

Also by Natasha Frazier

The Life Your Spirit Craves

Not Without You:

365 Days in the Lord's Presence

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Printed by Lightning Source, Inc.

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Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN: 978-0-9884521-2-1

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From the author

This book was written during my personal prayer and study time. My prayer is that you will grow in God during the next year and become more of who He has called you to be. As you set out on this journey, there will be many obstacles along the way; however, rest assured that God is always with you and is the source for everything that you need to overcome those obstacles.

Before you begin reading this book, know that you may start on any day of the week in any month of the year. The seventh day of each week is a *Day of Reflection*. On this day, you should meditate on the scripture reading, make note of what the Holy Spirit is speaking to you and apply that lesson to your life.

Remember that above all, God desires you! Choose to submit to His perfect will, love Him and love others in the way that He desires. May this book encourage you and help guide you along your spiritual journey for the next 365 days.

Peace and blessings to you!

Strength and Courage

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9 NIV)

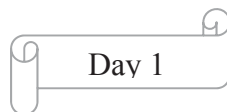
If you read the entire chapter, you will find that Joshua was commanded to “*be strong and courageous*” four times! Because of the repetition, this command must have been very significant. The Lord knew that Joshua would face many obstacles when he succeeded Moses as leader of Israel to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land.

Just as the Lord knew what Joshua would experience, the Lord also knows what you will encounter throughout your life. His character has not changed. He promised that He would never leave nor forsake you. Through your life’s journey, know that the Lord is right there with you and that He commands you to not be afraid but to be strong and courageous while trusting in Him.

Be encouraged to know that God loves you and His presence is always with you.

Prayer for Today: Lord, let me not forget that Your presence is always with me. Give me the strength to learn to trust and depend on Your promises and Your Word, for they are guidance for my life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Joshua 1; Deuteronomy 31:6



In His Presence

Then Moses said, “If you don’t personally go with us, don’t make us leave this place. How will anyone know that you look favorably on me—on me and on your people—if you don’t go with us? For your presence among us sets your people and me apart from all other people on the earth.” (Exodus 33:15-16 NLT)

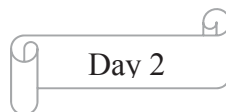
Oftentimes when we’re given an assignment to complete, we become anxious and worry. We become concerned about who will support us, or distract us or about the many obstacles that will come our way. Not completing it in time. Lacking what we need. Many obstacles trip us into habitual worry rather than diligence and faith.

As you meditate on today’s Scripture, focus on the fact that God planted the vision in you and He will see it through to completion. God is going with you! Don’t focus on what people around you may be thinking about you but focus on what God thinks. He thought enough of you to choose you. Know that God has planted a seed within you and He wants to see the fruit.

Be sure to stay in His presence seeking His will and direction. His presence sets you apart from everyone else. Staying in His presence will bring about His purpose in you.

Prayer for Today: Lord, I don’t want to be anywhere where Your presence is not! Help me to focus on You and what You have called me to do. Let me not be concerned about what others think but with what You think. I want to walk in Your will. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Exodus 33 and Psalm 32:8



I'm Listening

*And the LORD came and called as before, "Samuel! Samuel!"
And Samuel replied, "Speak, your servant is listening."
(1 Samuel 3:10 NLT)*

If you read the previous verses, you will see that Samuel has just discerned God's voice. Once he did, he made himself available to God to receive the message that God was giving him.

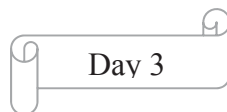
Quite often in our lives, we're so busy with tons of things that we don't even set aside time to hear what God is saying to us. We often pray but we rarely make time to listen.

If you desire a more intimate and meaningful relationship with your Savior, I encourage you to set aside a specific time in your day where you can commune with God uninterrupted: no TV, no spouse, no kids, no cell phone, no Internet or anything else that will distract you. Spend time reading the Word of God; this is how you hear from Him - through His word. Make yourself available to Him. I often find that it is those times when I'm by myself that I receive all of the inspiration, direction and encouragement I need from God. It is in those quiet moments that I receive my fill of Him.

God is waiting for you to make yourself available and say, "Speak Lord, I'm listening."

Prayer for Today: Lord, help me to remove distractions to focus on You. I need to hear from You and spend time in Your presence. Let me not neglect this precious time with You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: 1 Samuel 3:1-14



Window to Your Soul

“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.” (Proverbs 4:23 NLT)

It is important to monitor what you allow in your heart, because what is in your heart, determines what comes out of your mouth. Not only this, but what’s in your heart also determines the direction of your life.

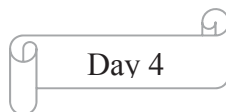
Be mindful of the things that you watch, read and listen to. These things manifest into thoughts and thoughts manifest into actions. Focus on what is pure and holy. See Philippians 4:8-9.

Our eyes and ears are the windows to our soul, and what we allow in them determines what we allow into our hearts. Once these things are in our hearts, they become a part of us. Luke 6:45 confirms that out of the heart flows the issues of life. Proverbs 23:7 (NJKV) further confirms that as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

Job spoke of making a covenant with his eyes (Job 31:1) to keep him from sinning. You too, can make a covenant with your eyes (and ears) so that you may be able to guard your heart from those things that are unlike Christ.

Prayer for Today: Lord, help me to focus on that which pleases You so that I may hear Your voice and continue to walk in Your will. Teach me to guard my heart by being selective about what I allow to come in through my eyes and ears. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Philippians 4:8-9 and Luke 6:45



Shift your thoughts

I will thank the Lord because he is just; I will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High. (Psalm 7:17 NLT)

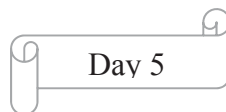
Regardless of how things are going in your life, it is always a good thing to have praise in your heart. Praising God often takes our minds off our circumstances and places our focus upon Him. God desires that we keep our focus on Him anyway.

Give thanks to God today just for being who He is. He is merciful, full of kindness, love and grace. Keep a song of praise on your heart for those times when life seems to be too heavy and you're overwhelmed with burdens.

I challenge you to shift your focus from your circumstances to your God -- who already knows what your circumstances are but desires more of you.

Prayer for Today: In the name of Jesus, Lord I come to You with praise on my lips and in my heart. Remind me daily to keep my focus on You and Your will for my life that I may walk along the path that You have predestined for me. May my praise be a sweet sound unto You. Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Psalm 34 and Psalm 9.



Victory belongs to you

His companion answered, “Your dream can mean only one thing—God has given Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite, victory over Midian and all its allies!” (Judges 7:14 NLT)

Fact: God has a plan for you.

Fact: God will give you guidance regarding this plan.

Fact: You have been given the victory and the enemy knows that you have been given the victory!

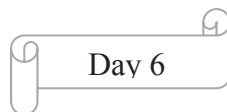
When I studied this passage, I did a little dance afterwards. Why? I think there is something very important about this story. You see, even though God had already told Gideon that He would give him victory, He also allowed Gideon to receive confirmation. The awesome part is that the confirmation came from the enemy’s camp. Wow! Life lesson: The enemy will fight you even though he knows that he will lose the battle. Therefore, you cannot become discouraged.

Although the voice of the enemy that you hear may not be as positive as Gideon’s confirmation, it is confirmation nonetheless. The voices of negativity, discouragement and defeat are not from God and are simply designed to get you off track. Don’t fall for it! Don’t lose focus!

All you have to do is be obedient to what you have been called to do. Fight! You already have the victory and the enemy knows it. It’s about time that you know it (and act like it) as well.

Prayer for Today: Lord, Thank You for the victory that You have given me. Thank You for giving me confirmation to keep me on track. Help me to always discern Your voice and follow it. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Judges 7 and Romans 8.



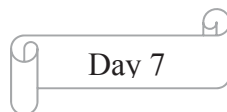
~Day of Reflection~

Devoted to God

Read: 1 Chronicles 28:9 and Psalm 5

Meditate: Have I been devoted to God in prayer and deeds?

Apply: What will I do today that will help me become a more devoted follower of Christ?



In-Between

The Lord heard Elijah's prayer, and the life of the child returned, and he revived! (1 Kings 17:22 NLT)

In 1 Kings 17:8-24, the widow and her son had very little to eat and Elijah went to her asking for food. She explained to Elijah that she didn't have any food but only a little flour and oil to make the last meal for her and her son. Afterwards they were going to die for lack of food. Then Elijah gave her instructions from the Lord (v. 13-14) to not be afraid but to use what she had to prepare a meal for her and her son – but to feed him first! As a mother, my initial thought would have been "I have to feed my child first!" I don't know what her thoughts were but the Bible says that she did as she was told (v.15).

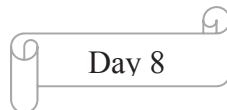
Because of her obedience, she was blessed!! She received exactly what was promised to her (v. 16). All was well until her son became sick and died (v.17). Lord, You have been faithful and have done just as You said. Now, You're taking my son away? Those were her thoughts. She questioned what Elijah did to her and why he came there (v.18).

But the Lord is faithful and gave restoration. Although her son died, Elijah took him upstairs to pray for him (v.21). The Lord heard his prayer and returned the child's life back to him (v. 22) Praise God!

While you're waiting on God to restore you, whether in this life or the next, just remember that He is faithful! Continue to seek Him in all that you do!

Prayer for Today: Lord, give me wisdom and understanding to trust You in the "in-between." Help me to remain faithful and steadfast to Your word regardless of what's going on in my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: 1 Kings 17:8-24.



Priority

*“You must worship no other gods, for the Lord, whose very name is Jealous, is a God who is jealous about his relationship with you.”
(Exodus 34:14 NLT)*

As we enter into a New Year or any new beginning with resolutions, goals, plans, purpose and fresh desires, we must remember not to forsake our time alone with God. (Many people include rebuilding their relationship with God or growing closer to Him as part of their "change" for the New Year or other life goals) Although we attend church services, watch TV sermons, listen to gospel music in our homes, cars and cubicles, none of these things can take the place of genuine time spent alone with God.

While God wants us to have success and the desires of our hearts, He wants us to be in relationship with Him more than anything.

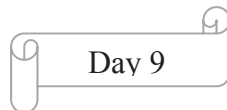
Think about your earthly relationships. How do you maintain them? By spending time with your loved ones, right? That is exactly what we must do with our Heavenly Father. Set aside time to pray each day. Set aside time to study God's Word. A friend recently mentioned to me that midnight was the best time for her to study. Each one of us must decide what is best for us and make spending time with God a priority. When are you least distracted?

So today, I encourage you to examine your *busy* schedule:
Where are you spending your time?
When are you spending meaningful time with God?
Are you making your relationship with Him a priority?

Remember that God loves you and wants the best for you every year, not just this year! God's greatest desire is you getting to know Him. So as you chase after your dreams, be sure to always chase after the Dream Giver!

Prayer for Today: Lord, thank You for Your faithfulness. Give me the mindset to always chase after You. Help me clear my schedule to make time for You. Show me areas where I am wasting my time and can devote that time to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Psalm 37:4 and Exodus 34



The Company you keep

*Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."
(1 Corinthians 15:33)*

Have you ever found yourself saying a new word? It doesn't have to be a bad word but just a new word that you've picked up from someone else. You've heard the word so many times from this person that it has become a part of your speech.

Have you ever found yourself doing things you haven't done before? Have you found yourself in places you have never gone? Have places that once made you uncomfortable become comfortable? Have you really ever been in a place and thought, "*How did I get here?*"

Once you're around something or someone for a long time, you become like that thing or person. Whether good or bad, you're going to change. I would encourage you today to make sure that you're exposing your mind and spirit to the right things and people. . . people who are going to encourage you to grow and help you proceed in the right direction. Do not be fooled to think that the ways of those you are with most won't become a part of you, because they will. See our key verse.

Prayer for Today: Lord, give me wisdom in assessing the company that I keep. Let me not keep the company of those who will pull me away from You as I only desire to be more like You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Proverbs 9:10-12 and Proverbs 11: 1-11.

Live in Expectancy

Finally the seventh time, his servant told him, "I saw a little cloud about the size of a man's hand rising from the sea." (1 Kings 18:44 NLT)

In the earlier verses, Elijah began to pray for rain. After he prayed, he sent his servant to look out toward the sea to see if he saw any rain coming. The Bible tells us that he did this seven times.

It is very important to be persistent and steadfast in our faith. When you have an unwavering mindset, it properly positions you to receive all that God has promised and helps build your faith. You may have to keep praying for what you desire; but remember that the Bible tells us in Matthew 7 to keep on praying, knocking and seeking God.

Keep an attitude of expectancy like Elijah when he prayed for rain. Although you may not see or receive it the first time, do not give up. Keep praying. Keep your vision sharp. Believe God. If He said it, it's going to happen.

Prayer for Today: In the name of Jesus, Lord I ask that You help me to remain steadfast in my faith even when it seems that it is taking much longer to receive that which I've been asking for. Strengthen me to trust in You without doubt. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: 1 Kings 18:1 and 41-46; Matthew 7:7-8.

Predetermined Purpose

“And why have I called you for this work? Why did I call you by name when you did not know me? It is for the sake of Jacob my servant, Israel my chosen one.” (Isaiah 45:4 NLT)

In Isaiah 45, the passage teaches us that Cyrus was chosen by the Lord to restore his city and free the Lord’s people. Cyrus was chosen before he even knew the Lord (v.4). This confirms that our purpose—our destiny—is determined way before we meet the Lord, decide to follow Him and give our lives over to His purpose.

Verse 2 tells how the Lord will go before Cyrus to do His part in assisting Cyrus to accomplish the purpose God had predetermined. If you read further, the Bible teaches us that we should not question or argue with the Lord about why we have been given the assignments in which He purposed for us. The Lord himself will guide our actions (v. 12) and that is assurance enough. You should know that oftentimes, it may not be revealed to you as to why the Lord has chosen you for a specific task especially when the task doesn’t line up with your background or education. When this is the case, you have to truly rely on God’s power and guidance in order to accomplish what He has called you to accomplish. The scripture reveals that God will go before you; you just have to follow. Remember that your assignments are meant to give God glory and build up His people.

Prayer for Today: Lord, thank You for Your greatness and Your sovereignty. Thank You for Your purpose for my life. Even before I came to know You, You already had a plan for me. I seek You today so that You may speak to my heart. I want to know You more and what You have purposed for me. Thank You for choosing me. Help me to serve You with joy and boldness. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Isaiah 45:1-13

Getting to know God on another level

Then a certain prophet came to see King Ahab of Israel and told him, "This is what the LORD says: Do you see all these enemy forces? Today I will hand them all over to you. Then you will know that I am the LORD." (1 Kings 20:13 NLT)

Many times in life (as in our key verse), God does things or allows certain things to happen in our lives so that we will know who He is in all of His power. It is not to hurt or destroy our spirit or faith in Him. The victory isn't about us but about Him.

We may experience loss, (jobs, friends, finances, family, etc.) which oftentimes leaves heartache, pain and brokenness. However, there is always restoration; God heals the hurt caused by these experiences and our relationship with Him is strengthened. As a result of loss situations, we become better acquainted with God and develop a level of faith and intimacy like never before. I even went through a period where I was laid off and didn't find employment for six months. In the midst of that, I had to learn to trust God and what He was doing in me. It was during that time that my faith was strengthened and I came to know Him better.

Be confident in knowing that sometimes, things happen because God desires that you serve Him wholeheartedly. Sometimes things happen so that you will experience God in a fresh, new way. He desires that you praise Him. Most importantly, God desires you!

Prayer for Today: Lord God, I know that You desire more of me. Help me to cling to You and Your Word. I desire to be more like You so mold me into who You have called me to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: 1 Kings 20:13-21 and 28-30.

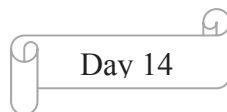
~Day of Reflection~

Attitude

Read: Genesis 4:6-7; Numbers 14:1-4; Habakkuk 3:17-19

Meditate: Have I allowed my attitude to destroy relationships? Has my attitude led to poor decision making?

Apply: What can I do today that will help me maintain a positive attitude and loving spirit?



Excuses lead to destruction

The prophet said to him, "This is what the Lord says: Because you have spared the man I said must be destroyed, now you must die in his place, and your people will die instead of his people." (1 Kings 20:42 NLT)

When you do not destroy (get rid of) the sin in your life, the sin will destroy you.

You must be careful to do exactly what you have been called to do and not try to preserve your "favorite" sin(s). It is a lot easier to sin less in some areas as opposed to others. Sins that give you the greatest pleasure are the ones that you tend to try to rationalize why you still do them. You'll say things like, "God isn't through with me yet" or "I'm not perfect." Essentially these are excuses to make you feel better.

Consider what happened to Saul when he preserved the best of the cattle, sheep and goats when God commanded him to destroy everything. He lost his favor with God, and God then chose David to be king.

Don't miss out on the greater blessings that God has for you because you're holding on to something that is destroying you.

Prayer for Today: Lord, You know where I am weak. I thank You for being forgiving, merciful and kind. Thank you for not dealing with me as I deserve. Your grace and mercy are truly amazing! Thank You for loving me. Give me strength to get rid of those things in my life that do not please You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Colossians 3: 5-10; 1 Samuel 15; 1 Kings 20:31-34

God answers prayers in His own way

But Naaman became angry and stalked away. "I thought he would certainly come out to meet me!" he said. "I expected him to wave his hand over the leprosy and call on the name of the LORD his God and heal me! Aren't the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than any of the rivers of Israel? Why shouldn't I wash in them and be healed?" So Naaman turned and went away in a rage. (2 Kings 5:11-12 NLT)

Here's a little background: Naaman went to Elisha to be healed of his leprosy. He went to Elisha's house and waited at the door for him. Instead of coming out, Elisha sent a messenger giving him instructions on what he must do to be healed: wash seven times in the Jordan River. As you can see from today's meditational verses, Naaman became angry because he *thought* he would be healed in a different way. He thought that things would play out differently. Doesn't this same thing happen to us as well?

We seek God for a closer relationship with Him, new careers, new opportunities, financial stability, etc., and He answers us. But what happens? The answer comes in a way that we didn't expect. We've prayed about this thing for so long that we've already come up with *how* God is going to do it! Right? Then all of a sudden, we're in for a big surprise! We become frustrated, angry or even disappointed.

Just because things don't happen as we thought they would, we shouldn't get discouraged. God's thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways. (Isaiah 55:8) I encourage you to be receptive to God's answers to your prayers even when they don't come in the way you expected. God knows what is best for you and His plan for your life is far greater than anything you can imagine.

Prayer for Today: Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus, open my eyes and heart to Your blessings and Your answers to my prayers even when the answers aren't as I thought they would be. Help me find comfort in knowing that You have my best interest in mind and that Your plan for my life is far greater than any plans I could ever make. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: 2 Kings 5 and Isaiah 55:8

Idols are forbidden and useless

“Their gods are like helpless scarecrows in a cucumber field! They cannot speak, and they need to be carried because they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of such gods, for they can neither harm you nor do you any good.”(Jeremiah 10:5 NLT)

An idol is anything or anyone that you put before God. Throughout the Old Testament, God repeatedly speaks about the Israelites, His chosen people, who make their own gods by carving them out of wood, gold and other man-made items. These gods do not speak, do not walk; they do no harm nor do any good.

Who would want to serve a god that needed to be carried around and could not do anything for them, including saving them? These gods cannot make any promises; they cannot hear or answer prayers, neither can they provide protection and comfort in times of trouble.

The truth is that we often put many things and people before God, creating little gods. We often praise the things He has given us and not God Himself.

Spend more time getting to know the Lord because He is truly awesome. There is absolutely no one like Him. There is no need to carry Him around because He is the one carrying you.

Prayer for Today: Lord, please forgive me for putting things and people before You. Let me be mindful of my relationship with You and Your place in my life. Remove those things from my life that distract me and often try to take Your place. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Jeremiah 10: 1-16 and Exodus 20:3-7

Do the God thing

But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the LORD. He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping to escape from the LORD by sailing to Tarshish. (Jonah 1:3 NLT)

The Lord gave a message to Jonah and instructed him to go to Nineveh to give that message to the people there. Jonah heard the Lord but decided that he would attempt to hide from the Lord by going in the opposite direction and boarding a ship that would take him to a different place.

Jonah's actions had consequences. He was chosen by the Lord to carry out a specific task and he ran. Because of his disobedience, he caused the storm in the lives of those around him. When he revealed to the sailors aboard the ship that his disobedience caused the storm, they still tried other things to make it through the storm instead of getting rid of the problem (Jonah).

We can learn a few things from this situation: 1. It is likely that if there is a person in your life causing the storm, they already know it and they know what needs to be done for it to go away. They need to get off your boat! 2. Not only is it important that you are following God, but it is also important that those in your circle are doing what God is calling them to do as well. When those around you are running from God, their disobedience can cause storms in your life. 3. Don't be afraid to throw them off your boat if they reveal to you that they are running from the Lord. Do not attempt other methods to calm the storm in your life when you know who or what is causing it. Get rid of the culprit.

Prayer for Today: Lord, give me discernment so that I may know when there is someone in my life causing storms because they are running from You. Give me courage to not assist them in running from You but to push them back to You. Empower me to continuously walk in the path that You have set for me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Jonah 1

Success and Faithfulness

Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before or after his time. He remained faithful to the LORD in everything, and he carefully obeyed all the commands the LORD had given Moses. So the LORD was with him, and Hezekiah was successful in everything he did. (2 Kings 18:5-7a NLT)

This passage of Scripture mentions three important things about King Hezekiah's character that we can attribute to the Lord being with him and giving him success in everything that he did. King Hezekiah trusted the Lord, remained faithful to the Lord and carefully obeyed all the Lord's commandments.

Throughout life, you will encounter many situations that will test your faith and tempt you to stop trusting the Lord, lose faith or do things outside of God's will. However, if you want the Lord to be with you and grant you success in everything, you must do your part and remain steadfast in your faith.

Find strength in the power of God that has already been planted within you as King Hezekiah discovered. That is the key to experiencing the life that God has predestined for you to live.

Prayer for Today: Father in heaven, give me the strength to trust You, remain faithful and obey Your Word even when it's hard to do so. Let Your power rest within me so that I may live out my faith in You every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: 2 Kings 18:1-8

Who do you trust?

“Then the Assyrian king’s chief of staff told them to give this message to Hezekiah: “This is what the great king of Assyria says: What are you trusting in that makes you so confident? Do you think that mere words can substitute for military skill and strength? Who are you counting on, that you have rebelled against me?” (2 Kings 18:19-20 NLT)

When Assyria began to attack Judah, the Assyrian king sent a message to King Hezekiah of Judah. The Assyrian king was essentially taunting and talking trash to King Hezekiah. He told the people of Jerusalem to not be fooled into trusting in the Lord because none of the gods of the other nations could save their people; therefore, the people of Judah would be insane to think that the Lord could rescue Jerusalem from him!

This is just like the enemy. He knows that you are trusting in the Lord and will say and do anything to get you to doubt God’s power. I encourage you to stand strong; trust in the Lord regardless of what’s going on around you and regardless of what the enemy is whispering or shouting in your ear! Have faith that the Lord will take care of you, provide for you and sustain you regardless of the enemy’s threats. Remember that the enemy can only do what the Lord allows him to do. He has to get permission from your Father to mess with you. Remember Job? Be confident and continue trusting that this is the Lord’s battle and He already has the victory!

Prayer for Today: Oh how I love You and trust in Your faithfulness my Lord! Thank You for being in charge of my life. I thank You that the enemy cannot even come near me unless he gets permission from You. In knowing that, I trust that You will not put anything in my path that I cannot bear. Continue to strengthen me in Your Word. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: 2 Kings 18:13-37 and Job 1

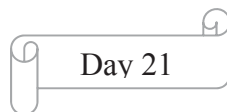
~Day of Reflection~

Trust

Read: Proverbs 3:4-7

Meditate: Do I have difficulty trusting God? Why? Am I holding on to past hurts?

Apply: What can I do to eliminate doubt and fully trust God?



Faith and Mercy

“Go back to Hezekiah, the leader of my people. Tell him, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you, and three days from now you will get out of bed and go to the Temple of the LORD. (2 Kings 20:5 NLT)

Earlier in this chapter, the Lord had just sent Isaiah to King Hezekiah to warn him to get his affairs in order because he was about to die. After hearing this, the king prayed to the Lord and reminded Him of how he had always been faithful in serving Him and always did what was pleasing in the Lord’s sight.

As you can see from today’s meditational Scripture, the Lord changed His mind! He gave Hezekiah fifteen more years of life!

There are two important things to learn here: Faithfulness has its advantages and God’s mercy is everlasting. King Hezekiah’s faithfulness before his sickness gave him favor with God. Faith activates favor! He didn’t allow his circumstances to determine how or if he would continue to serve God. In addition, God is forever merciful. He answered Hezekiah’s prayer with kindness and compassion.

Prayer for Today: Heavenly Father, forgive me for my unfaithfulness. Help me to live a life that is pleasing to You at all times, in deed and in spirit. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: 2 Kings 20:1-10 and Hebrews 11

When you know more, become more

You were sorry and humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I said against this city and its people—that this land would be cursed and become desolate. You tore your clothing in despair and wept before me in repentance. And I have indeed heard you, says the LORD. (2 Kings 22: 19 NLT)

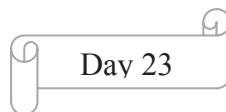
Earlier in this chapter, the court's secretary found the Book of the Law and read it to the king. When the king heard what was written in the Book of the Law, he humbled himself, repented and sought the Lord.

When we learn more about God and His Word, we are responsible for becoming better Christians. We must humble ourselves, repent and turn away from those things that do not please the Lord and seek Him.

First Peter 1 encourages us in the same way: we must live as God's obedient children and not live to satisfy our own desires. We did that when we did not know better but now that the Word of God is planted within us, we must adhere to it.

Prayer for Today: Heavenly Father, forgive me for living to please my fleshly desires. Help me to walk in Your ways at all times because You expect me to live a holy life. Let me not bring shame to Your holy name. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: 2 Kings 22:8-20 and 1 Peter 1:14-16



Stand out

There was a man named Jabez who was more honorable than any of his brothers. His mother named him Jabez because his birth had been so painful. He was the one who prayed to the God of Israel, "Oh, that you would bless me and expand my territory! Please be with me in all that I do, and keep me from all trouble and pain!" And God granted him his request. (1 Chronicles 4:9-10 NLT)

It is quite interesting that as you read through this chapter, the writer abruptly stops giving the lineage to talk about Jabez. The writer of this book does not speak about the character of any other person but Jabez. What makes Jabez stand out? The Bible says that he was more honorable than any of his brothers and he was the *one* who prayed to God. The Bible does not tell us what makes him more honorable and why he had such favor with God.

Although there are a lot of unanswered questions about why Jabez was chosen, we do know that he was a praying man. This tells us that having communication with God (a prayer life) is very important. The book of Hebrews teaches that God rewards those who diligently seek Him! We can see that this is true because the Lord granted Jabez's request: to expand his territory, be with him in all that he does, keep him from trouble and pain.

Spend much time in prayer seeking God's face and His will. But equally important, spend time communing with Him - not because you want Him to move on your behalf but just because of who He is.

Prayer for Today: Lord I seek You because I want to be more like You and be all that You have created me to be. I want to be able to hear You clearly and walk according to your Will. You are so worthy of my praise and my time. Help me to focus on building a more meaningful prayer time with You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Hebrews 11:6, Proverbs 15:29 and Matthew 21:22

Holy Invitation

So David did not move the Ark into the City of David. Instead, he took it to the house of Obed-edom of Gath. The Ark of God remained there in Obed-edom's house for three months, and the LORD blessed the household of Obed-edom and everything he owned. (1 Chronicles 13:13-14 NLT)

The Ark of God represents the presence of God. While the Ark of God was in Obed-edom's house, the Bible tells us that his household and everything he owned was blessed.

Although we do not have a physical Ark of God presence, the Lord's presence is always with us. We don't have the ark because we have something *better*. The sacrificial system is gone because of Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice (see Hebrews). It is through Christ that we no longer need such temporary elements as the temple furniture, because we have direct access to God Himself. It isn't our doing at all, but wholly God's grace. Welcome the presence of God into your home and receive the blessings of God.

How do you welcome the presence of God into your home? Set the atmosphere by living according to the Word of God and serving only Him; acknowledge Him in everything that you do. He promises to never leave nor forsake you.

Prayer for Today: Lord, I welcome Your Holy Spirit to dwell in my heart and in my house. I want to experience all of the blessings that You have for me and my family. Teach us to obey Your will and walk in Your ways. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Deuteronomy 31:8; Psalm 139:7 and Psalm 16

Proceed with prayer

“Because you Levites did not carry the Ark the first time, the anger of the Lord our God burst out against us. We failed to ask God how to move it properly.” (1 Chronicles 15:13 NLT)

The first time David and his officials attempted to bring the Ark of God back to the City of David; Uzzah was killed because he reached out his hand to steady the Ark to keep it from falling to the ground. This angered the Lord and caused Him to kill Uzzah right there! All of this happened because David did not follow God’s instructions on how to bring the Ark back safely.

We experience spiritual demise in many situations because we do not seek the Lord first to obtain guidance in how to proceed. When we fail to properly worship God and seek His face, we find ourselves struggling. Consider married people who are both selfish, they fight for their own way and end up in mutual pain rather than mutual blessing. The person who steals or lies is afraid he’ll get caught; the person who gossips has a hard time trusting others. In each of these situations, no one is seeking or trusting God.

Whatever you have before you today, seek the Lord first. He desires to hear from you to guide you in the path that He has predestined for you. Proceed with prayer.

Prayer for Today: Heavenly Father, forgive me for not always proceeding with prayer. I want to experience the abundant life that You have prepared for me so let me not forget to acknowledge You in all things. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Psalm 34:10, Matthew 6:33 and Proverbs 3:5-6

The sin of friends

But Joab replied, “May the Lord increase the number of his people a hundred times over! But why, my lord the king, do you want to do this? Are they not all your servants? Why must you cause Israel to sin?”
(1 Chronicles 21:3 NLT)

King David ordered Joab to take a census of all the people of Israel. This was counted as sin and both David and Joab knew this. However, in today’s key verse, we find that Joab questioned David’s decision but, David insisted that Joab proceed. David’s sin brought consequences on the entire nation of Israel and not just David himself.

Likewise, the ramifications of the sins committed by those you are connected to will affect you as well. As a Christian, you have a responsibility to your brothers and sisters to warn them of the consequences of their sin (although they are likely already aware). You are the salt of the earth. Be bold and courageous to remind them of who they are in Christ!

Be mindful of who you are connected to and the type of lives they live because you are likely to reap the harvest (good or bad) of what they are sowing.

Prayer for Today: Father in Heaven, give me the spirit of discernment so that I may know who I am spending my time with. Allow me to be a light and encouragement to Your people. Let me be bold and steadfast in my faith so that I may please You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: 1 Chronicles 21:1-17; Matthew 5:13

~Day of Reflection~

Accountability

Read: Ezekiel 18:30; Matthew 12:36; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Luke 17:3

Meditate: Each of us will have to give an account to God for our words and actions. Am I mindful that God holds me accountable for what I know?

Apply: Choose a trustworthy friend that will support you and hold you accountable to living according to God's principles. This person should not have a problem telling you that you're wrong (in a loving manner) to help you get back on track.

Serve God willingly

“And Solomon, my son, learn to know the God of your ancestors intimately. Worship and serve him with your whole heart and a willing mind. For the Lord sees every heart and knows every plan and thought. If you seek him, you will find him. But if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.”(1 Chronicles 28:9 NLT)

In this particular passage, King David began giving instructions to Solomon on the plans for building the temple. The instructions given to Solomon in the meditational Scripture are very powerful and can apply to our own lives.

Learn to know God intimately. In order to know God intimately, you must spend time with Him by praying and studying His Word. Worship and serve Him with your whole heart. The Word of God says that those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. To worship and serve wholeheartedly, allow yourself to be led by Him and only Him.

Worship and serve Him with a willing mind! Make a decision to serve God. Serve Him because of who He is and His love for you. To get to this place, you need to know Him intimately and give the Lord your heart. If you seek Him, you will find Him. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that the Lord rewards those who diligently seek Him.

Prayer for Today: Heavenly Father, as I seek You with my whole heart, please reveal yourself to me as You promised in Your Word. Help me not to waver but to trust and serve You wholeheartedly with a willing mind. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Jeremiah 29:13; Hebrews 11:6; 1 Chronicles 28

How long are you going to wait?

Then Joshua asked them, “How long are you going to wait before taking possession of the remaining land the Lord, the God of your ancestors has given to you?” (Joshua 18:3 NLT)

How long are you going to wait before you take possession of the life you were called to live? God gives each one of us assignments throughout our lives. Your assignment this year may not be the same as your assignment last year or the next year. In every season of our lives, we are called to demonstrate God’s love in different ways but it is up to us to seek God to see what that looks like. Learn to discern, understand and obey His voice.

Once you are aware of what you should be doing in this season of your life, accept and pursue it wholeheartedly. Do not become discouraged or disheartened by how big or small you think the assignment is; your desire should be to please God and *love* people not please them. Oftentimes, as Christians, we get caught up in seeking praise and validation from people; this type of behavior is distracting and unproductive. Stay in alignment with the assignment that God has given you in this season of your life. Whatever that is, do it with all your heart unto the Lord.

Prayer for Today: Heavenly Father, thank You for the calling that You have on my life. Thank You for the reassurance that it is all about You and no one else. All glory belongs to You. I seek to please You with my life and live according to the way You have called me to live. Keep me from getting caught up in things that do not matter and do not bring You glory. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Joshua 18: 1-3; Isaiah 49:1 and 4; John 10:27; Colossians 3:23 and Jeremiah 29:11



Achieving God-given dreams

“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the Lord. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.” (Isaiah 55:8 NLT)

I have a friend who once considered giving up on her dream. She made several unsuccessful attempts to achieve her dream and decided to take a safe route that would get her in the neighborhood but not at her “address” (as my pastor would say). As the Holy Spirit reminded me of this Scripture, I shared it with my friend. I’d like to share this with you: Even though you’re going down the path chasing your dream and you experience road blocks, don’t give up. Don’t allow difficulties to destroy your dreams.

Dreams are God-given and He gives us vision to make them happen. We must spend time in His presence studying and praying to receive guidance and direction. Find a place to spend quiet, quality time with the Lord. He will surely speak when we are ready to listen and obey. We learn to discern God’s voice by spending time studying His word. God will not tell us anything that is contrary to His word.

Let’s not get so far removed from God that we don’t hear His voice and follow His way. Let us also not make the mistake of hearing His voice and not recognizing that it is God speaking to us. His thoughts and ways are not ours. Even when it seems like it is taking longer than expected to accomplish your goal, there is a lesson to be learned that will better prepare you for where you are going. Just because there is delay, doesn’t mean that it won’t happen. Don’t give up! If it’s from God, it shall be accomplished!

Prayer for Today: Father in heaven, thank You for Your power and Your wisdom. Cleanse my heart and mind that I may be able to hear You clearly and determine where You would have me to go. I only want what You want for my life. Teach me to delight in Your will and Your ways. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: John 10

Turn around

*At times I might shut up the heavens so that no rain falls, or command grasshoppers to devour your crops, or send plagues among you. Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.
(2 Chronicles 7:13-14 NLT)*

In this passage of Scripture, we learn about some of the ways the Lord disciplined the Israelites because of their sin. They did not always experience prosperity and fruitfulness; their sin caused God to shut up the heavens. Likewise, our sins will oftentimes cause God to do things to get our attention so that we will humble ourselves and return to Him.

The Lord promised the Israelites that He will hear from heaven, forgive their sins and restore their land if they became humble, prayed, sought His face and turned from their wicked ways. God desires the same things of us today: humility, repentance, prayer and worship. He requires wholehearted devotion because without fully turning to Him and giving up the sin, we end up in the same place learning nothing from the previous consequences.

Take a moment to humbly seek God's face and forgiveness. Strive to sin less and worship more.

Prayer for Today: Heavenly Father, I praise Your holy name. Please forgive me of my sins and help me to fully turn away from them so that I may honor You in all that I do. I thank You for Your forgiveness and restoration, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Psalm 51 and Hebrews 12:1

I want to see You

Then they scoffed, "He's just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us." They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him. (Mark 6:3 NLT)

It is amazing how people will discount you when they do not know or understand the calling that has been placed over your life. Re-read today's key verse. "He's just a carpenter," they said of Jesus but little did they know, He is actually the Messiah.

We often fail to see Jesus for who He is in our lives because He doesn't present Himself the way we think He should. Consider the moment when Jesus walked on water and called Peter to get out of the boat. Peter asked if it was really Jesus because He wasn't expecting Jesus to be on the water. He then stepped out of the boat by faith to meet Jesus on the water but started to sink when he took his eyes off Christ.

We will constantly miss the Lord if we continue to put Him in a box. If we can see Jesus in all of His glory, our own lives will fall into place and we will begin to live according to the way God intended for us to live.

Prayer for Today: Heavenly Father, help me to see You in all of Your glory. Let me be receptive to Your Holy Spirit. I want to live a faithful and abundant life that pleases You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Mark 6:1-6 and 2 Chronicles 15:2

Temptations from within

When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came. (Luke 4:13 NLT)

As we learn from today's key verse, Satan is always looking for opportunities to tempt us. Do not be fooled; he is always looking for ways to trap you. It is best to be prepared by keeping your heart and mind filled with the Word of the Lord. This is why it is so important to meditate daily on God's Word.

Commit to spending time in prayer and studying God's Word each day. Keep your spiritual tank full. God has given you everything you need to be equipped for all of Satan's schemes. Satan uses your innermost desires to cause you to sin. See James 1:14-15. You must not give him room to use these desires by replacing the desire for those sins with desires for the things of God.

Prayer for Today: Father in Heaven, I ask that You give me strength to overcome the evil desires in my heart that Satan uses to draw me away from You. Help me to become more like You by removing those things from me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Additional Scripture reading: Luke 4:1-13 and James 1:12-15

