

A stone archway with a metal grate on either side, leading to a dirt road that stretches into the distance under a cloudy sky. The foreground is a cobblestone path.

Draw Near

**A 40-DAY GUIDE
TO EASTER**

DR. ED YOUNG

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TO EASTER



the **winning** walk

DR. ED YOUNG

Dear Friends,

Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection are the heart of the Christian faith. The 40 days leading up to Easter Sunday are referred to as Lent. Unlike the joyful anticipation of the arrival, or Advent, of Christ at Christmas, Lent is a solemn examination of our sinful hearts and contemplation of what Jesus did for us on the Cross. The culmination of this season is the magnificent celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on that Day of days, Easter Sunday.

This devotional booklet has been prepared to serve as a companion for your prayer time. The selections are from various experiences, anecdotes, and teachings from my sermons. I pray they will be uplifting as you draw nearer to Him during this holy season. May God bless you during your Lenten experience.

His and yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Young". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that loops back under the name.A photograph of a dirt road leading through an open gate. The gate is made of stone pillars and metal bars. The road is wet and reflects the light from a bright, hazy horizon. The sky is overcast and the overall scene is peaceful and hopeful.

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

DAY 1

Spiritual Inventory

DO YOU LOVE GOD?

"And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments." | John 2:3

Do you love God? I would be quite surprised if you said "No." In fact, I believe most people would reply, "Yes, I most certainly love God." But, there is a simple test that tells us how much we really love God. The test has nothing to do with church attendance, or time spent in prayer or Bible study or singing praise songs. Instead, it has everything to do with obedience. "If you love Me," Jesus said, "you will keep My commandments." Obedience is God's "love test." With that in mind, let me ask you again, "Do you love God?"



**Ask God to help you pass His
"love test" with flying colors.**

DAY 2

Spiritual Inventory

AN INDEPENDENT AUDIT

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts..." Psalm 139:23

Corporations have long recognized the value of an independent audit to uncover any financial wrongdoing and identify assets and liabilities. This kind of honest, intentional assessment makes positive change possible. In the same way, through the process of confession, we are "independently audited" by God Himself. When our wrongdoing is revealed, we become aware of our need for forgiveness in specific areas. Then, through confession and turning away from the sins God reveals to us, we take steps to prevent them from happening again. So, why not take some time alone today and ask God to audit your life and show you the results. He wants to help you make positive changes that will strengthen you as an asset to the Kingdom and keep you close to Him.



**Reach out to God and ask Him
to give you the courage to undertake
an honest inventory of your life.**

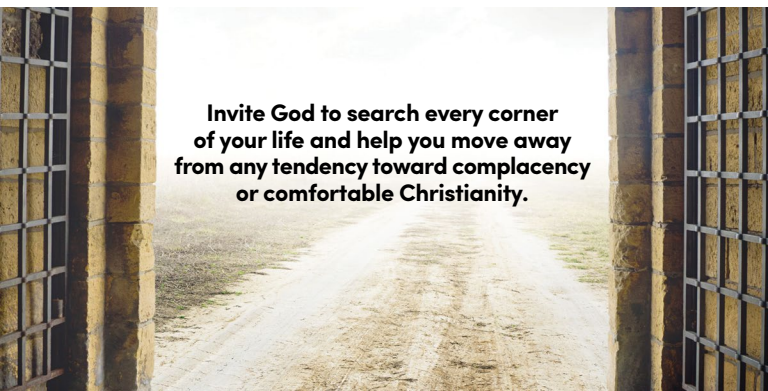
DAY 3

Spiritual Inventory

HIGHER GROUND

"For I am confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:6

My dad had a country store. Every year, we would close down the store to take inventory. It was a tough job because we had to count every single thing in the store. Sometimes we need to be bold enough to take a searching inventory of our lives as well. If you're tired of what I call "comfortable Christianity" and truly want to grow and get onto higher ground with God, you need to take personal inventory. Get by yourself, just you and God, and invite Him to shine the light of His truth into every corner of your life. It's exacting, and it takes courage – but it will be a thrilling step toward freedom and victory in your daily walk with God.



**Invite God to search every corner
of your life and help you move away
from any tendency toward complacency
or comfortable Christianity.**

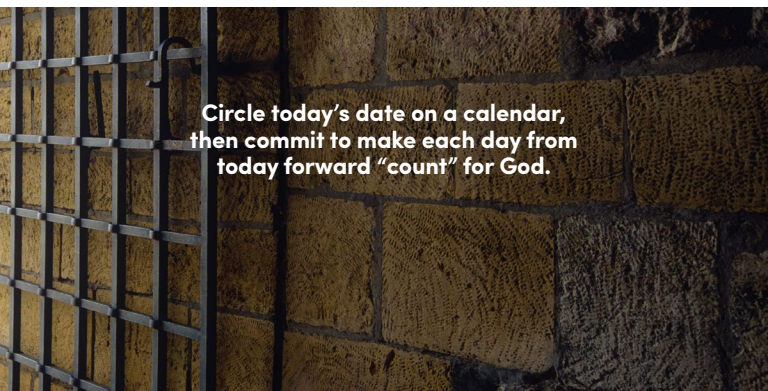
DAY 4

Spiritual Inventory

NUMBER YOUR DAYS

“So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.” Psalm 90:12

Recently, I was talking with a man who is at church whenever the doors are open. He told me he had been away from the Lord for 64 years, and now that he has found Christ, he wants as much of Him as he can possibly get. You see, he is making up for lost time – for the years that passed without salvation, peace, and fullness. Today’s scripture tells us we are to number, or measure, our days, so we can present to God a heart of wisdom and a life of meaning. Do you number your days? Do you focus on eternal things as much or even more than the things of this world? Remember, only what you – and only what I – do for God in Christ will stand the test of time.



**Circle today’s date on a calendar,
then commit to make each day from
today forward “count” for God.**

Sunday

*"Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name;
worship the Lord in holy array." Psalm 29:2*

God has given us seven days in each week, but He asks us to take one day out of the week to rest, to reflect, to recover, and to worship Him. Don't treat this day like every other day of the week. Sunday should be a joyful time, a privileged time. Set aside this special day to give honor and glory to the Almighty who has given us everything!


DAY 5

Confession

THE GOD OF SECOND CHANCES

"The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness." Lamentations 3:22-23a

Lou Gehrig was one of the greatest baseball players in history. He was a gentleman in the game, and never argued balls and strikes with an umpire. On one occasion, however, after taking a pitch that was called "strike three," he had a word with the umpire before heading back to the dugout. After the game, reporters asked the umpire what Lou had said. The ump replied, "He said, 'I wish I had that one over again.'" How many times have you and I echoed those same words, as life has thrown pitches our way that we wish we could have over again? Scripture assures us that, although we can't go back, we can begin again...every day. So, look for assurances of God's unceasing lovingkindnesses and unfailing compassion today. He is giving you and He is giving me a much-needed second chance.



**Thank God for His lovingkindness
and for the opportunity to experience
His compassion and faithfulness
each and every day.**

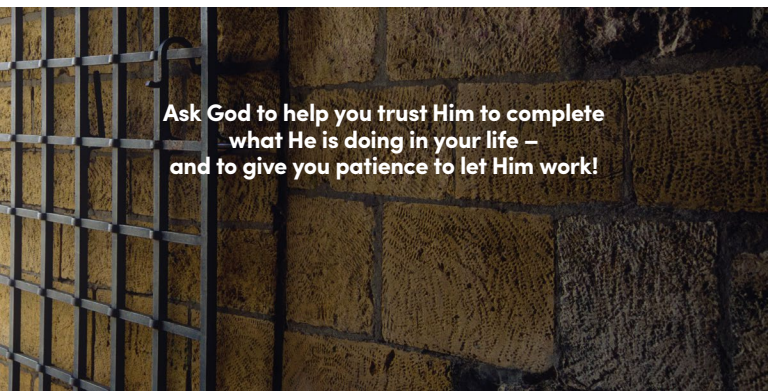
DAY 6

Confession

BE PATIENT

"However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it was shaved off." Judges 16:22

Samson's hair began to grow again! That's great news, because it tells us that forgiveness is God's business. But it also tells us that restoration is a process that takes time. Even after forgiveness has taken place, it will take time to rebuild those spiritual disciplines in our lives. It also takes time to rebuild broken relationships. But don't become impatient about this. Recall that it took time for Samson's hair to grow and for his commitment to be renewed so that God could use him again. But God did use Samson – and He did so in a mighty and powerful way. Thank God for His more-than-amazing grace that both forgives and restores.



**Ask God to help you trust Him to complete
what He is doing in your life –
and to give you patience to let Him work!**

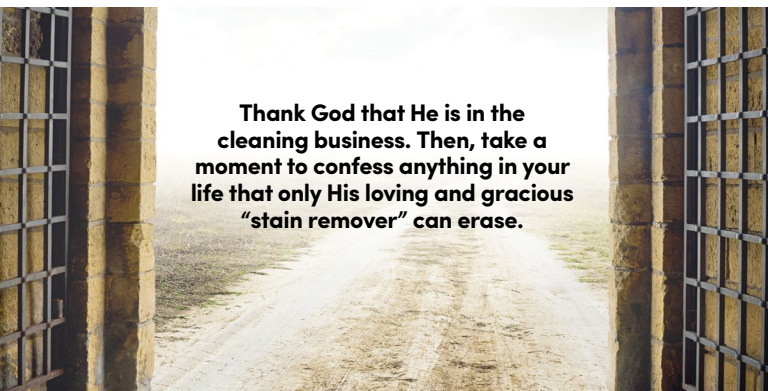
DAY 7

Confession

HOPELESSLY STAINED

"Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord. 'Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be as wool.'" Isaiah 1:18

You are about to make an all-important presentation at work when you notice it: an ink stain the size of a baseball on your crisp white shirt. There is nothing you can do to hide or remove the mark. You are hopelessly stained! Every person alive is sin-stained, and there is nothing we can do ourselves to hide it or remove it. Only Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is equipped to remove sin's stain. The good news is that Jesus is in the cleaning business! His clean-up procedure is called salvation, and it takes place when we, by faith, receive Jesus Christ into our life. So, call on Him and confess your sin. He will clean – and keep on cleaning – you from sin's stain.



Thank God that He is in the cleaning business. Then, take a moment to confess anything in your life that only His loving and gracious "stain remover" can erase.

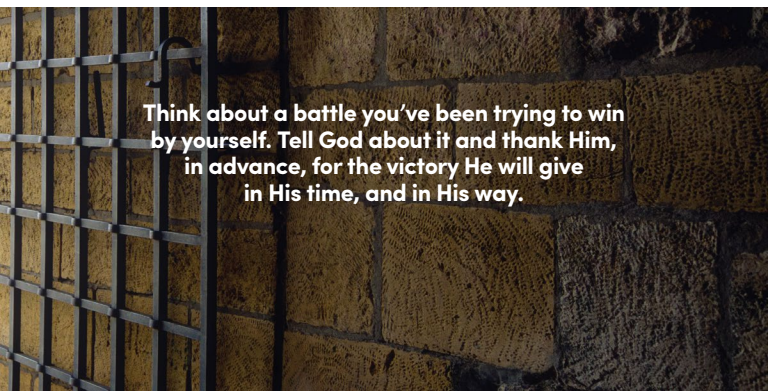
DAY 8

Confession

SPIRITUAL BATTLES

*"...for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh,
but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses."
2 Corinthians 10:4*

In every life there is a Jericho. You know what that is? It is that thing that would block you from becoming all that God wants you to be. Whether it is a besetting sin, a habit, or an attitude, our Jericho will block our way to the full blessing of God. As long as we try to scale the walls and knock them down using our own resources, we will fail. We cannot win spiritual battles with weapons we have borrowed from the world's arsenals. Instead, recognize how impossible it is to handle the situation on our own. Then, just be patient, be quiet, and soon – at God's command – you will be able to shout the shout of faith that will bring the wall crashing down.



**Think about a battle you've been trying to win
by yourself. Tell God about it and thank Him,
in advance, for the victory He will give
in His time, and in His way.**

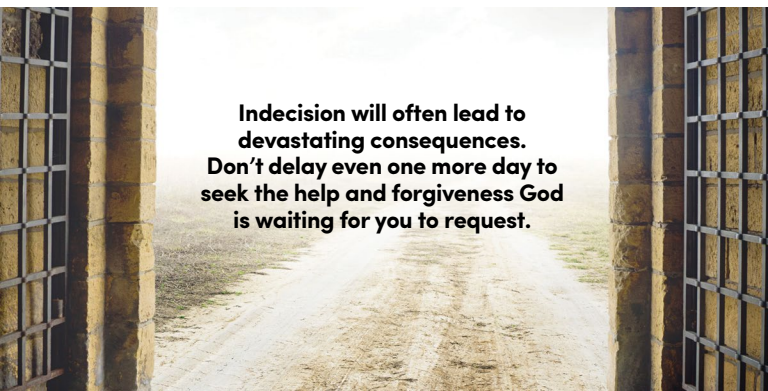
DAY 9

Confession

WITHOUT DELAY

"Thus says the Lord, 'In a favorable time I have answered You, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.'" Isaiah 49:8

The more you hear the truth and refuse to respond to it, the tougher it gets to respond and to live by it. Think of your conscience as a square. Every time you sin, that little square turns and the corners of that square get knocked off, and there is pain. As you continue to sin, the pain persists for a while. But, over time, that square gets smoothed out and becomes a circle – and you find that you can sin and no longer feel the pain or the need to deal with it. Don't let that happen! Don't put off making a full surrender to Christ. Today is the day of opportunity, of salvation, of new life. Don't miss it.



Indecision will often lead to devastating consequences. Don't delay even one more day to seek the help and forgiveness God is waiting for you to request.

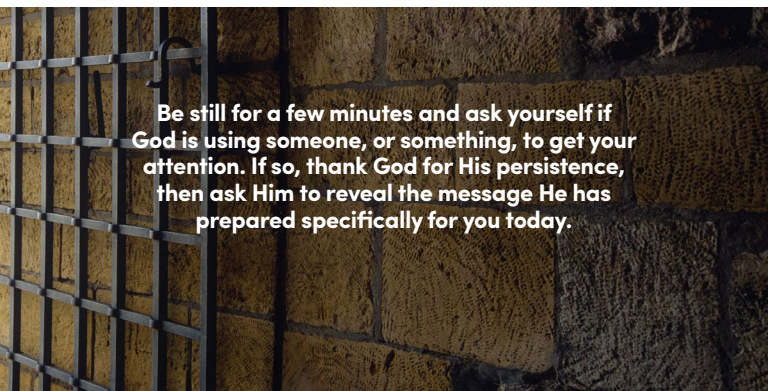
DAY 10

Confession

TALKING TO YOU

"I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have preserved my life." Psalm 119:93

We are Phi Beta Kappa in rationalization, in being defensive, and in blaming others. We put things in our closet of forgetfulness rather than deal with truth, even when it is piercing and accurate. I remember a cartoon years ago. It showed the pastor, and his arm was about 30 feet long. It extended all the way to the back row of the church. His finger was pointing right at a man seated there, and the man's wife punched him and said, "I think he's talking about you." Is God using something – or someone – to get your attention? He loves you so much He will use almost any means possible to communicate His truth to you. Commit right now to receive it and to act on it.



Be still for a few minutes and ask yourself if God is using someone, or something, to get your attention. If so, thank God for His persistence, then ask Him to reveal the message He has prepared specifically for you today.

Sunday

"And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed." Romans 13:11

How can you honor God in times of corporate worship? Start praying with the person who prays, singing with the person who sings, reading the Scripture on the screen, and getting involved in what's happening in the service. Tune in and say, "Lord God, speak to me. I need a word from You today." Come to church with that kind of anticipation, and I guarantee God will speak to your heart every single time.

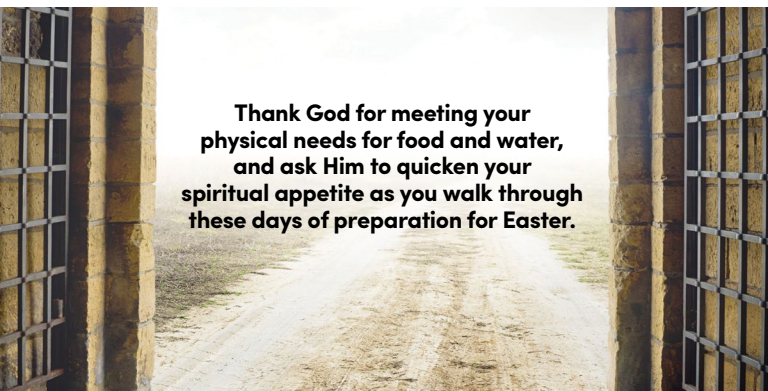
DAY 11

Spiritual Hunger & Thirst

HOW'S YOUR APPETITE?

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Matthew 5:6

Have you heard of the "rule of threes"? This rule states that we can go without air for about three minutes, without water for about three days, and without food for about 33 days. If that is the case, most of us have never experienced true physical thirst or hunger. What Jesus is saying in this Beatitude is that we need to be thirsty for righteousness and develop a passion for moral living. If we have that kind of passion, our lives will be filled because we will be full of God, and full of Christ, and full of His Spirit. Life will definitely not be boring! There will be an excitement in our lives, and meaning, and peace. For what are you thirsting? For what are you hungering?



**Thank God for meeting your
physical needs for food and water,
and ask Him to quicken your
spiritual appetite as you walk through
these days of preparation for Easter.**

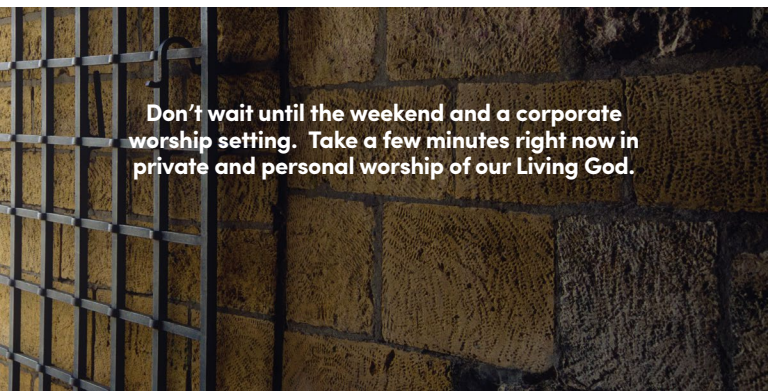
DAY 12

Spiritual Hunger & Thirst

ARE YOU THIRSTY?

"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" Psalm 42:1-2

In these verses, we are given a picture of a deer running from those who would hunt down the animal. He has been running so long that thirst has set in and he is at the point of exhaustion. David states that his desire to know God and feel His presence is so strong it's like that deer looking for water. Have you ever experienced that kind of passion to be in God's presence? Whatever the occasion, how incredible it is that we can come into the very presence of God and fellowship with Him. Just thinking about that makes me thirsty. How about you?



Don't wait until the weekend and a corporate worship setting. Take a few minutes right now in private and personal worship of our Living God.

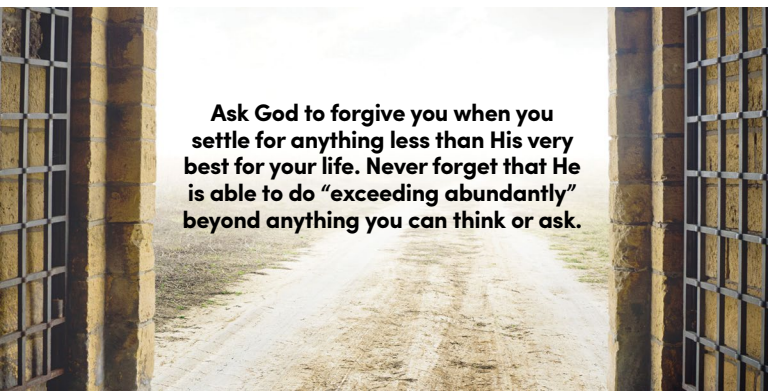
DAY 13

Spiritual Hunger & Thirst

MEASURING UP

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might..." Ecclesiastes 9:10

In Mississippi, where I was born, there is a little town by the name of Soso. Years ago, when they were building the railroad, a group went ahead to scout out a place where they could set up camp. Upon returning, they were asked if they had found a good spot. And they replied, "We found a place. It has some water, but not enough. It has some shelter, but not what we'd expect. The place we found to build is just so-so." Just so-so. Not quite adequate? If that is how you would describe your spiritual life right now, don't camp there! God is at work in your life, so press on, and He will turn your so-so life into "so much more" than you could ever imagine.



Ask God to forgive you when you settle for anything less than His very best for your life. Never forget that He is able to do "exceeding abundantly" beyond anything you can think or ask.

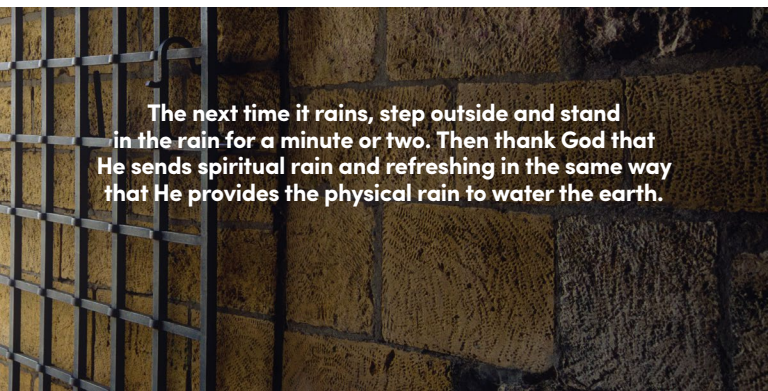
DAY 14

Spiritual Hunger & Thirst

PARCHED!

"I stretch out my hands to You; My soul longs for you, as a parched land." Psalm 143:6

We all go through droughts – dry periods in our lives. This was true of David in our scripture passage. His dryness was not due to a physical thirst for water. Instead, David was spiritually parched. He said his cure was to “spread out his hands” to God, meaning he prayed. When we are parched, praying is not high on our priority list, but digging the well of worshipful prayer is the way to quench the thirst of a dry heart. So, when you experience spiritual drought, set aside time to wait in God’s presence. Immerse yourself in the worship of the Most High. Stretch yourself out before Him so He can rain on your parched heart and spiritually renew your soul.



The next time it rains, step outside and stand in the rain for a minute or two. Then thank God that He sends spiritual rain and refreshing in the same way that He provides the physical rain to water the earth.

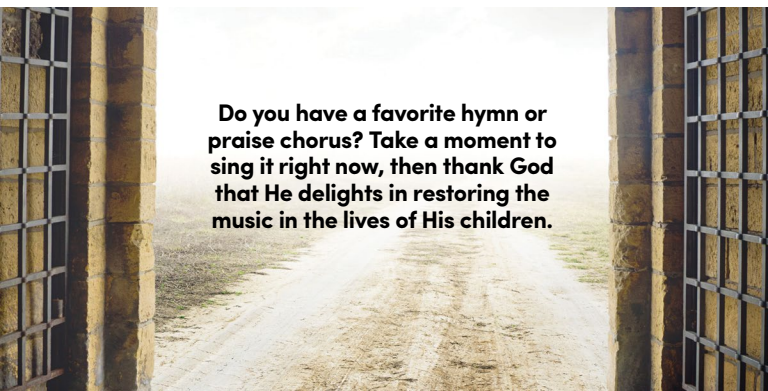
DAY 15

Spiritual Hunger & Thirst

GOD UNDERSTANDS

*"How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?"
Psalm 137:4*

The Israelites were in captivity in Babylon, and their captors asked them to sing one of the songs of Zion. But the Israelites wept instead. When the Babylonians asked what had happened to their song, they replied that they had "hung their harps" on a willow tree because they felt God had forsaken them. Let me ask you: is your harp on a willow tree today? In other words, are you beaten up, confused, and feel that God has abandoned you? When that happens, remember that God understands and cares. He is with you at the bottom just as He is with you at the top. Knowing He is in control will enable you to sing songs in the daylight - and songs in the night. He is Lord.



Do you have a favorite hymn or praise chorus? Take a moment to sing it right now, then thank God that He delights in restoring the music in the lives of His children.

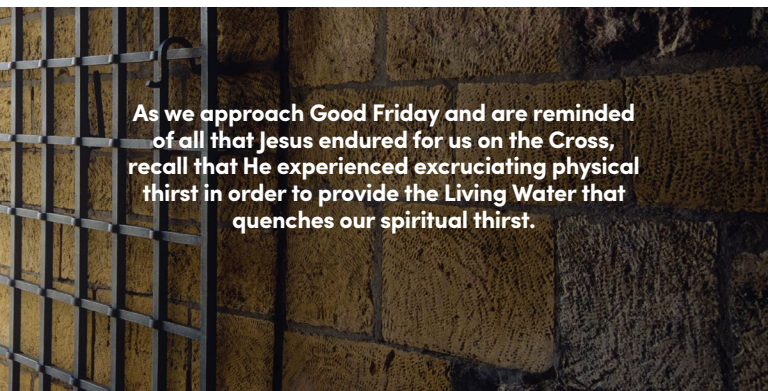
DAY 16

Spiritual Hunger & Thirst

OPEN YOUR MOUTH

"Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.'" John 7:37

To understand spiritual thirst, imagine an individual in the desert. His canteen is empty, his lips are parched, and he is desperate for water. Just as God provided water in the wilderness to quench the physical thirst of His people, Jesus offers living water to quench our spiritual thirst. Psalm 81 says, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." The genius of the Christian life is opening your mouth, your heart, and your life wide – and just drinking that water of the Spirit. Suddenly you will begin not only to live, but to also experience the power of God in every area of your life.



As we approach Good Friday and are reminded of all that Jesus endured for us on the Cross, recall that He experienced excruciating physical thirst in order to provide the Living Water that quenches our spiritual thirst.

Sunday

*"...not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another."
Hebrews 10:25*

One of the oldest living things in the world is the Sequoia tree. You never see a sequoia tree by itself. These trees grow in clusters, with their roots intertwined with the roots of other trees so they can withstand even a strong storm. That sounds a lot like the fellowship of the church, doesn't it? We come together in worship, we listen to one another and relate to one another. We laugh together and share one another's sorrow. And most of all, we grow together as we devote ourselves to the fellowship of the Body of Christ.


DAY 17

Simplicity

TAKE A COFFEE BREAK

"And after He had sent the multitudes away, He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone." Matthew 14:23

When I was a boy, we had an old radio that had been in our family for a long time. On occasion, static would come on that radio, and my dad would just smack the side of it to make the static go away. Could it be that when storms or difficulties come into our lives that God is just "slapping us" on the side of the head to say, "I want you to slow down and get quiet, just for a moment, because I have something to say and you're so filled with static you can't hear Me speak." Build a little silence into your life today. Go outside with a cup of coffee, or step outside at night and just breathe in the night air. Solitude is a rare commodity, but how we need it in our daily lives.



**Turn down the volume on the things
that are filling your mind and
consuming your thoughts right now.
Only then will you be ready to
hear God clearly.**

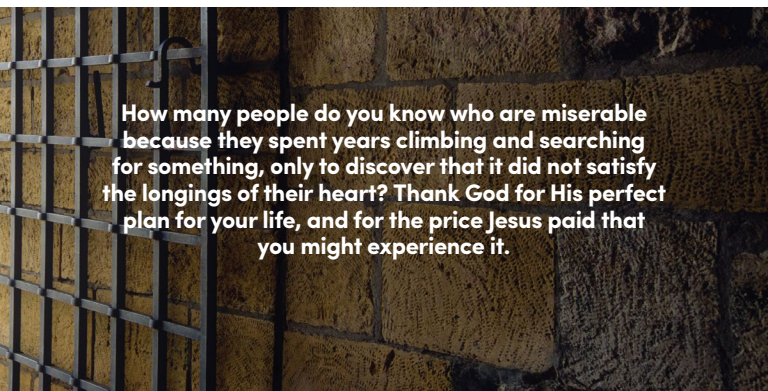
DAY 18

Simplicity

I WANT! I WANT!

"For I know the plans that I have for you," declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope...'" Jeremiah 29:11

Poet/artist William Blake has a classic etching featuring a little man climbing a ladder toward the moon. The caption to the picture is "I Want! I Want!" If we're honest, we identify with Blake's little man. We come into this world "wanting." We're restless, so we climb and want, and we climb and want, yet we are never satisfied. And when we get to the top of the ladder, we realize what we've wanted will not deliver the satisfaction and meaning we're searching for. We've wasted our life on things that don't fulfill the purpose God has for us. Are you on that ladder? If so, carefully step down and begin again today, focused on God's purpose and plan for your life. His way is the only way to live a life of meaning.



How many people do you know who are miserable because they spent years climbing and searching for something, only to discover that it did not satisfy the longings of their heart? Thank God for His perfect plan for your life, and for the price Jesus paid that you might experience it.


DAY 19

Simplicity

GOD'S SMOKE DETECTOR

"And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span?" Luke 12:25

Anxiety is like smoke. When anxiety comes into your life, follow it to its source in the way you look for the source of smoke. Anxiety comes when we take something that is good, and we put that in the place of God. We take a good gift from God – our vocation, our children, a hobby – and we make that the thing we look to for happiness or fulfillment. When that good thing we've put in the place of God is in jeopardy or is removed from our life, it makes us anxious. So, any time you have anxiety, follow the smoke. More than likely, you will find the source in that which caused you to move God out of the center of your life and put some "good thing" there instead.



During this Lenten season, take a few moments each day to check for any indications of anxiety in your life. Now is the time to track them to their source – and get rid of them once and for all!


DAY 20

Simplicity

JUST BREATHE

"In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat – for He grants sleep to those He loves." Psalm 127:2

Stress leads to burnout, and burnout often leads to depression. How does that happen? We take on more and more things – more meetings, more activities – that sap our energy and demand our best. We think, "I can handle this, I've got it together." Doctors tell us that stress – not heart disease or cancer – is the number one killer in the Western world. Stop for a moment right now, take a deep breath, and decide that before you add "one more thing" to your plate, you will do what the Psalmist prescribes and "sleep on it."



What can you take off your plate that will enable you to focus on God and spend more time with Him each day this week?

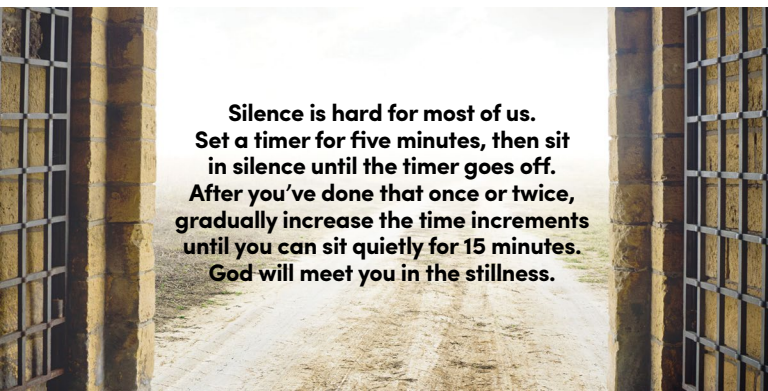
DAY 21

Simplicity

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

"My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation." Psalm 62:1

How at ease are you with silence? Do you have to have a little background noise or media distraction when you are by yourself? Solitude and silence are considered spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith. They are inseparable partners that enable us to surrender control and learn to trust our Heavenly Father, who sees and knows all. So, let me encourage you to spend 10-15 minutes alone today with no agenda other than to wait on God in silence. After all, in the presence of One who loves and treasures you, words are unnecessary. In fact, they can even become a distraction. So be still, be quiet, and wait in silence for God and God alone.



**Silence is hard for most of us.
Set a timer for five minutes, then sit
in silence until the timer goes off.
After you've done that once or twice,
gradually increase the time increments
until you can sit quietly for 15 minutes.
God will meet you in the stillness.**


DAY 22

Simplicity

ROUGH SAILING

"Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence?" Psalm 139:7

When God instructed Jonah to go to Nineveh, we read that Jonah, instead, went to Joppa and boarded a ship to Tarshish. Let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that the minute you decide to walk away from God and the plan He has for your life, you are going to find plenty of ships going in the wrong direction. The Devil's Travel Agency has the motto, "We can always make room for one more." We get on board these ships all the time. One ship we can call "Busyness." We fill our schedules, make lots of appointments, and engage in all kinds of activities. But if we get on this ship, we do so at the risk of wandering away from where God wants us to be – and not filling our hearts, or the hearts of others, with a sense of God's presence.



**Do you need to repent of the pride of busyness?
Our perceived lack of time can be a trap that keeps us
from spending quality time alone with God each day.**

Sunday

*"There is no one holy like the Lord; indeed, there is no one besides You, nor is there any rock like our God."
1 Samuel 2:2*

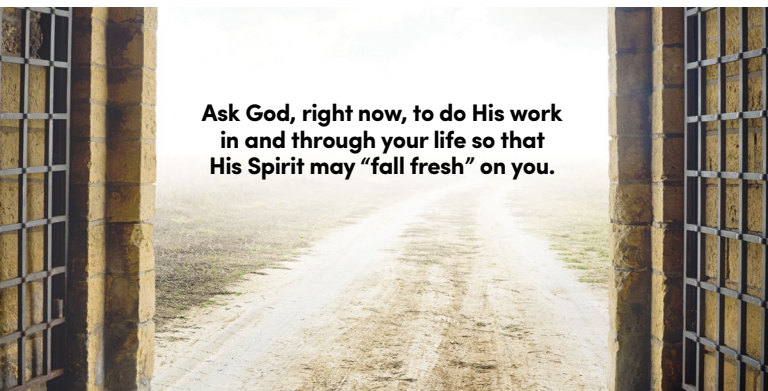
Remember that God has said, "Be still and know that I am God." So, take a time out to get your priorities right and recall that our number one priority is to seek the Kingdom of God. How do we do that? The answer: Worship. Sit at the feet of Jesus, submit to His Word, listen for His voice, and worship Him.

DAY 23
Prayer

MELTED & MOLDED

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth." John 16:13

I love the old hymn, "Spirit of the Living God." In it there is a prayer that says, "Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me." That prayer should be on our lips every day. Melt. Does God need to melt away any barriers or prejudices in your relationships? Mold. Is there anything God needs to shape in you so He can fill you, then use you in ways that are sometimes quiet, sometimes public and dramatic? Can you pray today and say, "Lord, melt me, so you can mold me. Then fill me, and use me any time, anywhere, any place, and under any circumstances."



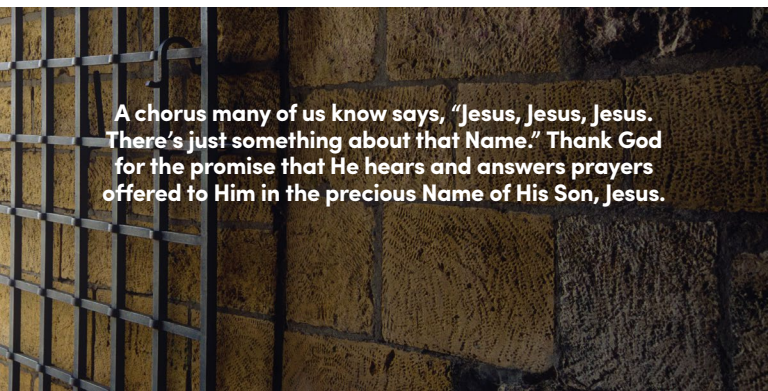
**Ask God, right now, to do His work
in and through your life so that
His Spirit may "fall fresh" on you.**

DAY 24
Prayer

A BLANK CHECK

"And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." John 14:13

The little secret in this verse is the phrase, "in My Name." In other words, what we ask for in prayer must be in accordance with the character of Jesus. We can confidently pray in the Name of Jesus. We know He is involved, that He is in the middle of the situation, and that His will is being accomplished. So, the question is, "Are your prayers being specifically answered?" Jesus gives us a blank check. But before we fill it out, we must first present our request in His Name, so that Our Heavenly Father will receive all the glory.



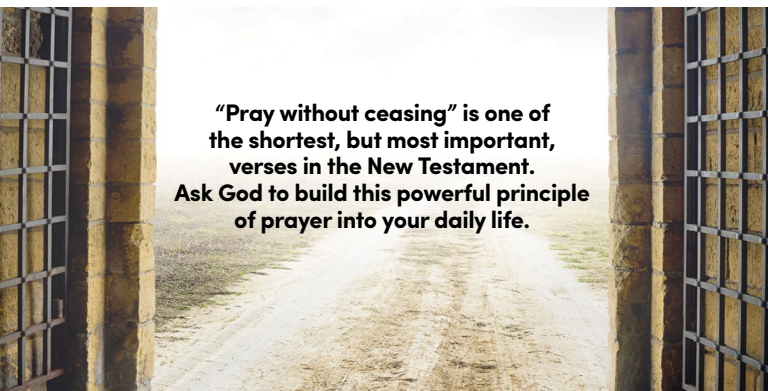
A chorus many of us know says, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. There's just something about that Name." Thank God for the promise that He hears and answers prayers offered to Him in the precious Name of His Son, Jesus.

DAY 25
Prayer

A GOOD HABIT

"...let Thine ear now be attentive and Thine eyes open to hear the prayer of Thy servant which I am praying before Thee now, day and night." Nehemiah 1:6

Before undertaking a major challenge, Nehemiah prayed "day and night." In other words, he prayed "without ceasing." That is the picture of someone with a hacking cough that goes on all throughout the day until it becomes a habit. We just do it unconsciously. This is how we ought to pray. We are to pray constantly and faithfully over and over, until our prayers are so much a part of who we are that we remain on praying ground throughout the day. What happens when Christians do not pray? Nothing. Learn to live on praying ground and God will not only hear your request, He will answer in accordance with His perfect plan and purpose.



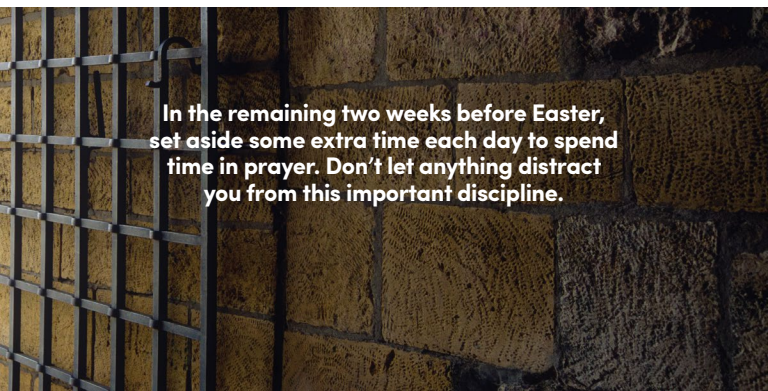
"Pray without ceasing" is one of the shortest, but most important, verses in the New Testament. Ask God to build this powerful principle of prayer into your daily life.

DAY 26
Prayer

DIVINE MATH

"But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made." Luke 10:40

Far too often we relate to Martha and feel that we are too busy to take time to pray. But I have found that something supernatural happens the moment you spend time in Bible study and in prayer. Just as Jesus took the loaves and fish and multiplied them, He can multiply the time we spend with Him. Try it. Spend quality time with God and see how He will extend your day. Your mind will be clearer, and you will accomplish more. God takes the time we spend with Him and multiplies it to help us meet the challenges of the day.



In the remaining two weeks before Easter, set aside some extra time each day to spend time in prayer. Don't let anything distract you from this important discipline.

DAY 27
Prayer

OUT OF THE CAGE

"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." 2 Corinthians 3:17

One summer Bob Bartlett, a wonderful explorer, filled a boat with rare birds, put them in cages, and began to transport them to America. Somewhere in the Atlantic, the boat encountered rough water, and one of the birds got loose. They watched the bird fly away to apparent "freedom." But, several hours later, the bird returned. He couldn't find any land, so he came back to the ship. What had once been a prison was now the only way this bird could get across the ocean. We can be confident that Jesus, as our Savior, is our Rock and our strength, and that following Him is the only certain path to freedom. We need to pray, "Make me a captive, Lord, so that I can be truly free."

A photograph showing a dirt road leading out of a stone cage with metal bars. The road is illuminated by a bright light source, possibly the sun, creating a strong glow and long shadows. The cage is made of stone pillars and metal bars, and the road leads away from it into a bright, hazy landscape.

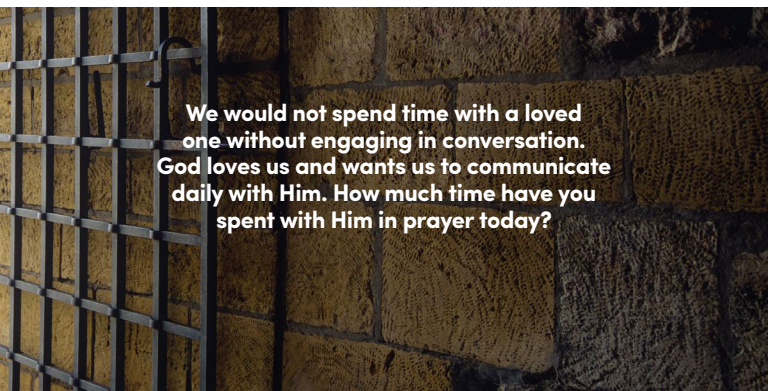
**Thank God today that He sent His Son
so that we can be free, "free indeed"
as we read in John 8:36.**

DAY 28
Prayer

FULLY DEVOTED

"...rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer." Romans 12:12

A country doctor had a sign over his office door that read, "First visit \$25. All other visits \$10." A man who was known to be pretty frugal went to see the doctor. He greeted the doctor by saying, "It's good to see you again." The doctor proceeded to examine the man but didn't say anything. When the doctor finished the exam, the man was upset and asked what he was supposed to do. The doctor replied, "I want you to do the same thing I told you to do the last time you were here." God wants us, as His children, to be devoted to prayer. Only when we make prayer a regular discipline can we receive the "just in time" provision He has for us each day.



We would not spend time with a loved one without engaging in conversation. God loves us and wants us to communicate daily with Him. How much time have you spent with Him in prayer today?

Sunday

"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place."

2 Corinthians 2:14

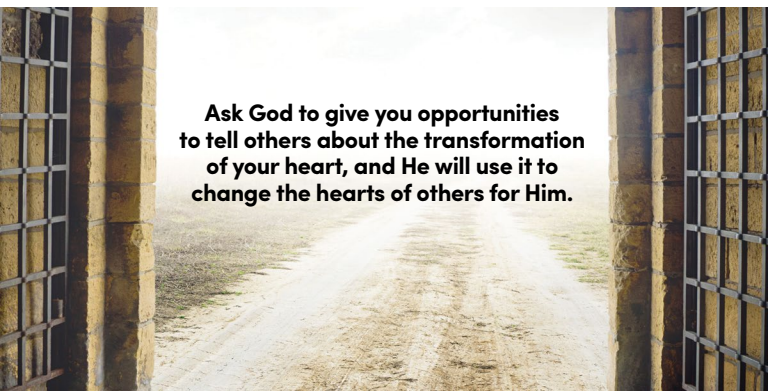
When God does business in a heart, there is a sweetness that goes up from it. There is also a radiance, a joy, and a spontaneity that goes up as well. I think there is something special you experience in the presence of people who pray and love and believe and sing and seek to know God and to walk in His steps. You can just feel it. That is the aroma of worship, a fragrance that is pleasant to the nostrils of the Almighty.

DAY 29
Witness

THE POWER OF A STORY

"What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and, indeed, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3

One of the greatest witnesses in all the Bible is a Samaritan we know as the "woman at the well." During her encounter with Jesus, she learned He was the Messiah, who had come to offer the living water of eternal life. She returned to her city to share this good news. As a result, many Samaritans came to know Jesus as the "Savior of the World." The woman at the well was not educated, and she had limited biblical understanding. She simply told her story. If you are a Christ-follower, you have a story as well. Your testimony is simply your story of your life-changing encounter with Jesus.



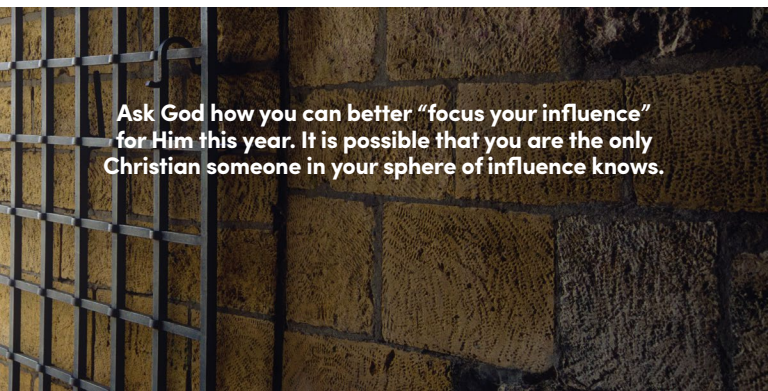
**Ask God to give you opportunities
to tell others about the transformation
of your heart, and He will use it to
change the hearts of others for Him.**

DAY 30
Witness

SYMBOLS THAT TEACH

"Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15

In the New Testament, there are several symbols for the Kingdom of God. Jesus says it is like salt, like light, like water, like leaven, and like a key. What do these five things have in common? One thing: penetration. Salt penetrates meat to preserve it. Light penetrates darkness to illumine it. Water penetrates the soil to refresh it. Leaven penetrates dough to help it rise, and a key penetrates a lock to open it. As Christ-followers, we are not to let the world get into us. But God has placed us in the world for one very clear reason, and that is in order to penetrate our world with the Good News of the Gospel.



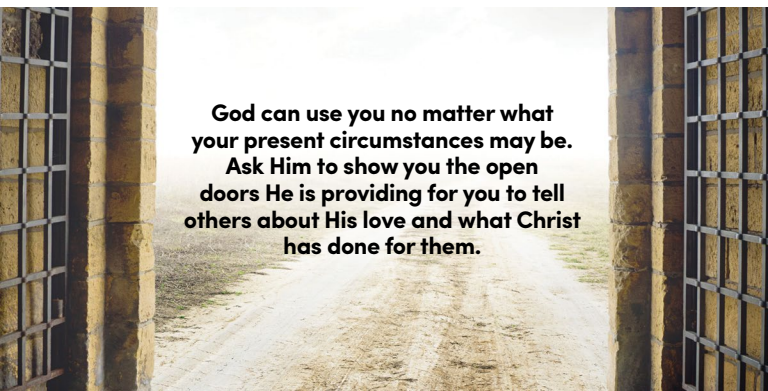
Ask God how you can better "focus your influence" for Him this year. It is possible that you are the only Christian someone in your sphere of influence knows.

DAY 31
Witness

OPEN-DOOR OPPORTUNITIES

"At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open for us a door for the Word, to declare the mystery of Christ..." Colossians 4:3

Fanny Crosby was one of the most prolific hymn writers in history. Although blind from infancy, she composed thousands of songs and poems, became a teacher, and worked in rescue missions. While some may have regarded her blindness as a closed door in her life, Fanny used her blindness as an opportunity to share the Word of God. Do you feel that God has closed a door in your life? It may or may not be a physical infirmity like Fanny's. It may be in your vocation, in a relationship, or even in your life's dream. Whatever the situation, your closed door may actually be God's "open-door" opportunity for you to share His Word and declare the life-changing truth of Jesus Christ.



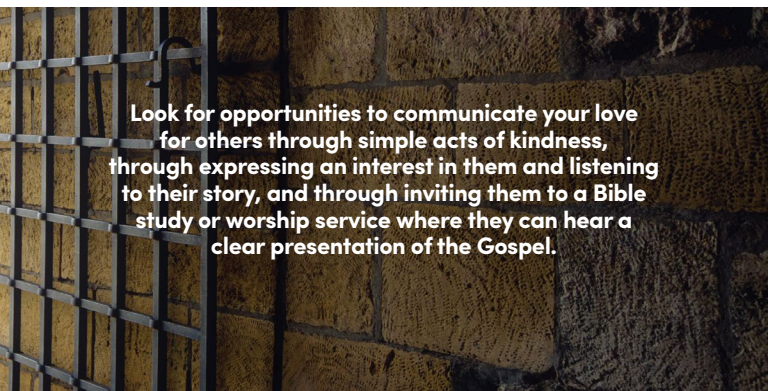
**God can use you no matter what
your present circumstances may be.
Ask Him to show you the open
doors He is providing for you to tell
others about His love and what Christ
has done for them.**

DAY 32
Witness

SHOW ME

"And a second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" Matthew 22:39

One day, someone went to Jesus and asked, "What is the number one commandment?" Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." The crowd would have probably said, "Good answer!" Every Jewish boy might have answered the question in the same way. But then Jesus added a second commandment. The first one is rather abstract, rather intangible. It is easy to say, "Oh, I love God." But the second brings it down into the concrete and says we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. So, if you say you love God, the genuineness of that love is demonstrated by how you love others. That makes all the difference, doesn't it?




Look for opportunities to communicate your love for others through simple acts of kindness, through expressing an interest in them and listening to their story, and through inviting them to a Bible study or worship service where they can hear a clear presentation of the Gospel.

DAY 33
Witness

DON'T SIT AND SOAK

"Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:12

Many people end up just auditing church for a lifetime. They sit, and soak, and listen, but they stay on the bench. The Apostle Paul realized there is more to the Christian life than that. He understood that the life of adventure means getting off the bench and into the game. Our primary passion in life should be to discover why Christ "laid hold" of us. Otherwise, why are we running the race in the first place? Jesus did not save us just to have us wither away and shrivel up on the bench. He wants us on the field. He wants us to be involved.

A photograph of a dirt road leading through an open gate. The gate is made of stone pillars and metal bars. The road is long and straight, leading into a hazy, open landscape. The text is overlaid on the road.

**What are you waiting for?
Put your running shoes on!**

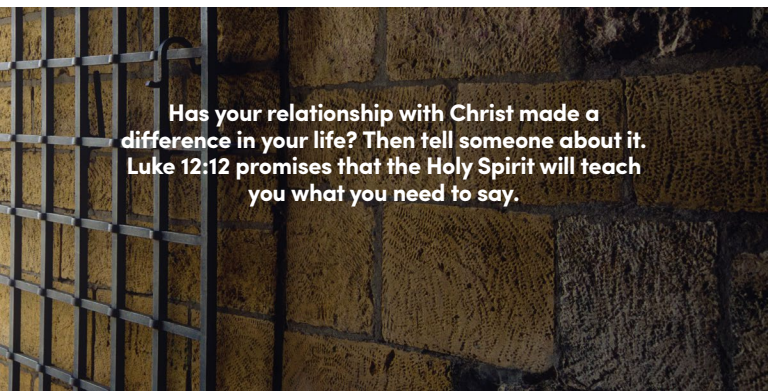
DAY 34
Witness

DON'T STIFLE YOURSELF

"But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."

1 Peter 3:15

Whether you ever saw the television show "All in the Family" or not, you are probably familiar with Archie Bunker's catchphrase to his overly talkative wife, Edith: Stifle yourself! Stifling may be good for some situations, but never in the case of your heart or your witness. And we stifle both when we try to stay quiet about our faith. Listen, the world is starving for truth, but looking in all the wrong places. In fact, you will probably come across someone this very day who has lost their way in life and needs to hear the true Truth of God. If you know Christ, then you know the Truth, because He is the Truth. So, don't stifle yourself. Follow His lead and speak the truth in love. Someone is waiting to hear from you.



Has your relationship with Christ made a difference in your life? Then tell someone about it. Luke 12:12 promises that the Holy Spirit will teach you what you need to say.

Sunday

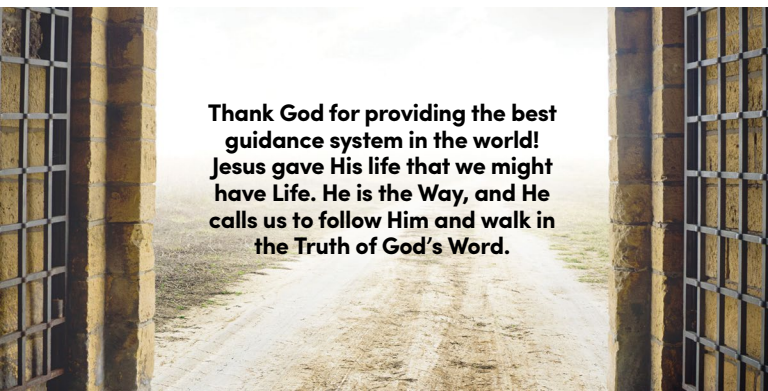
"And as He was now approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, saying, 'Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!'"
Luke 19:37-38

What is a Christian? It is someone who has had his own Palm Sunday experience. Did you know that? If you have had your own Palm Sunday experience, that means you have invited Jesus to come and to ride into your life and take over your life as King and as Lord. John 1:12 states that "as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." Ride on, King Jesus. Ride into my life.

DAY 35
*Passion
Week*
WAYFINDING

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me.'"
John 14:6

What a wonderful word picture Jesus has given us in this verse. One day, I was in one of those giant superstores, and I needed to find something. When I asked a clerk where it was, she said, "Follow me, and I'll take you there." I told her that wasn't necessary and to just give me the directions. But she insisted! She didn't just point out the way, she became the Way. That's what Jesus is saying here. He is saying, "There isn't a chart you need to follow. You just get in Me, and I will get in You, and I will become the Way." God provides His children with a built-in guide and compass. Jesus Himself is the Way – and the Truth – and the Life.



**Thank God for providing the best
guidance system in the world!
Jesus gave His life that we might
have Life. He is the Way, and He
calls us to follow Him and walk in
the Truth of God's Word.**

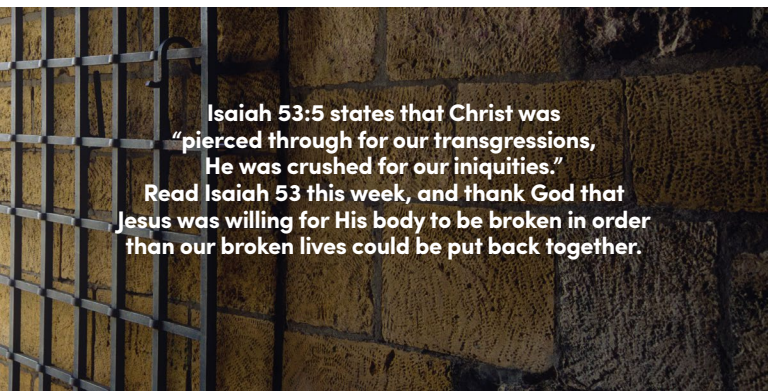
DAY 36

Passion Week

HE PAID FOR IT

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear..." 1 John 4:18a

Have you ever been in a store where there was a sign that read, "If you break it, you'll pay for it?" Usually the store is filled with all kinds of fragile things made of glass or pottery, and you tend to walk through the store on tiptoe, fearful that you may break something. God doesn't operate that way. If He had a store, it would have a different kind of sign on it. Through His sacrificial death on the Cross, Jesus demonstrated that we no longer need to live or walk in fear. Instead, He declares, "If you break something – if your life is broken – tell Me about it, and I'll forgive you."



**Isaiah 53:5 states that Christ was
"pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities."**

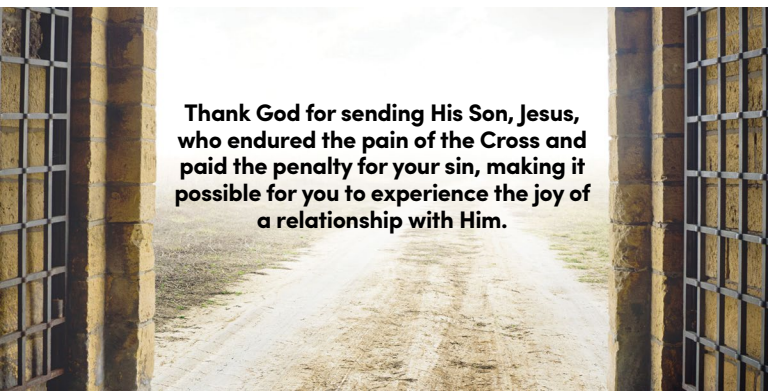
**Read Isaiah 53 this week, and thank God that
Jesus was willing for His body to be broken in order
than our broken lives could be put back together.**

DAY 37
*Passion
Week*

A RESTORED RELATIONSHIP

"For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time." | Timothy 2:5-6

In Genesis, we are told that Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden of Eden. Can you imagine the fellowship and joy they experienced! But that all ended when they disobeyed God and ate from the forbidden tree. It is here we learn that the tragic result of sin is not a broken rule, but a broken relationship. Yet God, in His grace and mercy, has provided a way to restore our relationship and fellowship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ. The finished work of Jesus on the Cross is God's invitation to come to Him and to know Him. It is an invitation to anyone and everyone...and it comes with an RSVP card and stamped return envelope. Have you replied?

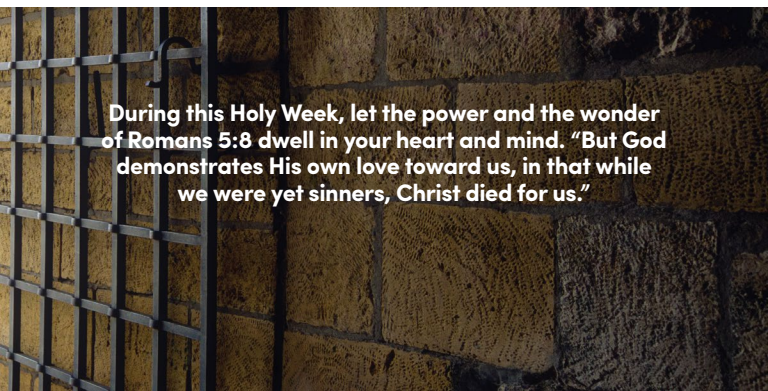


Thank God for sending His Son, Jesus, who endured the pain of the Cross and paid the penalty for your sin, making it possible for you to experience the joy of a relationship with Him.

DAY 38
*Passion
Week*
IN THE GARDEN

"When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, into which he Himself entered, and His disciples." John 18:1

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus asked the Father, "If Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me." What do you think Jesus saw in that cup? I think He saw Hell itself. He saw all the trash, the chicanery, the hypocrisy, the sin...all the filth of humanity in that cup. He saw your sin and mine. Can you imagine how terrible that would be? It wasn't the physical act of crucifixion, as horrible and shameful as that was. But as He looked in the cup, He saw all that would come upon Him, that price that must be paid as He became our Substitute. But love compelled Him to endure it all for us. Despite His agony, He then prayed, "Not My will, but Thine be done."



During this Holy Week, let the power and the wonder of Romans 5:8 dwell in your heart and mind. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

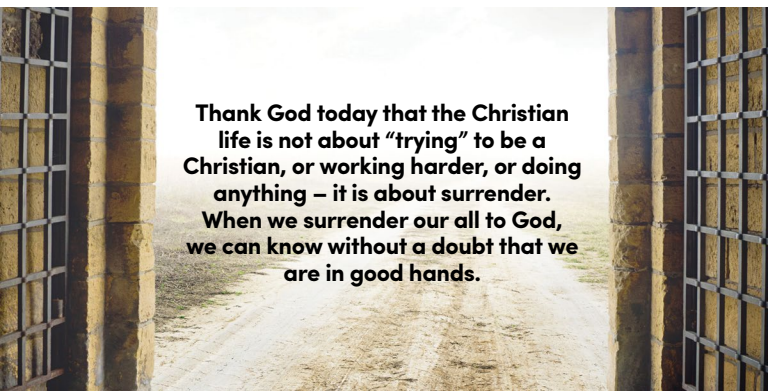
DAY 39

Good Friday

IN GOOD HANDS

"And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into Thy hands I commit My Spirit.' And having said that, He breathed His last." Luke 23:46

As we go to the Cross, we recall that the Gospels record the "seven last words" of Jesus from the Cross. When we study these statements, we begin to comprehend, better perhaps than in any other biblical account, the very heart of God. The final word from the Cross is one of the greatest words of all. It is a prayer. The seven last words begin with a prayer as Jesus asked the Father to forgive those who crucified Him. And here, in this last word, is another prayer. And this prayer is the very essence of the Christian life. It is about surrender. Jesus prayed "Into Thy hands, I commit, that is, I surrender all." As we learn to surrender our all to the Lord Jesus Christ, we just extend our arms, and we surrender all that we are to Him - and He will catch us every time.

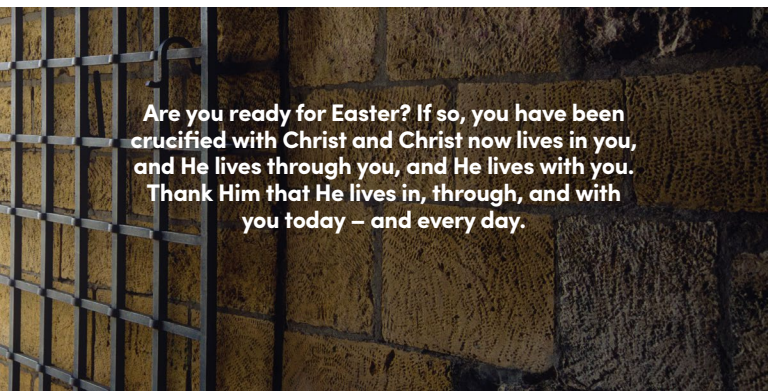


Thank God today that the Christian life is not about "trying" to be a Christian, or working harder, or doing anything - it is about surrender. When we surrender our all to God, we can know without a doubt that we are in good hands.

DAY 40
*Passion
Week*
AT THE CROSS

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." Galatians 2:20

What does it mean to be crucified with Christ? In effect, it means to be on the cross of Christ. Do you recall what I have said is true about someone on a cross? An individual on a cross cannot come down off the cross or turn around and go back. An individual on a cross is facing in only one direction. And a person on a cross has no future plans that are his own. It is also important to realize that a person cannot crucify himself. Someone else has to do it. That is part of the process of surrender, because only when we have been crucified with Christ can we truly live for Christ – and know that our Savior is living within us.



Are you ready for Easter? If so, you have been crucified with Christ and Christ now lives in you, and He lives through you, and He lives with you. Thank Him that He lives in, through, and with you today – and every day.

Easter

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures..." 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

Christ is Risen! He is Risen, indeed! Once you grasp the truth of the Resurrection, there will be a passion in your life to worship the Living Lord. There will be a freedom and a lightness in your life because all fear of this life and of death has been eliminated. And you will have a story to tell. Because He lives, we too shall live!

*"Draw near to God
and He will
draw near to you."
James 4:8*

If you would like to know more about additional resources from The Winning Walk with Dr. Ed Young, please contact:



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