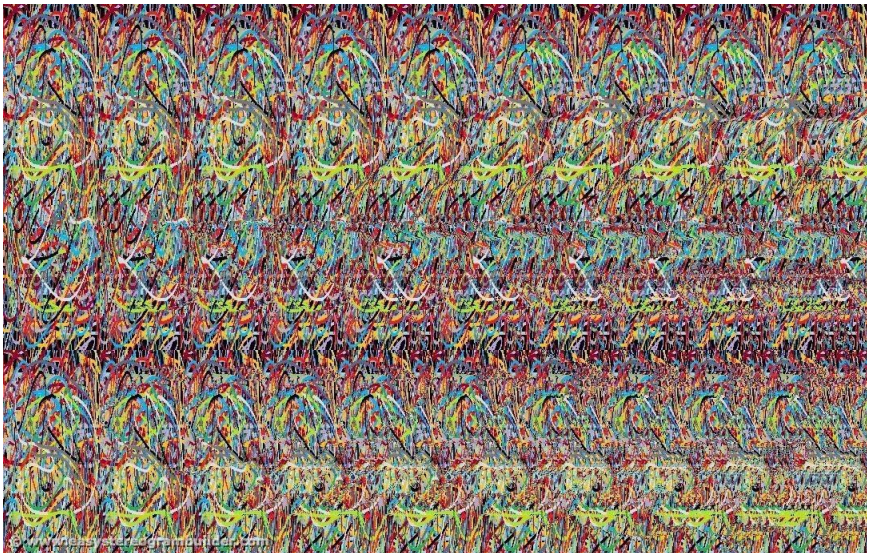
Some of us are like Doubting Thomas; we won't believe in something if we can't see it. But that doesn't mean it doesn't exist. We can't see the wind. We can't see sound waves, which are used by sonar to locate things under water that we can't otherwise see. We can't see radio waves, either, but they are used by radar to track things in the sky and in the ground. We can't see radiation or magnetic fields, but x-rays and MRIs can see inside our bodies. This should help us to believe that there are other things we can't see either, like spiritual entities.

Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 6:12

The phrase, “What you don’t know can’t hurt you” is ludicrous. Just ask people who found they had a disease too late to treat. The same thing applies to what you can’t see, like natural gas and carbon monoxide and life after death.

Look at the stereogram image below. At first, it looks like a jumbled mess. But if you quit trying to focus on it and relax your eyes, you will see some fish appear. You may need to put your nose up to it, let it go out of focus and slowly pull it away from you.



“I was blind, but now I see!”

With some practice, we can train our spiritual eyes and ears to see and hear from the Lord. We just need to sit still long enough to listen to him, read his words in the scriptures, then keep in touch with him with ongoing conversational prayer throughout the day.

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. (1 Peter 1:8).

Day 23: Proclaiming & Acclaiming the Glory of God



I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.
Psalm 121:1-2

I took this picture after a strenuous hike to the top of a mountain along the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina. There's something about being up high and looking down that changes my perspective. It makes me look so small and makes God look so big. It's my favorite spiritual pathway. It reminds me of what the prophet Isaiah said, "The mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands." So how can I not help but do the same?

You may wonder, if God is all sufficient and doesn't need anything, why should we give him accolades? God does want us to praise him, but not because he needs it to feel good about himself. It's for *our* enjoyment as we take pleasure in him. C.S. Lewis explains it this way,

"I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed....All enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise."

There are many people who don't know why they are here or what to do with their lives. But the answer is revealed in 1 Peter 2:9: "*You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*"

We are told to proclaim and acclaim the glory and majesty of God. When we **proclaim**, we announce and when we **acclaim**, we enthusiastically applaud and cheer, like we do for our favorite sports team. Are we doing that for our heavenly Father?

We humans are fascinated with amazing stories, inventions, athletic achievements and accomplishments. Our news outlets thrive on them; the weather broadcasters get excited when tracking natural disasters. We can't wait to tell people about the latest and greatest thing. So, what's keeping us from admiring *God* as fully as we should? I think familiarity has replaced the "Awe Factor." We've seen so many colorful sunsets and beautiful mountains and creatures and flowers with their intricate designs that we simply take them for granted. Or we give the credit to "Mother Nature" and chalk it up to millions of years of evolution.

No matter how good something is, I can take it for granted; even the love and grace and grandeur of God. But when we praise Him, we are acknowledging his greatness. As we begin to notice the blessings of God and the beauty of his creation, we can't help but magnify him. When you use a magnifying glass, you can see things much more clearly. When we magnify the Lord, we are making his glory known to everyone around us. And the closer we get to God, the more we want to worship him. Our degree of worship is a barometer of our walk with Christ.

"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain." (Isaiah 29:13).

When I arrive at the church, is the praise and worship segment something I can stroll into after it's started as long as I get into my seat before the sermon begins or is it something more than a preliminary, something that I should be on time for to prepare my heart to hear from God? Am I just mouthing the words like a robot when I sing, "*All that is within me bless his holy name*" or am I giving it all I have? Am I expressing my love and thanks to the Lord my God with all my heart and soul and mind and strength or am I just going through the motions? Do I expect the worship leaders to bless me or do I have some responsibility to shoulder, like blessing the *Lord*?

Actually, the most intense worship experiences I have are when I let loose outside when no one is around. That's when I can cry out and let the tears flow!

Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.

Psalm 63:3-4

Day 24:

Transaction vs. Interaction



“Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” -Jesus, Matthew 7:22-23

Doing things for God is important. He has given us many tasks to perform. But apparently that’s not enough. He wants more. He wants... us. To know him.

We Americans are so driven to achieve and accomplish things. We want to be noticed, recognized, admired and praised. We climb the ladder to gain status over others and to keep up with the Joneses. There’s nothing wrong with striving for excellence and doing our best. It’s just that we can become so self-absorbed and self-sufficient, even doing good things for God, that we don’t call on him until there’s an emergency. When we meet Jesus for the first time, we are filled with gratitude and joy and peace. We walk and talk with him and soak up the Bible. But then, if we’re not careful, something happens, but it happens so gradually that we don’t notice it. We drift from him. We still believe in him but our faith becomes dormant. We lead decent lives, but so do others who aren’t Christians.

As Andrew Murray explains in *Abide in Christ*, *“The blessings you once enjoyed were lost; the love and joy of your first meeting with the saviour, instead of deepening, have become faint and feeble. And often you have wondered what the reason could be, that with such a saviour, so mighty and so loving, your experience of salvation should not have been a fuller one. The answer is simple. You wandered from him.”*

God is calling out to us as he did to Adam in the garden, “Where are you?” The question is not “Where is God?” It’s “Where are *we*?”

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Notice the verse doesn’t say, “If you obey all God’s commands, then you’ll become a new creature.” It simply says *If anyone is in Christ*. How can we do that? I think it means accepting Christ as *Lord* and getting to know him by abiding and remaining in him all day long; trusting while obeying.

God wants more from a relationship with us than we have with a waiter or waitress who says, “May I take your order?” He wants it to be more than a transaction. Yes, he already knows what we are thinking and feeling but he wants us to verbalize it, to interact with him. The goal is not to bring Christ along with us but to *go with him*. He’s the pilot, not the co-pilot. He says, “Follow me.” Making your life count for something and living a life of significance is not found in self-actualization or trying to find yourself. This may sound counterproductive, but Jesus offers the best plan for fulfillment:

“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Matthew 16:24-25).

Jesus liberates us from the losing battle of trying to find happiness through feeding our appetites for pleasures that always fall short. God created longings in us that only he can quench. Think about how good it feels to be in the company of someone you like and knowing that they like to be with you, too. I love it when my little grandkids’ faces light up when they see me and squeal with delight as they run into my arms. As wonderful as that is, being aware of the presence of God is so much better. This is why Jesus said,

“Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:14).

Here’s the difference: Jesus satisfies. Unlike everything else in the world that leaves you wanting more, Jesus is enough.

Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. (Psalm 73:25).

Day 25: Can you read just one page from your Bible every day?

Reading through the entire Bible in one year is a worthy goal, but that requires at least 3 chapters a day and encourages one to rush through the verses instead of taking the time to study and prayerfully meditate on them. However, you can read the entire New Testament in one year, along with the Psalms and Proverbs by reading just one chapter a day, which is about one page in your Bible. While the chapters average 32 verses, most of the Psalms are only about 16 verses long, so you can read two of those per day, except for Psalm 119, which has 176 verses!

There are many Bible reading schedules out there, but I personally don't like reading all of the gospels together. I would like to hear from Jesus all throughout the year, so I mix them in with the rest of the New Testament. I do this with the Psalms and Proverbs as well. You can also read the Old Testament, but at a more leisurely pace.

You can start reading anytime; you don't have to wait until the beginning of the year. The schedule is divided into two 6 month sections to let you know how far you have come. If you miss a day, don't worry; just continue where you left off.

Sharon and I have been using this schedule for the last several years. We read the same scripture in our quiet times, then get together once a week to share what we've learned and then pray together. It's been great!

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Psalm 119:105

<u>First half of the year:</u>	<u>Second half of the year:</u>
Matthew	Luke
Psalms 1-14	Psalms 86-99
Proverbs 1-3	Proverbs 19-21
Acts	1 Thessalonians
Psalms 15-29	2 Thessalonians
Proverbs 4-6	1 Timothy
Romans	2 Timothy
Psalms 30-43	Titus
Proverbs 7-9	Philemon
Mark	Psalms 100-113
Psalms 44-57	Proverbs 22-24
Proverbs 10-12	John
1 Corinthians	Psalms 114-123
2 Corinthians	Proverbs 25-27
Psalms 58-71	Hebrews
Proverbs 13-15	James
Galatians	Psalms 124-137
Ephesians	Proverbs 28-29
Philippians	1 Peter 2 Peter
Colossians	1 John
Psalms 72-85	2 John
Proverbs 16-18	3 John
	Jude
	Psalms 137-150
	Proverbs 30-31
	Revelation

***Your word I have treasured in my heart,
that I may not sin against You. (Psalm 119:11).***

Day 26: Don't be a stranger!

How good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

Psalm 133:1



It has been said that a joy shared is doubled and a grief shared is cut in half. While it's true that people don't always get along peacefully, it's also true that we wouldn't accomplish nearly as much or enjoy life nearly as much if we didn't have someone alongside of us to do life with.

When God created us he intended for us to live in community, regardless of how messy it can get sometimes. Social media helps to keep us connected but there's no substitute for a face to face encounter with someone who can laugh, cry, play and pray with you.

I remember when I was a little guy I loved to go outside and play with my friends. We played baseball, rode our bikes around the neighborhood and engaged in mud ball fights in the hills behind our homes. This was before video games kept children inside. Many of us lose touch with our childhood buddies when we grow up and leave town, get married and start our families. Very few of us live in the same town or even the same state we grew up in so we only see our relatives or old friends a few times a year, if that much. Our lives become a routine of going to work, coming home, going to bed and starting over again the next day. We are hermits in the midst of people, working with them all week long and seeing them in church on Sunday but not really knowing any of them. We've become *A Nation of Strangers*, which is the title of Vance Packard's book, detailing how our mobile society has lost its sense of roots and belonging. When nobody knows you, you not only become lonely but you lose the kind of accountability that keeps you grounded and motivated to live right. Word can travel fast in a small town but you can be anonymous when nobody knows their neighbors.

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

The purpose for getting close to God isn't to withdraw into a spiritual bubble away from the rest of the world. As we get to know the heart of God, we will begin to love others because that's where *his* heart is.

I have learned the value of regularly meeting with other Christian men. I had been on my quest to get closer to God for five years and wanted to see if other guys would like to join me, so with the encouragement of my son-in-law, I put together a three month study while our small groups were off for the summer. I wasn't sure how many would show up, but the Lord brought together 24 guys, who enjoyed it so much that we continued to meet for 6 more years.

Men need other men and women need other women. I love my wife but she relates and processes things differently than I do. So it's good for her to have girl friends to hang out with and for me to be with the boys once in a while, so girls can be girls and boys can be boys. There are things that can only be understood by members of your own sex.

A tactic used by ancient armies was to butt or overlap their shields, shoulder to shoulder, forming a shield wall. Each soldier benefited from the protection of their neighbors' shields as well as their own. The same principle applies to the body of Christ. We draw strength from each other as we hold up our shields of faith together to extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one.

We all need a Paul, a Timothy and a Barnabas

As Paul needed his friend, Barnabas, we need accountability partners to help us live right. If we isolate ourselves from other Christians, we'll end up doing our own will. We need to make course corrections from time to time and our friends can point out our blind spots and see through our defense mechanisms that keep the truth at bay. We should pray together and give each other the freedom to confess sins confidentially. I've heard it said, "What is not let out will be acted out."

We also need a Paul, a mentor, for guidance and encouragement and a Timothy to disciple. We will never get to the point that we don't need a mentor and there is always someone we can help as well.

It's good to have friends but it's more important to choose them wisely. As John Maxwell explained in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, you'll never be nobler than the noblest person you hang out with.

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Proverbs 27:17

Day 27: Our minds are like a raging river



The tallest dam in the Eastern United States is the Fontana Dam in North Carolina. It is one of 29 hydroelectric dams the Tennessee Valley Authority built, some dating back to 1933. Most of them are along the 652 miles of the Tennessee River that flows southwest through Tennessee, Northern Alabama, Northern Mississippi and finally into the Ohio River at Paduka, Kentucky. The project created 12 major lakes in Tennessee alone. The only natural lake in the state is Reelfoot Lake, which was formed by an earthquake in 1811.

Before the dams were built, there was severe flooding during hard rains, and navigation was impossible over shallow areas during dry spells. With no controls in place, the water just went where it wanted to, covering all the low lands in its path, including houses, farms and roads.

Our thoughts are like a raging river, with thousands of them swirling around in our heads every day. Our minds are truly amazing, with imaginations that can invent and create some pretty cool things. But our minds can also be the Devil's playground for lust, fear, and bitterness. We can dream up all kinds of scenarios that cause depression, jealousy and anxiety, to name a few. We can be pretty hard on ourselves. We tend to expect the worst. Self-hatred paralyzes us and sets us up for failure. We often let regrets from the past and worries about the future hijack our present effectiveness and enjoyment. It can also rob us of confidence. If

we don't think we can do something, we won't even try. It all begins in our minds, then results in actions or inactions. But wait, there's good news: we can control the rushing river of our thoughts! But there's a better way to do this than just positive thinking. Three ways, actually:

1. *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.* (Romans 12:2). If you don't want to be swept down the river with the rest of the world, you'll need to swim upstream and pursue activities and entertainment that honors God. Hang out with people who will encourage you on your walk with Christ.

2. *Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.* (2 Corinthians 10:5). We can build a dam in our minds to hold back ungodly thoughts. We can then replace them by releasing a spillway of healthy ones:

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. (Philippians 4:8).

3. *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.* (Hebrews 12:2). We won't get very far with the above steps if we try it without Jesus. When we remember that he is always with us and wants us to stay close to him, we can draw on his power to help us achieve the right state of mind and follow him. One way I have found to do this is to continually revive or resuscitate my connection with Christ. I practice CPR as often as I can:

C: Converse with God with my mouth and in my thoughts

P: Praise him with worship and thanksgiving.

R: Read and Recite scripture from memory

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

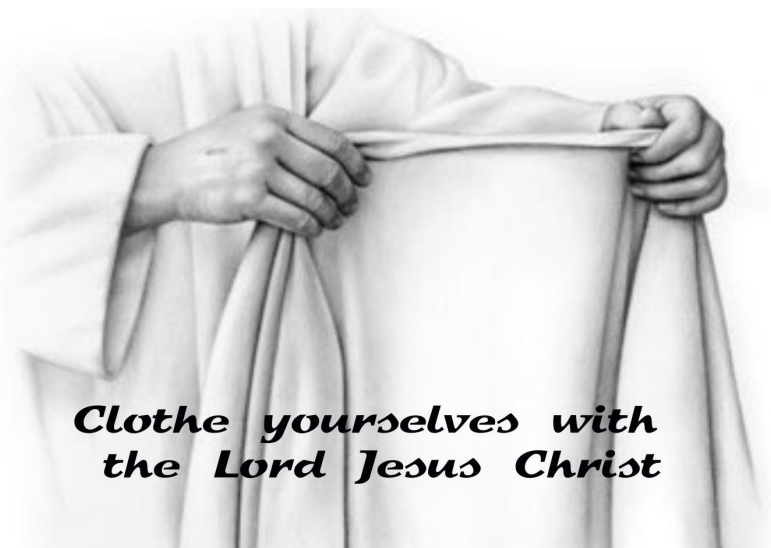
Colossians 3:2

I once heard a pastor say that our god is what we think about the most.

Keeping our minds a place where we dwell with Jesus will not only clear our heads but will also fill our hearts with peace and contentment. And when our rivers dry up making navigation difficult during the droughts of life, his living water will refresh our souls!

You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. (Isaiah 26:3).

Day 28: What will you wear today?



***Clothe yourselves with
the Lord Jesus Christ***

We put a lot of value on the clothes we wear, don't we? Thirty years ago, most homes were not built with walk-in closets; today most homes come with them. Our wardrobes have grown, too. My voice would echo in a big closet because I tend to wear the same clothes until they wear out. If it wasn't for my wife and mother insisting I adorn myself with something new once in awhile, I would be seen wearing the same shirts in our family portraits year after year! And that would not be cool. Why? Because we want to make a good impression, to dress for success. Like it or not, people size us up and make assumptions based on our appearance.

In Romans 13:14, Paul advises us to: ***“Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.”*** Some versions translate it as putting on the Lord Jesus Christ. How do we do that? Colossians 3:12-14 gives us some details:

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so must you do also. In addition to all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

What kind of perceptions do we portray as we interact with people throughout the day in person and on social media? Does it look like the qualities mentioned in the above verses? Or do we rant and complain and find fault with those we disagree with? Those impressions speak more about ourselves and our priorities than the clothes we wear.

The last thing Jesus prayed for on his last night with his disciples was for them *and us* to dwell in unity:

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:20-23)

Many of us Christians have let politics and the COVID-19 Pandemic divide us more than ever before: Democrat vs Republican, vaccination vs no vaccination, mask vs no mask. It's good to have strong convictions and to help people find the truth and to vote according to our values, but we should not allow our differences to dissolve our love for each other or cause us to break fellowship. That divides families and friends and portrays a poor witness to the world:

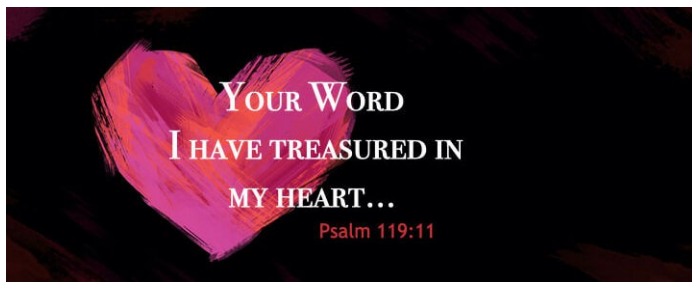
“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” - Jesus, John 13:35

We should not expect people to hold Biblical values if they don't know Jesus. Angrily lashing out at them with Bible verses will probably just drive them further away from the truth. Here's some good advice from the Apostle Paul:

In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 3:15).

So, let's clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ before we leave the house in the morning. If you don't do that, it's like going out in your birthday suit. If you only shoot up a prayer or two during the day, that's like only wearing a fig leaf-it's better than nothing but not good enough!

Day 29: Why should we memorize Scripture?



Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. (Psalm 119:97).

We have been told that we should commit scripture to memory, but most of us don't have more than a few verses tucked away in our heads. Why is that? I think it's because we don't realize the benefits, so we aren't motivated enough to work at it. Think about something you recently learned to do and now enjoy. You may wonder why you didn't do it sooner. Sharon and I tried riding a Segway for the first time during our vacation recently. It was a little awkward at first, but after a few minutes it became second nature and was a lot of fun. Like when a little child refuses to eat a certain food but discovers he really likes it after he finally tastes it, we can experience the wonderful perks of having scripture readily available to us anywhere and any time if we will make the effort to deposit it into our minds and hearts.

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you. (Colossians 3:16).

We all have memorized many things: procedures, policies, songs, rules of the road, and so on. But why is it a good idea to put Bible verses to memory? Because those words are the most important words ever recorded. They are more than just a bunch of wise sayings and interesting stories written thousands of years ago. They provide you with help, comfort, inspiration, encouragement and motivation.

Chuck Swindoll wrote, *"I know of no other single practice in the Christian life more rewarding, practically speaking, than memorizing Scripture...No other single exercise pays greater spiritual dividends! Your prayer life will be strengthened. Your witnessing will be sharper and much more effective. Your attitudes and outlook will begin to change. Your mind will become alert and observant. Your confidence and assurance will be enhanced. Your faith will be solidified."*

If you'd like to hear from God and experience him, then immerse yourself in his words. Hopefully, you are already doing that on a regular basis. But it's not practical to open your Bible all throughout the day. That's why you need to get those words into your mind so they can flow into your heart, as well. You will then be able to recall scripture, not only to help yourself but to comfort and counsel people and lead them to Christ. I have verses that enhance my worship as I say them out loud on walks through the woods in my back yard.

Reciting verses during the day will also keep you closely connected to Christ. It's great to be able to speak scripture as a prayer to God as you go about your day. For those of you who don't think you're up to memorizing verses, listen to what James Nicodem says in *Prayer Coach*:

"I know Christian men who haven't memorized a Bible verse in months (or longer), but they can reel off the batting averages of their favorite team's players. Or the Dow Jones averages for countless stocks. Or the par for every hole at the local golf course. Or the Internet addresses for a dozen interesting Web sites. Or the stats on a sports car they're considering."

Where to begin?

Start with picking 7 verses that you think would be good to know, one for each day of the week. Write them down on 3x5 cards and display the verse for the day where you will see it and say it out loud several times a day. Pick and memorize a key word that summarizes the verse for that day. Repetition is the key. Once you've mastered those, add a verse for every month, then move on to passages of scripture, such as the 10 Commandments or Psalm 23. But you need to keep repeating all the verses to keep them fresh in your mind. If you feel really ambitious, try memorizing the Sermon on the Mount! Yes, that is 3 chapters and 111 verses, but it is the most famous sermon ever preached. By the grace of God, I've been able to do that, but it took me a full year. I put 4 verses on 28 cards with key words. I like to recite it when taking a 20 minute walk out back, making it even more enjoyable!

I know you can memorize scripture. Here's why I know: soon after my little children began to talk, I got them to repeat the verse for the day every day for many years. Over 3 decades has now past and they still remember most of those verses!

It is really cool how the Holy Spirit brings to mind the right verses you need for every situation when you have them swimming around in your head. It's one of the best ways that I've used to grow closer to God and it has helped to keep me on the right track!

Day 30: Can People tell if you've been with Jesus?

When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

Acts 4:13



Has there ever been someone in your life that you admired and respected so much you just had to be around them whenever possible? Maybe it was an older sibling you looked up to, or an Aunt or Uncle that took a special interest in you. In school, it could have been a teacher or professor.

I remember a particular summer when my family made one of our annual treks from Chicago to Pensacola, Florida. I got to spend some time with my cousin, John, in nearby Fort Walton Beach. He was about 16 years old at the time, and even though I was just a few years younger, in kid's years that was a BIG difference. He could drive, pull a boat, pilot the boat, and catch fish! I thought he was so cool, I wanted to be just like him. His life seemed so adventurous to me.

Most of us didn't learn our manners, skills, or trades on our own. We were taught and mentored by our parents, relatives, friends, and business associates, weren't we? We spent a lot of time with those people, who influenced us and helped to shape our values as well as our abilities.

Today we have long distance learning, offering degrees and certifications on line, but most professions still require some type of apprenticeship or internship to become competent in their fields. I certainly wouldn't want to have open heart surgery performed on me by someone who had only *read* how to do the procedure!

Mark recorded that Jesus appointed twelve disciples "so that they would *be with Him* and that He could send them out to preach." According to Wikipedia, the term "disciple" is derived from the New Testament Greek word "μαθητής", coming to English by way of the Latin "discipulus," meaning, "a learner". The word *disciple* is used in English generally to

mean "follower" or "pupil." What a privilege it must have been to be one of those chosen to live and learn from the Master himself every day for three years!

How do people get trained to spot counterfeit money? By spending a lot of time in front of *real* money, feeling the texture and carefully studying the print quality.

You can usually tell when someone is genuine or just trying to impress, can't you? The same thing applies to being a Christ follower. We can do our best to imitate great Christians we know, or even try to be like Jesus, but as soon as someone pushes our buttons or becomes too much trouble, our true nature comes to the surface and exposes us as cheap imitations, or even worse, hypocrites. That's because living a pure and holy life, and putting others first does not come natural to us and never will. We can only learn this from cultivating a relationship with Christ, who not only will show us how it's done, but will work it out through us.

I strongly believe that if we can get properly connected to the Lord, most sermons preached today would not be necessary and people would have fewer regrets. I haven't figured it all out yet, far from it, but I have learned a few things since I started this quest 15 years ago. It pretty much boils down to time spent reading the Word and good spiritual books, starting your day resting and waiting on the Lord, praying and singing to him throughout the day, and hanging out with other Christians who will stand by you and encourage you. Memorizing scripture and speaking it out loud whenever you get a chance will also help. These are not easy disciplines to maintain, and I'm not as consistent as I would like to be, but they are well worth the effort.

Mirroring is something we do subconsciously without thinking about it. We copy the body language, speech, facial expressions, posture, gestures, and even the moods of people we hang out with. It builds empathy and trust. It can also lift our spirits because laughter is contagious. From experience I can tell you that being married over 4 decades to my lovely wife has caused us to form similar values, opinions and feelings about things. We can even finish each other's sentences!

The more time we spend with Jesus, the more we become like him and the more people will be drawn to us, wanting to know what or who has put the spring in our step. Our faces probably won't glow quite as much as like Moses' did when he returned from his appointments with God, but people will notice that something is different about us. Wouldn't it be cool if they realized that we have been with Jesus?

Day 31: Believe BIG!



"It shall be done to you according to your faith." (Matthew 9:29).

As Sharon and I were flying home from our vacation, she pointed out to me a hole in the dark clouds through which we could see the blue sky.

We were in the midst of the clouds and caught a perspective that the people on the ground being rained on couldn't see. As we descended, the hills and rivers of Middle Tennessee gradually came into view. Finally, houses, tiny cars, and miniature people appeared.

The Lord gave us a snapshot of the big picture. We humans can get so caught up in our own little everyday world that we forget that there is something and someone so much bigger out there. Sometimes all we see is the rain around us and we can't see above the clouds where the sun rules.

So many Christians have settled for just a little Christianity. They only want enough to get by. All they need to do is just survive and hang in there until they get to their sweet home by and by. Do you want more than that? I do. I think God wants to do more for us, too. But he restrains himself when faith is in short supply:

"He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief."

Matthew 13:58

I want to see God work every day, going before me to soften and prepare the hearts of those friends, relatives, and co-workers who don't know him. I want to see hope restored, relationships reconciled, addictions conquered, families strengthened, jobs found, lives changed, and people healed physically and emotionally. I want to see God speak through me and love through me, because I can't do it. It's not in me, I've tried. Apart from Christ, I can do absolutely nothing of lasting spiritual value. I may be able to get someone to consider spiritual matters, but the Holy Spirit is the one who draws that person to himself.

I want to see God *do "far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us."* (Ephesians 3:20).

I want to see God not only work miracles in my life, but to see him do it in the ones I pray for, as well. I want to see American churches grow and thrive and make a difference in their communities. Is this asking too much? I don't think so:

"Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours...All things are possible to him who believes."

Matthew 21:22, Mark 9:23

These are not carte blanche, name it-claim it statements that apply to everything we want. James warns against that: ***"You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures."*** (James 4:3). But I think everything in my wish list in the above paragraphs can be prayed for with confidence.

We should always pray for God's will to be done, but that doesn't let us off the hook for believing that he will come through for us. God may not answer my prayer the way I ask him to, but until I know otherwise, I am to believe that he will. If he has another solution or wants me to wait, then I know it's for the best, so that's even better. God is not just a life raft to save us from all our problems. When he doesn't remove them, he infuses in us the power to thrive in the midst of them. Our faith can certainly be tested, especially when we're experiencing extreme physical or emotional pain, or other kinds of adversity, but I hope you'll read something here to help you find a way to strengthen yourself in the Lord as David did when he was stressing because he was about to be stoned by his men after their families were captured by the enemy. (1 Samuel 30).

We should eagerly anticipate God to do wonderful things, not just hope that he will. What do you need the most right now? Don't stop praying, no matter how long it takes. We need to recognize that God is who he says he is and will do what he says he will do. True peace is experienced when we come to a point where we just *know* he will take care of us, as certain as we are that the sun will rise and set every day.

The more you commune with the Lord, the better you will know him, and the more you will see him working in your life, which makes it easier to ***"bear all things, believe all things, and endure all things."*** (1 Corinthians 13:7). You will also be able to better discern his will in the things you pray for.

Dream BIG - Pray BIG - Believe BIG!

Day 32: Devotion

We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us. (2nd Corinthians 5:20).

I had a career with Ricoh USA as a Technology Services Engineer. If I had not performed the duties that came with that responsibility, my title alone would not have made me very useful to my company. Neither would my certifications if I had not put them to use.

Those of us that have the title of Christian have the responsibility of being ambassadors for Jesus. That involves more than just going to church and being nice people. If I'm not striving to follow Christ, I'm not being very useful for his kingdom that I'm supposed to be representing. That would be like being a member of a health club but never going there to work out.

As followers of Jesus, we're called to be always growing and becoming more like him in purity and holiness. But we won't get far without an intentional, deliberate and relentless pursuit of God, who helps us every step of the way. It also requires submitting to his authority before following our own agendas. When we accept Jesus as our Savior, we should also accept him as Lord. We may retire from a career but we should stay devoted to him forever.

The righteous...will still bear fruit in old age. (Psalm 92:14).

Procrastination is a tool Satan uses to keep us from pursuing God. He starts when we are young and we think, "I'll have more time for God when I settle down and get married." Years later we say, "It looks like I'll need to wait until the kids move out." Then, it gets pushed until after we retire. It is then that we realize that we forfeited the best years of our lives by living for ourselves instead of helping to build the kingdom of God.

Is pursuing Christ worth risking everything for? Paul thought so:

I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him. Philippians 3:8

The late missionary Jim Elliot said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

The more we become captivated and consumed with the love of God, the more we will recklessly abandon all restraint on our time, talents, and treasure, and willingly release them for his purposes and glory. Only then will we understand the motivation behind Paul's devotion and others who gave up everything to follow Christ. They discovered that being a willing slave for him is better than being free to follow their own desires which never stay quenched.

“If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. -Jesus, Matthew 16:24

How do you know if you are denying yourself or not? Listen to how many times you hear “me, myself and I” in your thoughts and speech: **I** don't want to do that. **I'm** not comfortable doing that. That bothers **me**. That's awkward for **me**. What will they think of **me**? **I** don't have time for that. **I** don't want to give that much money.” I know those thoughts because I think them. But I don't want to. Like Paul said in Romans 7:19, “*What I do is not the good I want to do.*” But he goes on to say, “*Thanks be to God-through Jesus our Lord!*”

A life set apart vs. a part of your life

When is the last time you threw yourself into something that consumed most of your thoughts and your time? It's amazing what we can accomplish when we put our hearts and souls into something. So, it's no surprise when a lukewarm attempt yields a mediocre result. The same principle applies to our Christian walk. The angel's message from God to the church at Laodicea in the third chapter of Revelation was,

“Because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.”

It all comes back to getting and enjoying a close relationship with God. Until we experience that, we will not only fail to please him, we won't even want to give him more than a small part of our lives, since we all end up doing what we want to do.

I have to constantly remind myself of what my ultimate purpose in life is – to bring glory to God and bring people into his kingdom. I need to carry that mindset with me all throughout the day. There's nothing wrong with having fun and enjoying things he has given me, but I shouldn't stay in a continual feast of feeding my appetites because that will never fully satisfy. What I'm slowly beginning to discover is the delicious fruit of pursuing Christ, which then compels and propels me into his service through the power of the Holy Spirit. Is this easy? No. Is it worth it? Absolutely. There is no better way!

Day 33: Pack light!



“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” (Luke 12:15).

The American dream can turn into a nightmare if you're not careful. In the United States, the average size of a new home has doubled since 1960, from 1,300 square feet to 2,600 today. And that's not enough space to store all our stuff, so we use self-storage facilities, an industry that didn't even exist in the 1960's! Clearly, our drive to acquire more and more stuff has gotten out of control. How did this happen?

Two of the strongest drives for men and women are to build wealth and status. We buy stuff to keep up our image. And for many of us, ordinary stuff isn't good enough. So, we buy bigger and better and newer. But since there is always someone that has cooler stuff than us, we never catch up. Nevertheless, we still try to keep up with the Joneses, in spite of the time and stress it takes to earn and maintain it all. Before long, we no longer own our stuff; it owns us, especially when we go into debt over it. Our marriages also suffer because we can't agree on who gets to buy what stuff. And to think, it all ends up in the junkyard, anyway!

It's funny how excited we get about our purchases, only to experience buyer's remorse and become disenchanted a short time later when something newer comes along, rendering what we already bought instantly obsolete. We once had a neighbor who bought a brand new Camaro, but the very next year traded it in for an all-new model.

“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Jesus, Matthew 6:33

If your household income is more than \$10,000 per year, you’re making more than the average family in the world, which puts you in the category of the rich. Funny thing is, the more we make, the more we spend and the less we save and the less we give away. But all our money comes from God and we are supposed to be generous with it.

God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7b).

Jesus told us that “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” but that doesn't make sense until you try it. And when you start giving away more than a tenth of your income to various ministries or just to help people in need, that's when the fun really kicks in!

“God is the owner, and it's not 'How much of my money should I give to God?’ but 'How much of God's money should I spend on myself?’”
-Jeanette Gardener Littleton

Spending so much of our time, energy and money on stuff leaves little time or resources to help build the kingdom of God. We spend the best years of our lives working so hard to save enough money so we can live comfortably for the last 10-20 years of our lives, if we live that long. It’s good to work hard and plan ahead as long as we don’t sacrifice the things that are the most precious – time with our families which we will never get back and time that could have been used to serve God. What are we investing in for our *eternal* portfolios? Don’t be a collector – be a dispenser!

We say everything we own belongs to God, but do our hearts betray him? God understands our tendency to grasp for more; that’s why he gave us the tenth commandment, “You shall not covet.” I’ll never forget watching an older gentleman dancing and praising God outside of his dirt floor shack in the Dominican Republic. He was so excited seeing us raise the roof on his new church that was going up next door. He had no plumbing or electricity, but he was ecstatic because he had the joy of the Lord. He was rich toward God!

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21).

Day 34: Who do you smell like?



“We are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To one we are the smell of death; to the other an aroma of life.” (2 Corinthians 2:15-16).

Our sense of smell is very powerful. It can lead us to food, let us know when something’s burning, and what (or who!) to stay away from. It can also trigger memories, both good and bad. Cologne or perfume can remind us of those we know, or knew. Almost everything we encounter has a particular odor attached to it, from a rose to a rainstorm.

When we allow the Lord to scrub our lives clean of our sins and garbage, people can’t help but pick up the refreshing scent of love, grace and peace that spontaneously exudes from us. At least they should, if we take the next step. Did you notice there are two bars of soap in the picture above? If not, take a look at this picture of the same bar from another angle.



The little bar was almost used up when I grabbed a new one, but instead of throwing it away I left it in the tray with the new one. The two stuck together and after a few showers, the small bar conformed to the curved shape of the new one, even though it was flat at first.

“We are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

(2 Corinthians 3:18b)

The more I devote myself to God, the more I will be like him. As the small soap bar gave in to the mold of the larger one, I have to let go of my own ways and submit my life into the hands of the Potter to shape me into his image.

Different people affect us in different ways, altering our moods and even our behavior. Let me ask you: What do people notice and feel when they are with you? What persona or aura do you give off? Are they refreshed and encouraged by your presence or are you a drain and a downer to be around? Do they hear hope and cheer or complaining and sarcasm? Who does most of the talking, the listening?

I can hear some of you saying, “That’s just the way I am. I’m not outgoing or friendly. I’m basically shy and keep to myself.” Well, so am I, but we need to change. I don’t think the Lord wants us to stay in our comfort zones. It’s a stretch for me, but I want to be more inviting and approachable, even to strangers. I challenge you to smile at everyone you pass tomorrow and see how many people return your smile. That’s more fun than looking past them, as if they don’t exist.

I had a dream recently where I was with my dad. I felt his warmth and acceptance and humor as strong and real as I remember it from years ago. I enjoyed hanging out with him for a while, even if it was only in a dream. Just thinking about certain people can bring me to tears or make me smile.

What a wonderful day that would be, if, when people cross my path, they would see Jesus more than they see me. This goes beyond asking “What would Jesus do?” It’s being *in* Jesus and him in me, so others see the real thing. Am I there yet? Nope. It’s going to take a lot more showers from the living water to conform me. But one day we will *all* be like him:

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”

Philippians 3:20-21

Do you smell like Christ?

Day 35: What's between you and God?

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: see if there's any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalm 139:23, 24



I'm not a very good judge of my own character but I'm an expert at spotting the faults of others. When I do consider how I fall short, I grade myself on a curve, and since there are always people that appear to sin worse than me, I give myself a passing grade.

Another way I excuse my sin is to rationalize my behavior or blame others for it. If left to myself, I often simply ignore my sins altogether.

God has blessed us with many fun things to enjoy, especially in our affluent culture. But we need to be careful that we don't chase after and love the creation more than the Creator. Otherwise, our purpose in life becomes nothing more than feeding our appetite for what A. W. Tozer called our self-sins: self-indulgence, self-pity, self-absorption, self-aggrandizement, self-deception, self-exaltation, self-sufficiency and a host of others just like them. People who claim they can do whatever they want are never happy for long. That's because the "self" is a harsh taskmaster who is never satisfied with our performance to carry out our selfish desires. We need to be set free from the childish habit of always wanting to get our own way. We can't be filled with the Spirit if we're full of ourselves.

We will never be sinless, but with God's help we can sin *less*

I don't think we're trapped to stay in a broken state of continual sin or resign ourselves to live a life of a hopeless sinner. We will never be sinless, but with God's help we can sin *less*. But this can only be accomplished if we possess Christ, and not merely profess him. Faith and works are a package deal. God wants us to walk with him, but as Jesus said, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Repentance is resolving to change our behavior. It must follow confession. I don't think God is pleased with continual confession of the same sins committed over and over again. That's an abuse of his grace.

Turn my eyes away from looking at worthless things. (Psalm 119:37).



The eye is the lens of the heart. The heart processes what it sees and hears and then shapes our values and drives our behavior accordingly.

The Letter to the Hebrews tells us to fix our eyes and thoughts on Jesus, but I don't always do that. Competing thoughts, temptations, and busyness build up a cataract on the eye of my heart, which clouds and blurs my vision and primary purpose in life, which is to bring glory to God. If we invite violence and immorality and profanity to be portrayed and heard in our homes through our TVs, phones and computers, the continuous consumption of a secular worldview will influence us and shape our values over time. Proverbs 4:23 warns, ***Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.***

Take your spiritual pulse:

We need to ask ourselves how we're doing on the following qualities. This is not a legalistic list of requirements or a checklist, but rather, some indicators of spiritual maturity. It reveals what is captivating our hearts and shows us where we need to grow. Nobody does this perfectly, but these are things that we should strive for with the help of the Holy Spirit:

- Do I have a daily quiet time for prayer and Bible reading?
- Do I memorize and recite scripture often?
- Do I keep a prayer list and pray for those people and concerns?
- Do I share my testimony with others when there are opportunities?
- Do I pray regularly for lost people by name?
- Do I generously give of my time and resources for God to use?
- Do I seek reconciliation and forgiveness when needed?
- Do I trust God and involve him in everything I do?
- Do I treat my spouse, children, and others with love and respect?
- Do I have compassion for those who are hurting and do I help them?
- Do I pray regularly with my spouse and children?
- Do I use my tongue to encourage rather than criticize or cuss?
- Do I control my temper?
- Do I live according to honesty and integrity?
- Do I honor God by my thoughts and choices of entertainment?
- Do I keep in touch with the Lord throughout the day?
- Do I have fellow believers in my life for mutual encouragement?
- Do I have a grateful heart for all the blessings I receive from God?

Day 36: Is it time you took a leap of faith?



When God called Moses and Gideon and many others recorded in the Bible to do something big, they all felt inadequate and tried to get out of it, usually because he asked them to do something that was beyond their ability to accomplish.

In fact, just to make sure that the odds were definitely stacked against Gideon and his army, he told Gideon to pare down his fighting men from 32,000 to 300. That way, Gideon and his men would have to depend on God and would give him the glory for the victory. I get encouraged when I read the accounts of how God used ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things. But it's even more exciting to know that he's still doing it today.

"If we never pray audacious, courageous prayers, how can he answer them? If we never follow him to positions where we need him, how can he show up and make his presence known? Live...as a person dependent on him, desperate for God the Spirit to show up and make a difference."
Francis Chan, *The Forgotten God*

I strongly believe that all of us should be attempting something that we can't possibly achieve unless God shows up. I must warn you, it involves challenges and risks. It won't be easy but it won't be boring, especially when God begins to do stuff through you that you know didn't come from your own strength or talents.

*"It may be that we rarely experience the Spirit of God because we never need him. Our lives are too secure. Our prayers are too safe. Our expectations are too low...Do not complain that God never does anything dramatic in your life if you never attempt anything outside your comfort zone." - Tim Chester, *Enjoying God**

When I was around 12 years old I had a paper route, and the worst part of the job was collecting the money. If my customers didn't pay then I didn't get paid because that's how it worked back then. Some people wouldn't answer their door, and others were quite rude and wouldn't pay me a dime. This went on until my dad found out about it. Just having him by my side as we walked up to their doors washed away all my fear and

anxiety. They could not get rid of my Dad as easily. He wasn't leaving until we got the money! When you are close to God, you have the assurance that there is no way you can fail in what he calls you to do. But we have to step out. When God told the Israelites to cross the Jordan River, he didn't hold the water back until they got their feet wet. Is it time for you to quit playing it safe and take a leap of faith?

A pastor once asked two very important questions: *"What are you doing with your life?"* and *"At the end of our days, will we celebrate or regret the past, living the way we're living now?"* Just staying busy doesn't count for much if we don't do those things with and for the Lord. How we spend our time with our short existence here will affect our lives for eternity. When I finally get to see my Lord face to face, I want to hear him say, "Well, done, my good and faithful servant!"

I believe that God is waiting for us to carry out his commissions, but many of us are holding back because we don't feel adequate in our abilities. We absolve ourselves from certain responsibilities by claiming we're not gifted in those areas and so we just stick to what we're comfortable with and know how to do. Life then becomes mediocre, routine and boring.

Live in the power of the possible with God!

You may not think you have much to offer God; maybe you've failed before and don't feel confident or worthy to begin or join a ministry. I want you to know that God is a God of second chances and all things are possible with him, no matter what you've done or how old you are. He wants to breathe new life into your soul and use you to be a blessing to others.

I don't want my life to end before I come to the end of myself.

On judgment day, we will have to account for what we have done. I don't want to say, "I'm sorry, Lord, but I was just too busy for you." Let's not be like the servant in the parable who buried the talent he was given. His master was not happy with him and gave the talent to the other servant who had put his talents to good use. That was a good example of the truth, "Use it or lose it!"

*"Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.
And when I am dying, how happy I'll be,
If the lamp of my life has been burned out for Thee."*

C.T. Studd

Day 37: Really God?



My soul is in anguish. How long, O Lord, how long? (Psalm 6:3).

Adversity. It can crush you, frustrate you, frighten you, depress you, hurt you, and even kill you. It happens to all of us at different degrees at different times. The most common questions people ask during difficult times are, “Where are you God? Why did you let this happen to me? Do you not see or care what’s going on here?”

There are many examples in the Bible chronicling the suffering of key players, like the prophets, Paul, and of course, Jesus, just to name a few. And it certainly wasn’t because they didn’t pray hard enough or didn’t have enough faith! Israel had to fight battles and lose lives on the way to the Promised Land. So we shouldn’t be surprised when God allows adversity to rear its ugly head in our lives.

Why does God let bad things happen to good people?

Not being able to come up with a satisfactory answer to that question has led many people to either reject God or deny his existence altogether. But if God is real, and there is a heaven and a hell, then opinions and wrong beliefs, however sincere, won't change that reality. Not believing in God doesn't make him go away. That's like a person diagnosed with cancer telling his doctor, “That's ridiculous. I can't see it and I feel fine so I don't believe that.”

Curse God or **Cling to him. What will you do?**

Don’t let your failures, disappointments, frustrations or heartaches keep you down and bitter and ineffective for God’s service. There’s nothing wrong with pouring our hearts out to God and asking for answers. You never know, he may reveal that we brought the problem on ourselves by poor choices. Being open and teachable is more productive and respectful than shaking our fist at him. Remember, God doesn’t owe us an explanation. Os Guinness, in *God in the Dark*, writes, “*If the Christian’s faith is to be itself and let God be God at such times, it*

must suspend judgment and say, "Father, I do not understand you, but I trust you."

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4).

According to James, trials are needed to grow us up spiritually. How much would we depend on God if nothing ever went wrong, if we didn't need him for anything? I think he uses difficult times to get our attention and discipline us when needed, to prune back our pride, independence, and selfishness. It's sad, but more often than not, it's when we are down and have no where to turn but to look up that we draw close to him.

"Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved." - Helen Keller

You've heard the phrase, "No pain - no gain." How would a body builder develop muscles if his workout equipment did not push back with resistance? How would we enjoy a cold drink if the day wasn't hot or savor a meal if we were never hungry?

God has gotten me out of more tight spots than I can count, including surviving without injury after being run over by a van and being rescued from a tornado and a hurricane. But sometimes he doesn't remove all the thorns from my flesh. I think that's when he's more interested in my development than my deliverance.

Sometimes we have to wait a very long time before our situation changes. As Oswald Chambers wrote in *My Utmost for His Highest*,

"Patience is more like endurance. A saint's life is in the hands of God like a bow and arrow in the hands of an archer. God is aiming at something the saint cannot see, and he stretches and strains, and every now and again the saint says – "I cannot stand anymore." God does not heed, He goes on stretching till His purpose is in sight, then he lets fly. Trust yourself in God's hands."

When you have developed a close walk with Christ, you'll be better prepared to face the storms when they come. You won't let the external conditions shake your faith because you've got an internal assurance that God is with you and will take care of you and those you love. He has left a track record of doing that for you. Don't wait for a catastrophe before pursuing Christ. Enjoy him with a thankful heart when times are good!

Day 38



Your heart. You probably don't think about it very often. But it is keeping you alive, beat after beat, ushering your blood throughout your body, allowing your organs to function properly. Its rate is not always perfectly consistent; sometimes it races and sometimes it slows down. Some of us have an irregular heartbeat, but as long as our hearts are persistently beating, we'll get to reside on this side of heaven.

Our lungs play their part as well, sending life-giving oxygen into our blood supply. Our breathing is not always perfectly consistent; sometimes we breath fast, sometimes slow and sometimes we are temporarily out of breath. But as long as we keep breathing, our spirits will get to stay in our bodies.

Your body is a beautiful sympathy, each part working together continually without interruption. But if one part fails to keep in step with the others, the whole body suffers.

Our walk with the Lord is not perfectly consistent, either. But he understands our shortcomings and has offered us a solution:

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13).

As our Creator designed our blood to flow continually through our bodies to enable them to thrive, our spirits also need a continuous flow of communication with him to thrive as well. But we may not think about that very often, no more than we think about our hearts and lungs. It's OK not to think about our hearts and lungs, because they function automatically for us. But the well-being of our spirits needs *us* to be involved. There's a lot of scripture explaining the importance of maintaining a consistent relationship with the Lord. Here are a few examples:

I have set the Lord continually before me...his praise shall continually be in my mouth...pray without ceasing...fix your thoughts on Jesus.

From Psalm 16:8, 34:1, 1st Thessalonians 5:17, Hebrews 3:1

I am so thankful that we have a God who extends grace to us when we fall short and uses us in spite of our imperfections. He doesn't hold our past sins against us:

One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14).

I was talking to my friend, Ron Bronson, about how hard it is for me to continually stay closely connected to Jesus and he gave me some great advice. He said, "You can do it. Maybe not perfect, but persistent." As our hearts and lungs are not perfectly in sync all the time but persistently keep us alive, we won't always pursue Christ as we should, but if we keep at it, we will slowly but surely grow closer to him. And maybe, just maybe, one day our walk with the Lord will become as involuntary as our hearts that beat and lungs that breathe!

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25

Day 39: Don't keep The Secret Place a secret!



We, with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory. (2 Corinthians 3:18a).

When the moon is full on a clear night, you don't need a street light to see where you're going. It's easy to forget that the moon does not generate the light. It only reflects the rays from the sun. When Moses came back from spending time with God, his face shone so bright that he had to put on a veil to keep from freaking people out. It has been said that we cannot give away what we don't possess. That's why it's absolutely essential to pursue Christ, as he explained in John 15:5,

"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

The closer we get to God, the more he fills us with his Spirit and his love. Then, like the moon, we are in the right position to reflect his light and help others find their way, as Paul encourages us in Romans 10:14:

How can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?

Jesus told us to *"let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven."* But he doesn't want us to stop there. You see, if we don't help people find Jesus, they'll just think we're good folks, and go on their merry way. I've never had someone ask me, "Rob, you're such a nice person, how can I be saved?"

But most Christians don't share their faith. Being an introvert, I have also struggled in this area. But if I don't look at people as projects to convert, but instead take the time to build a relationship and learn where they are coming from by asking questions, that builds trust and lowers hostility. I like to ask them about their family and if their parents are still living. Then I mention how I miss my dad and how his passing caused me to

start my quest to get closer to God. If the conversation concerns health issues, I'll briefly share how the Lord brought me through my thyroid surgery and restored my voice. I then ask, "What is *your* religious preference?" I try to be a good listener. Remember, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. So, ask questions that lead to spiritual icebreakers. If a discussion includes someone that died, you can ask him, "What do you think happens to us when we die? Do you think you'll go to heaven? How do you know?"

How to handle objections

It's perfectly natural for people to express doubts about the claims of Jesus, especially if it involves a life-changing choice. One of the biggest hurdles that keep people from accepting Christ is that he claimed he was the way, and the truth and the life. No could come to the father except through him. (John 14:6). That appears exclusive and intolerant to all other religions. We need to explain to them that God will not accept a sinner into heaven, so we can never be good enough on our own. That's why God sacrificed his sinless son in our place so we can live in his presence, now and for eternity. It's the only way because that's the way God provided for our redemption. If they say they don't believe in God or the Bible, politely ask them how they came to that conclusion, so you can help them overcome their objections. You don't have to be a Bible scholar or an expert in apologetics to lead people to Christ. Just briefly share what he has done for you. They can't argue with your story.

You don't have to be pushy or close the deal with every conversation. First of all, that's the Holy Spirit's role. So relax. Salvation is usually a process, and takes time. You may seed or water for someone else to do the harvesting. Remember: **A, B, C,** and 3 verses from Romans:

Acknowledge that your sin will keep you out of heaven.

Romans 3:23: *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Believe that Jesus died for you, rose from the dead and is alive today.

Romans 5:8 *God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Confess your sins and trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

Romans 10:9: *If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

If you haven't yet accepted Christ, you can ask God now to forgive your sins, and begin to follow him. Then find a church to help grow your faith.

Day 40: Information vs. Transformation

I have come to see that there are 7 areas we need to pursue in order to grow spiritually and enjoy God's presence in our lives. We've touched on all 7 during the last 40 days. But I would like for this devotional book to be more than just another collection of information to add to your shelf. Countless how-to books have been written and endless sermons and have been preached, so the problem is not a lack of information. What we need is *transformation*.

The only way for truths to become an experienced reality is to have a way to remember them and practice them daily. So here's the plan:

Each of the 7 areas, I call a step, and each one corresponds with a day of the week and the first letter of the step matches the first letter of the day it belongs to so you'll remember to practice the step for that day. Each step has three parts. For example, when Monday rolls around, that's "M" for Meditation. What will you do for that step? Read, Reflect and Recite God's Word. And, so on for the rest of the week.

I'm not saying you should only practice Meditation on Monday or Worship only on Wednesday. Ideally, we should incorporate each step into every day. But at least this is a way to remind us of one of the steps every day. Don't forget to recite your memory verse for each day as well.

I would start with writing the steps and their corresponding parts on a 3x5 card and begin memorizing the steps. Then move on to the three parts. Yes, I know, that's 28 words to memorize but that's no more words than are used in John 3:16, so I know you can do this!

Monday: Meditation - Read, Reflect and Recite God's Word

Tuesday: Trust - Seek God, Abide in Christ, Walk by the Spirit

Wednesday: Worship - Praise, Celebrate and Enjoy God

Thursday: Thanksgiving - For Blessings, Salvation and Deliverance

Friday: Fellowship - Love, Forgive, Witness

Saturday: Surrender - Repent, Devote, Persevere

Sunday: Slow Down - Rest, Simplify, Solitude

You can use this link for the video series, *Enjoying God's Presence*, which explains each part for the steps:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqSfYZ0D2VE&t=6s>

Thanks for taking this journey with me. May you enjoy the presence of God as you walk ever closer with him!

Resources

For ongoing encouragement for your walk with Christ:

<https://dwellinhissecretplace.wordpress.com/>

Join our Facebook group, Dwell in His secret place:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/689151281155552>

A PDF of this book is available as a free download on this link:

<https://dwellinhissecretplace.wordpress.com/2023/01/26/get-closer-to-god-in-40-days/>

Some of the books I found helpful in my quest to get closer to God:

Abide in Christ, Andrew Murray

The Pursuit of God, AW Tozer

The Knowledge of the Holy, AW Tozer

God Is Closer Than You Think, John Ortberg

When The Game Is Over It All Goes Back In The Box, John Ortberg

Practicing the Presence of God, Brother Lawrence

Knowing God, J. I. Packer

Unleashing The Power Of The Holy Spirit, Allen Jackson

Secrets of the Secret Place, Bob Sorge

Spiritual Disciplines Handbook, Adele Calhoun

A Praying Life, Paul Miller

Celebration of Discipline, Richard Foster

Prayer, Richard Foster

Hearing God, Dallas Willard

Going Public With Your Faith, William Peel and Walt Larimore

Prayer Coach, James Nicodem

Crazy Love, Francis Chan

My Utmost For His Highest, Oswald Chambers

God in the Dark, Os Guinness

Wasting Time with God, Klaus Issler

The Unexpected Adventure, Lee Strobel & Mark Mittelberg

The Case For Faith, Lee Strobel

Enjoying God, Tim Chester

Get Closer to God in 40 Days

Devotions for your walk with Christ



Becoming aware of God’s presence and really experiencing him will revolutionize our lives. God wants us to know him intimately and experience the peace and joy that only comes from a close walk with him. If we get this right, everything else will fall into place. Prime your spiritual pump with these 40 devotions!

I have sought your face with all my heart – Psalm 119:58



Rob Beaird lives in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. His hobbies include hiking, carpentry, video production, writing, and playing with his 5 grandchildren.