
AWAKENING

21 Days of Prayer, Fasting & Personal Devotion

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Dear Elevate,

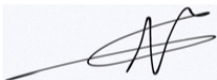
In every situation, whether good or bad, we try to pray before we act. Many times people act first and then want God to bail them out of that situation, but prayer should be our first response, not our last resort.

Understanding the necessity of prayer is not enough. In order for it to become a part of our life, it needs to become something we look forward to doing. I'm convinced most people don't enjoy prayer because they have never been taught how to pray. That's where this simple prayer journal can help. Using several prayer models out of the Bible and having some guides to make prayer more personal, this booklet is designed to bring joy into your time with God. When you discover the beauty of daily conversation with Him, you'll experience the presence of God that will change your life.

Once you learn how to pray, prayer can become a part of everyday life. And then...

- Before the day begins —
- Before you go to bed —
- Before you go to work or school —
- Before you send that text —
- Before you eat, drive or travel —
- When bad things happen —
- Before bad things happen —
- In every situation — PRAY FIRST!

Prayer changes everything!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pastor Hang Lee', written over a light blue rectangular background.

PASTOR HANG LEE

PRAYER/DEVOTION GUIDE

We don't have to follow a specific formula to talk with God, but practicing different ways to pray can help us find deeper purpose and connection to Him through our prayer time.

This book is designed to give you several prayer models. You don't have to master all of them at once; you can spend time reading 1 devotion a day or at your own pace.

As you pray, focus on the process the model reveals, giving yourself time to pray intentionally. If your mind wanders, use the model to restore your focus.

The goal of using this guide is not to add pressure or overwhelm you. The goal is simply to get comfortable with different biblical models of prayer and for your prayer life to become more natural, effective, and enjoyable. To make your prayer time even more meaningful, you can write notes and prayer requests and play worship music. The important step is committing to regularly entering God's presence through prayer.

The heart of this guide is to help you find a new level of purpose, effectiveness, and enjoyment in your prayer life. While prayer does take commitment and can require discipline to develop into a daily habit, we also want to remember that it's a "get to" not a "got to." It's a privilege to be able to come to God in prayer.

CREATING A LIFESTYLE OF PRAYER

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed.

MARK 1:35

Prayer is most effective when it isn't something we do every now and then, but when it's a lifestyle we cultivate. To understand how to have a lifestyle of prayer, we can look at the example Jesus gave during His life on earth.

HAVE A CERTAIN TIME

Jesus got up early in the morning to spend time with His Heavenly Father. Make a daily appointment with God — whether it's first thing in the morning, at lunch, or in the evening — and faithfully keep it.

HAVE A CERTAIN PLACE

Jesus had a specific place He went to pray. Having a designated place to pray helps us remove distractions and frees us to worship and pray out loud.

HAVE A CERTAIN PLAN

When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He gave them a prayer outline. We call it “The Lord’s Prayer.” This outline, along with several other tools, is available in this guide. As we pray every day, our plans for our prayer time can vary, maybe including worship music, Bible reading, and quiet time to listen to God. It doesn't always have to look the same; it just helps when we have a plan for connecting regularly with God.

TYPES OF FASTING

“return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning”

JOEL 2:12 (ESV)

While preparing for your fast, it is important to choose ahead of time what type of fast you will participate in. Not only will this help with making the necessary preparations to implement your plan, but as you commit to a specific fast ahead of time, and know how you're going to do it, you will position yourself to finish strong. Choosing your fasting plan is a very personal decision. We are all at different places in our walk with God and our spirituality should never be a cause for comparison or competition. There is nothing more “inherently spiritual” about one type of fast as opposed to another.

Your personal fast should present a level of challenge to it, but know your body, know your options, and most importantly, seek God in prayer about this and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do. It's also important to not let what you eat or do not eat become the focus of your fast. This is a time to disconnect enough with your regular patterns and habits in order to connect closer to God. Listed below, are some options and variations of different types of fasts you can choose to engage in. As you read over the information provided here, please consider how it applies to your circumstances and convictions. Fasting does require reasonable precautions. If you have any health concerns, please consult your physician prior to beginning your fast – especially if you are taking medication, have a chronic condition, or if you are pregnant or nursing.

SPECIFIC FOOD OR ACTIVITY FAST

This type of fast refers to omitting a specific item(s), activity or habit from your time of prayer and fasting. For example, you may choose to eliminate red meat, processed or fast food, or sweets. It could also involve fasting from an activity or habit, such as television watching, or social media.

DANIEL FAST

The Daniel fast is a great model to follow that proves to be extremely effective for spiritual focus, bodily discipline and purification in the body and soul. It is probably one of the most commonly referred to types of fasts, however within the term “Daniel Fast”, there is room for broad interpretation. In the book of Daniel, we find two different times where Daniel fasted, once in Daniel 1 and again in Daniel 10. Daniel 1 states that he ate vegetables and water, and in Daniel 10, while the passage does not give a specific list of foods that Daniel ate, it does state that Daniel ate no rich (or choice) foods as well as no meat or wine. So based on these two verses, we can see that either of these, or any variations in between constitutes a fast.

JUICE FAST

A juice fast is when no solid food is consumed and instead involves the intake of vegetable juices, fruit juices and water.

WATER FAST

A water fast is eating no foods and drinking no liquids except water for a period of time. Extreme precautions should be taken with a water fast and should be done under the direction supervision and monitoring of your physician.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Lord's Prayer is often recited in churches or at religious events, but there's so much more to this prayer. Jesus provided this model as an outline to teach us how to pray in a way that connects us to God and empowers us to accomplish great things through Him. This model takes us through each part of The Lord's Prayer, showing us how to pray the way Jesus instructed.

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray..."

LUKE 11:1

"Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your Name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

MATTHEW 6:9-13 NKJV

01. CONNECT WITH GOD RELATIONALLY

“Our Father in Heaven”

God isn't interested in us practicing religion; instead, He desires a relationship with us. God has adopted us as His children and loves for us to call Him our Father. Starting our prayer time acknowledging our relationship with God is powerful for us and delights Him as well.

You have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when He adopted you as His own children. Now we call Him, “Abba, Father.”

ROMANS 8:15 NLT

Proclaim your intimate relationship with God, addressing Him lovingly as your Father and thanking Him that you are His child.

PRAYER:

“Father, I come to You in prayer today thankful that I am Your child. I know I am a sinner, but You have forgiven me and adopted me as Your own, and I am so grateful to call you my Father. Thank you for loving me. I love you.”

02. WORSHIP HIS NAME

“Hallowed Be Your Name”

God loves when we worship Him, and there is power in His Name. Here is a list of some of His Names to help us worship Him specifically and personally:

God is Righteousness – *He makes us clean*

God is Sanctifier – *He has called us and set us apart*

God is Healer – *He heals all our diseases*

God is Banner of Victory – *He defeated our enemies*

God is Shepherd – *He speaks to us and leads us*

God is Peace – *He is our peace in every storm*

God is Provider – *He supplies all of our needs*

*The name of the Lord is a strong tower;
the righteous man runs into it and is safe.*

PROVERBS 18:10 ESV

Speak God’s Names out loud. When we proclaim who He is, we not only worship Him, but we also remind ourselves how powerful and great our God is.

PRAYER:

“God, I am in awe of You. Your Name is a strong tower, a place of protection and safety for me. I praise You as my Healer, my Shepherd, and my Banner of Victory. You are my Peace, my Provider, my Righteousness, and my Sanctifier. Your Name is great, and I worship You.”

03. PRAY HIS AGENDA FIRST

“Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven”

Part of being a child of God is caring about what He cares about. We know His will is perfect, and we acknowledge His wisdom and sovereignty when we pray His agenda first.

He will always give you all you need from day to day if you will make the Kingdom of God your primary concern.

LUKE 12:31 TLB

Spend time focusing on what God is focused on. His priorities include:

- Saving the lost
- Wisdom and guidance for those in authority –
parental, spiritual, governmental, work-related
- Accomplishing His purpose in our lives

PRAYER:

“God, I recognize there is no better plan on earth than Yours, and I pray for Your will to be done in my life (name the areas of your life where you need more of God’s presence today) and in our world. This world is lost and needs You desperately, and I pray for every person to know You as their personal Lord and Savior. I pray for the leaders in my life (pray specifically over

parents, spiritual leaders, government leaders, employers, and any other leaders in your life), that you would give them supernatural wisdom and discernment as they lead. Give them a revelation of Your will and Your purpose for them. And I give my life to You again today; have Your way in my life! Anything You want to do in me or through me, I will do. I ask today for wisdom and clarity as you show me my next steps.”

04. **DEPEND ON HIM FOR EVERYTHING**

“Give us this day our daily bread”

God promises to supply all our needs, and He wants us to come to Him with our problems, needs, and desires and to trust Him to provide.

I look up to the mountains—does my help come from there? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth!

PSALM 121:1-2 NLT

Ask God for what you need today. It may help to write down the concerns weighing on your mind or the desires of your heart. You can bring them to God, and trust Him enough to hand them over to Him fully. It may help to open your hands before God to physically show your surrender to Him. Problems can either be ours or God’s; they can’t be both.

PRAYER:

“Father, I acknowledge that everything I need today will come from You. You made the heavens and the earth; You are more than capable of handling any situation I’m dealing with, so I give it to You completely (specifically talk to God about what is on your mind and heart right now and give it to Him). I look to you to help me, sustain me, and give me Your peace. Remind me of Your hope and power today. Thank You in advance for taking care of my needs.”

05. FORGIVE AND BE FORGIVEN

“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”

God has offered us complete forgiveness, and we can receive it at any time. When we turn away from our sins and receive His forgiveness, our hearts are more prepared to forgive others as well.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 JOHN 1:9

Ask God to check your heart and life and show you areas where you might need to ask for forgiveness from Him. Then, it is your turn to forgive those who have offended you. We can even choose to forgive people in advance. Ask God to forgive you and to help you forgive others.

PRAYER:

“God, thank You so much for offering me the gift of forgiveness. Show me any areas in my life that I need to bring before You in order to receive forgiveness and healing. I confess that I have been struggling with sin (talk to God about any areas of sin in your life), and I know that You want me to be clean again. Please forgive me for my sin. Thank You for showing me unfailing grace. As You have so freely forgiven me, I also want to freely forgive others. Please help me let go of all of my offenses. I release to You those who have hurt me, and I trust You to handle those situations according to Your perfect will.”

06. **ENGAGE IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”

Spiritual warfare can seem difficult to understand, but the Bible makes it very clear that we have an enemy who is trying to steal from us, kill us, and destroy us. As we pray, we take our stand against the enemy and fight from a place of victory through Jesus as we’re empowered by His Holy Spirit. There is power in God’s Word, and every lie the enemy has told us can be replaced with God’s truth.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against

the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

EPHESIANS 6:12

By recognizing that the enemy wants to destroy you, you can shed light on his lies and claim God's truth over your life. Ask God to show you any lies you're believing or areas of warfare happening in your life. Ask Him to expose the enemy and to help you understand and receive His truth. Simply speaking the Name of Jesus has great power in the spiritual realm. The Bible tells us in James 4:7 that if we resist the devil, he will flee from us. Through prayer, we can resist him and walk forward in freedom.

PRAYER:

“God, I recognize that my struggles today aren’t against the people or circumstances around me, but against the enemy. Please help me to see how the enemy is lying to me. Help me to recognize his lies, take them captive, and make all of my thoughts obedient to the truth of Your Word (list out any specific areas God shows you where you have believed a lie that needs to be replaced with His truth). While the enemy wants to destroy me, I know that You came to give me life to the fullest. I speak the name of Jesus over my life and declare that no weapon formed against me will prosper. I don’t have to fear the enemy because the One who is in me is greater than the one who is in the world.”

21 DAYS

*PRAYER
FASTING
& PERSONAL
DEVOTION*

DAY 1

“Do not despise these small beginnings, for the LORD rejoices to see the work begin.” (Zech. 4:10 NLT)

A new year, another beginning, a fresh start. More opportunities to grow closer to God. More chances to be the person he created you to be. More ways to serve those around you. If you're like me, it's often hard to know where to begin making changes. Whether you have a lot you want to change this year or just a few things, you're going to need God's power to do it. And that's what this book is all about—providing you with bites of God's Word along with some encouragement and some challenges, always seasoned with his truth and the hope we have in Jesus Christ.

To get you started, consider this: What do you want your story to be a year from now? What major difference do you want to see in your life when you reflect after this new year is over?

What's one tiny baby step you can take today to move in this direction? Because you know how we grow? We practice daily. Rarely does success come without time, discipline, and hard work. Successful people often joke that they spent years becoming an overnight success.

What many don't realize is that it's the things no one sees that result in the things everyone wants. It's the faithfulness to do mundane things like flossing, walking around the block, eating better, and spending time with God before rushing out the door each morning. The best way to think about changing your story is to focus on today, not tomorrow, next week, or next January. It's time to take that first step.

Lord, give me wisdom to choose what to focus on during this next year. Help me to see my life, my story, the way you see it. Give me strength to take that first step today.

DAY 2

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Gal. 5:25)

One small decision today could have a big impact on tomorrow. Chances are you can think of something right now that you know God would love to include in your story. Just consider what might happen if you remember to floss tonight or work out tomorrow morning or attend church this Sunday or spend some special time with someone you love.

It doesn't always take a long time to see big differences in your life. What story do you believe God wants you to tell five or ten years from now? What does God want you to want? Jot down your thoughts about what you believe God wants for your future. Your ideas don't have to be perfect. You don't have to commit to what you write just yet. Just capture on paper the first thoughts that come to mind.

Based on what you believe God wants you to want, what discipline do you need to start doing to head toward where God wants you to go?

Choose one thing. You'll be tempted to pick three, four, or even ten, but don't. Whatever you do, pick just one thing. Because if you pick more than one, you likely won't achieve any of them. But if you select just one, you absolutely can start writing the story God wants you to write.

*Show me how you want me to grow this year, God.
Give me your wisdom and discernment to know how to focus my habits, choices, and routines on one area of change.*

DAY 3

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise. (Ps. 51:17)

As you reflect over the course of your years, chances are you have some chapters in your story that you'd rather not share with anyone. You might have secrets that you've never told another living person. You might have done things you wish you'd never done.

Maybe you've ended up somewhere you never wanted to be. You didn't mean to blow it, but you did. You made decisions that took you farther than you ever intended to go. You did some things that cost you more than you ever thought you'd have to pay. You hurt people. You compromised your values. You broke promises. You did things that you can't undo. There's no do-over like when you were a kid on the playground.

Sometimes you simply skip over those dark chapters of your life. Other times you edit the stories on the fly, making up a version that you like better than the truth, both to tell yourself and to tell others. You brush by the ugly parts and retell the happy ones.

No matter how you would describe your story right now, there's good news. Your story is not over. It's not too late to change the story you'll tell in the future. Regardless of what you've done (or haven't done) in the past, your future remains unwritten. There are more chapters to write, more victories to win, more friends to meet, more of a difference to make, more of God's goodness to experience. Today, with God's help, you can start something new.

Forgive me, Lord, when I stumble and struggle to keep going. Give me the strength to get back on my feet and start again.

DAY 4

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. (James 1:5 ESV)

Today you are one decision away from changing your life forever. You might not even know exactly what that one decision will be. It's natural to assume that such a big, life-changing decision would be obvious. And sometimes it is, like deciding whether you should take a new job in another state or whether to return to school and finish your degree. Or whether you should marry the person you've been dating for the last few months. Huge decisions like these will send countless consequences rippling through your life.

But daily, smaller choices can also have a big impact. Our lives are constantly spilling into the lives of others, and theirs into ours. Like falling dominos, even our smallest decisions sometimes cascade into consequences—both positive and negative—we never could have seen coming.

Ultimately, the decisions you make today will determine the story you will tell about your life tomorrow. Each new day presents opportunities that could become the plot twists that carry you to a new page, a new chapter. Every day, all day, you make one small choice after another. Where to go, what to say, what to do.

And those choices just keep accumulating, each one twisting, folding into the next, until eventually they're all woven into the tapestry that is your life's story. Today ask God to guide you to the decisions you need to make to grow closer to him.

Father, give me your wisdom and discernment in all the choices I make today, both big and small. Remind me that each decision I make can draw me closer to you.

DAY 5

For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. (Prov. 2:6 ESV)

If you haven't already, someday you'll find yourself at a crossroads, a place where you have to make a difficult decision about your life's direction.

"Should I stay the course when it would be easier to walk away? Or does God want me to stay put and wait on what he's doing here?"

Or maybe a better question you should ask is this: "What does God want me to want?" What is the one big thing you know God wants you to pursue? Does he want you to spend more time with your family? To stop cutting corners at work?

To evaluate an important relationship? It may be that God wants you to stop pursuing your own dreams, to surrender something to him that means a lot to you. Maybe he wants you to stop living for things that don't matter. Even if the thing you're thinking of isn't one of these, I'd be willing to bet you have some ideas of what it is that God wants you to want.

In light of this, where does God want you to stay the course so that ultimately you can tell the story he wants you to tell? Even though it might be easier to walk away, is there some situation where you're realizing that God wants you to take a stand?

Father, I'm tempted to run away from my problems sometimes in order to avoid conflict. Help me to face what I need to do, and show me where I need to stand strong in my life today.

DAY 6

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13 ESV)

Have you ever noticed that what you believe determines how you behave? For example, if you believe that everybody is going to criticize you, you'll behave tentatively. If you believe that you're probably going to fail, you're going to venture out cautiously.

However, if you believe that the one true Lord God is calling you, empowering you, leading you, and equipping you, you will live very boldly. Why? Because boldness is behavior born out of belief. The Greek word in Scripture that's translated as boldness is the word *parrhesia*, and this word means more than just speaking; it means outspokenness, it means assurance, it means courage, it means confidence, it means to act without fear.

To be honest, sometimes I get discouraged because the prayer I hear the most often is, “God, thank you for this day. Help us to get through this day. Amen.” Now that’s fine to include, especially if you’re starting out, but you have to admit, it’s not very bold. I’ve always wondered if God hears prayers like that and goes, “Okay, sure, but give me a tough one! I’m God of the universe—let me show you what I can do!”

In the Bible we see men and women who were just like us—scared, tired, unsure of themselves—who nonetheless were transformed into bold people. God delights in doing the same thing with us today—giving us the power to be bold. And it all starts with what we believe.

*I want to be bold, Lord, and to step out in my faith.
Today show me what risk to take that I may further
your kingdom and draw others to you.*

DAY 7

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

How do we love like Jesus? Especially when we consider deep hurts and major wounds to our heart, it can be tough to forgive. Maybe someone exploited you, abused you, betrayed you, lied to you, cheated you. Maybe someone hurt the people you love the most, leaving them injured for life.

Most of us carry such wounds around inside us: the church that excluded you, the boss who took credit for your work, the sibling who turned against you, the parent who let you down. This person may even be dead now, but still there's a dark, angry hunger gnawing inside you. You may even wonder how God could forgive someone who could do what they did to you.

But as we know, Jesus told us to pray for those people who hurt us—and more specifically, to forgive them. As hard as it may be, we can do it through the power of Christ. Why? Two reasons: first, Jesus knew what he was asking of us because he himself suffered the worst, most unfair, cruel abuse possible; and second, because even after suffering through all of that, he chose to die to wash away our sins and forgive us.

Today consider the grudge you've been carrying around against that certain person and begin the practice—and it will take daily practice for a while—of letting it go.

Lord, you know how hard it is for me to forgive certain people who have hurt me. Help me to love them by choosing to forgive them as you have forgiven me.

DAY 8

“When you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” (Mark 11:25)

When life doesn't work out the way we want, it's tempting to blame other people. Maybe it's our parents, kids, spouse, siblings, or other family members, but we often hold them responsible for holding us back. Sometimes we pin blame on our teachers, boss, coworkers, or employees. It's especially easy to play the blame game when one of these people offends us, hurts us, or says something critical that wounds our pride. That's how they then end up in the bull's-eye of our blame circle.

But Jesus reminds us over and over again that there's a direct correlation between how we handle the offenses of others and how we handle God's grace. If we're not willing to forgive others—let alone quit blaming them for our decisions and actions—then we're not able to embrace the grace of God.

It's not that he withholds it from us based on our unwillingness to forgive; it wouldn't be grace if that were the case. It's simply that when we experience the fullness of God's forgiveness in our lives, we're prepared to forgive others. True grace is always contagious.

With God's help, stop blaming others and start forgiving them just as God has forgiven you.

Dear God, I'm overwhelmed by the way you love me and forgive my sins. Remind me of your mercy as I encounter those who sin against me today.

DAY 9

“If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:36)

Sometimes we feel stuck and begin to wonder if we will ever change. We let others label us and we start to believe them. We feel haunted by past mistakes and don't know how to move forward.

No matter what you've done or haven't done, God's power is big enough to change you. There is no sin too great for God's grace. There is no habit too big for his healing. There is no label too strong for his love. Let me put it another way, because I want you to believe this: God's power is bigger than your past.

And his power is rooted in his love for you. He knows who you really are no matter what others may label you—or what you label yourself. What’s true about you now doesn’t have to be true about you later. The goal is not to “reinvent” yourself by striving to be some perfect person but to allow God to give you an extreme makeover by uncovering your true self in his image, redeemed through Christ. What once was no longer has to be. God can and will break the labels that have held you hostage.

You have freedom in Christ to become who you were meant to be.

Dear Father, I’m so grateful that you know everything I’ve done and still love me. Give me strength to overcome my past mistakes and to move into the fullness of who you created me to be.

DAY 10

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. (Ps. 23:1
ESV)*

Whether it's hours in the day or money in the bank, sometimes you feel like you will never have enough, that you can never get caught up, let alone get ahead. Especially when we look online or check social media and see what others have, we often feel like we're missing out.

We see other people eating incredible meals, taking amazing vacations, and having fun with family and friends. They look beautiful and wear amazing clothes, live in houses straight out of HGTV, and drive new cars.

And then we wonder why we feel so disappointed with our own lives. Here's what you need to remember. When your contentment is based on comparing yourself with everyone else—especially on social media—then you will never be satisfied. Even when you know everyone else is simply posing and photoshopping their lives, as long as you compare, you'll come up short.

However, when your desires for your life align with God's, you'll never feel envious or jealous. Instead, you'll feel just the opposite—content, joyful, fulfilled. Our primary need each day is to know him, grow closer to him, and know his peace. When we focus on this truth and follow our Good Shepherd, we become content in a way that Instagram can never convey.

Dear Jesus, you alone are the Lord of my life and my power source. Remind me that I have more than enough of what my heart truly desires through my relationship with you.

DAY 11

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:19)

Some days it feels like we never have enough—enough time, energy, money, patience—enough of anything. Sometimes our families, our coworkers, and even our friends drain us and leave us feeling empty. We aren't giving our family the time and attention we want, nor are we contributing our best to our work. Paychecks just seem to evaporate, one after another, even as the clock keeps ticking and the calendar pages keep turning.

Just. Not. Enough.

On those days, it's especially important to remember that God promises to meet all our needs—as this verse says—“according to the riches of his glory in Christ.” It's easy to assume this refers to physical needs, but it also includes other needs—those emotional, spiritual, psychological deficits we carry. God meets these needs even as he provides food, shelter, and transportation for us.

Sometimes we're so focused on meeting everyone else's needs that we overlook our own. We forget that we have to keep our tanks filled so we can lead and serve those around us. Tackling so many goals, chores, and responsibilities, we forget our “invisible” needs—for rest, for reflection, for peace.

But God doesn't forget. When he says he'll meet all our needs, he means all, including the ones we may overlook.

Remind me, Lord, to stay connected to you throughout my day. Bathe me in your peace and help me to pass it on to those around me.

DAY 12

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

Sometimes people wonder why their prayers seem ineffective. They pray faithfully believing that God will hear their prayers and move on their behalf. But nothing seems to happen. One thing some of us fail to consider is that the way we live matters. How we act and the motives behind our behavior matter to God, and they matter when we pray.

While we all have the same access to God, we may not see the same results from our prayers. The Bible indicates that the way you live impacts the power of your prayers. Notice in today's verse, it doesn't say "the prayer of an unrighteous person" or "an okay person." It doesn't say "the prayer of a casual churchgoer" or "the prayer of someone who likes Jesus."

Need more evidence? Consider Proverbs 15:29: “The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.” Now, we’re never going to be perfect. The good news is that our righteousness comes from accepting Jesus as our Savior. But in these verses, the emphasis is on living righteously, which means following God, obeying his commands, and relying on his Word.

If you’re struggling in your prayer life, I encourage you to think back over your past week. How are you living? Do others see Jesus through your attitude and actions? Or do they only see you?

Today I want to live for you, God, and I want my actions to reflect this desire. Help me to live in a way that others will see Christ through all that I say and do.

DAY 13

Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. (Gal. 6:9 ESV)

Sometimes the greatest act of faith is faithfulness, staying where you're planted, remaining patient when you're itching to force a change. Staying in your marriage when it only gets harder instead of easier to love your spouse. Keeping your job even though you keep getting passed by for a promotion. Supporting a friend who always seems to need help, although they seldom offer thanks for what you do. Taking care of family members with chronic illnesses.

If you haven't already, you will someday find yourself at a crossroads, a place where you have to make a difficult decision about your life's direction. "Should I stay the course when it would be easier to walk away? Or does God want me to stay put and wait on what he's doing here? If he wants me to wait, I'll need a lot of patience."

Patience is best exercised when you'd rather take a shortcut, make something happen, or force others to do things your way. But waiting on God shows just how much you trust him. Today keep on keeping on, knowing that God will move you forward according to his perfect schedule.

It's hard to stick things out, Lord, especially when I keep waiting and waiting and nothing seems to change. Despite how frustrated I may get, help me to stay put, knowing that you have me exactly where I should be today.

DAY 14

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Cor. 12:9)

Everybody wants to be strong. But if your physical health and appearance is all you invest your life in, then you’ll miss out on something that lasts forever—God’s kingdom. And you can’t fight for God’s kingdom using physical strength alone. The people who are really strong, the women and men who are world changers, honestly admit their limitations.

Their refrain is “Lord, I’m weak. And I need you.” Being a warrior is not about cockiness and attitude, not about six-pack abs and CrossFit, not about succeeding in life and winning everyone’s admiration or envy. Being a true warrior is about knowing the source of true strength. It’s about knowing your weaknesses and turning to God to empower you to be the person he made you to be.

Whether you think about it much or not, your spiritual Enemy wants to take you out. He's a master at making the strong become weak. Sometimes he does that by making us comfortable, secure, and safe, resigned to a mediocre life because it's familiar and doesn't require much from us. But is that really how you want to live?

On the other hand, God is in the business of making weak people strong. Your past isn't the most important thing. Your future is. If you want to live your life—really live it in a bold, passionate, life-giving way that's contagious—then don't compromise.

Fight. Every. Day.

God, you know my weaknesses, and I know you can transform them into your strengths. Today I will rely on your power and not my own to fight the Enemy.

DAY 15

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. (James 4:7–8)

Sometimes we fight and struggle and push against our addictions and ongoing temptations when we need to surrender—not to their power over us but to God’s power over them. We wouldn’t keep falling and slipping if it were possible to overcome these chronic battles on our own. But when we quit giving our issues power over us, and instead focus on our relationship with God, then we give him room to work in us.

If you want to be a man or woman of integrity, then maybe it’s time to submit to God like never before.

Maybe that's where your fight begins. Then with Christ's power, you'll be able to resist the devil and his temptations. Tragically, so many people do the opposite. They resist the promptings of God and give in to the temptations of the Evil One. But that will not be you. And it won't be me.

Instead, we will live with integrity. Because our lives are not about us. We will not gratify the self-centered lusts of our flesh because we are born of the Spirit. We will not allow God's loving truth to slide into the quicksand of popular opinion and allow ourselves to sink into lower standards. We will guard our peace and not allow others to rob us of our purpose, passion, and power.

Submit to God.

Resist the devil.

He will flee.

You will overcome.

Today I surrender my struggles to you, Lord, and trust your power to help me overcome them.

DAY 16

Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Ps. 37:4)

Some days you wake up and wonder how you ended up where you are in your life. You remember when you were younger and had a dream. You always thought, “One day I’m going to pursue that dream and I’m going to go for it and I’m going to take the chance.” You may have believed God gave you this dream and that he would provide the path you needed to reach this divinely appointed destination.

But when you look at your life now, it feels like you went off road and into a wilderness of distractions and diversions. Now you’re in a place where it seems like the ability to pursue that dream has passed you, and you feel like a failure because you thought by this point in your life you would be doing something different, something better, something more significant, something more meaningful.

Then one day you just looked up and you were nowhere close to where you thought you would be, where you thought God would lead you. No matter how disappointed you feel, or how far away you seem from your expectations from long ago, don't give up on your dream. If God has planted it in your heart, then he will lead you there, blazing a trail marked by his glory.

No matter how painful or impossible it seems, keep walking by faith.

Today, Lord, I will take the next step and trust you for where we're going and how I'll get there.

DAY 17

One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. (Ps. 27:4)

One of the secrets of growth is something I call “consistent variety.” To get better at anything, we must be consistent. Successful people do consistently what normal people do only occasionally.

If you want to get closer to God, consistently seek him. If you want to get healthy, consistently eat right. If you want to see your marriage improve, consistently treat your spouse with respect. Consistency matters. But so does variety.

For example, if you go to the gym consistently but only do the same exercises, your muscles will get used to it and your improvement will quickly diminish. It’s important to work out regularly, but you also have to change your workouts.

The same is true in your relationships. You will want to encourage those you love. But if you just say the same thing again and again, it won't mean as much. We must find creative ways to encourage and show our love.

When seeking God, we should pursue him daily. But don't just pray the same thing. Or even read the Bible in the same way. Consider praying in a different place. Read a different version of the Bible. Worship if you normally don't or find some new music that draws you to God.

To grow spiritually, make sure you consistently seek Christ, but mix it up. Today stretch your spiritual muscles and experience him in a fresh new way.

Forgive me, God, when I get stuck in a rut and keep approaching you the same way over and over again. Surprise me today with new ways of experiencing you.

DAY 18

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” (Matt 7:13–14)

The first time I remember encountering today’s passage, I was leading a Bible study for a group of guys in my fraternity. You may recall that I started this group as a PR move to change our bad-boy reputation. You know, sort of the thought that if a fraternity is hosting a Bible study, they can’t be all bad. The only problem was that I was not yet a Christian!

So when I came to this statement by Jesus, I hit a major wall. What in the world did he mean? It sure sounded like he was saying that the majority of people will go with the flow and take the route everyone else is taking, even though it leads to destruction. However, his followers aren’t like everybody else.

They will take a more challenging passage through the narrow gate. And waiting for them on the other side is new life. Jesus' words shook me up, planting seeds that later led to my getting on my knees on a campus softball field and inviting him into my heart as the Lord of my life.

But I've never forgotten the wonder, fear, and longing I felt when I first considered what it means to follow Christ and enter through the narrow gate.

What direction are you traveling right now? Are you on the twelve-lane interstate to destruction? Or on the narrow path toward God?

I'm committed to following you, Lord, even when I don't always understand where you're taking me or how I'll get there. Today I want to follow you through that narrow gate that leads to new life.

DAY 19

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8:28)

Even as you are reading these words on this very page, God is shaping you. You may not see it, you may not understand it, you may not be able to imagine how what you're going through could be redeemed.

But it can.

What does this verse promise us? In how many things? All things! Does all things include the good things? Yes! Does all things include the bad things? Yes! Does all things include things you are glad happened? Yes! Does all things include things you wish had never happened? Yes! In all things, God works for the good.

So here's another question: Does this verse apply to everybody? Actually, no. This verse makes it really clear that God works in all things to bring about good for those who love him, and who have been called according to his purpose.

The good news is, you love him. I know you do or you wouldn't be reading a devotion all the way to August tenth!

Because you are in Christ, you are a masterpiece created for the Master's purpose. He is the Potter. You are the clay. He's working all things for your good. Whatever you are going through today, thank God that he already knew it would happen and that he will use it to shape you into who he wants you to become.

Nothing is wasted with God.

I love you, Lord, and I will serve you even when I experience life's losses and daily disappointments.

DAY 20

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.” (John 10:14)

Indecision is often a huge barrier in our faith. Making decisions can be so draining. What school should I go to? Should I break up with this person I’m dating or try to work things out? Should I take this job or stay where I am? Should I buy a new car or put more money into this old one?

It’s encouraging to know that Jesus wants to speak to us. In John 10, Jesus shows us who he is—the Good Shepherd. The good news is that the Good Shepherd speaks. And not only does he speak, but the sheep know his voice.

If you need to make a decision, remember that Jesus wants to speak to you, and he does this in a number of ways. He will speak to you through his Word. He may speak through people. He might speak through circumstances. He could nudge you with his Spirit.

I always try to remember that the Good Shepherd guides the sheep. His job is to guide. My job is to follow.

When you are trying to make a decision for direction in your life, tell Jesus, “If you guide me, I will follow. Wherever you lead, I will go.”

I will listen for your voice today, Lord, and will follow where you lead me. Give me wisdom, discernment, and peace as I seek to make decisions that will always honor you.

DAY 21

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. (Ps. 119:105 NLT)

Sometimes when I'm making decisions about the future, I wish that God would give me more information to help make the decision easier. He already knows the future. Why won't he share more of it with me? During those times, I try to remind myself of today's verse from the Psalms.

When we seek him in his Word, God will often speak to us, prompting us on what steps we should take next. But if he is offering a lamp to our feet and light to our path, that may only help us for a few steps. And no more.

Most of the time we want more details about the future. However, it would probably be more than we bargained for. I'm guessing that God knows we wouldn't deal well with some of the details if we could see exactly what was coming. If he had shown me much of what I've had to endure leading the church, I would not have said yes to starting it more than two decades ago.

God's grace is always sufficient for today—or for the moment.

If you ever find yourself wanting more details, remember that God will show you all you need to make decisions that honor him. He may illuminate our path for two or three steps, but he likely will not show us steps four, five, or six. We have to take the first few before he'll show us what to do next.

As I make decisions in my life, Lord, I will trust you to illuminate the next step I should take. Forgive me when I want to see more than you are ready to reveal. I will wait on you to guide me.

PERSONAL PRAYER FOCUS

God has put us on the earth at this specific time for a reason. He says in Acts 17:26 that He determined when and where we would live. Knowing this, we can look at those around us at this specific time in history, and take personal responsibility to pray.

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

Pray for those in authority and those under your authority. Pray for those in your family and your circle of influence (anyone you're connected to). Write down the names of specific people and pray for them.

MY LIFE

CAREER _____

GOALS _____

FINANCE _____

NEXT STEPS _____

MY PRAYER LIFE

PERSONAL PRAYER _____
