

PRAY FIRST

STUDENT PRAYER GUIDE

whiteriver
CHRISTIAN CHURCH



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If you are reading this, it means you are a student who has taken up the 21 Day Prayer Challenge. Congratulations on taking a huge first step! As you begin this journey, we want to encourage you to consider where and when you will pray each day. A place and time where you can focus your mind, read over scripture and spend time praying over the topic of the day. There is one thing we know for sure, in the silence God speaks, in the stillness God moves, and that God is always present with us. We pray that you experience these truths over the next 21 days.

It's said that it takes 21 straight days of doing some sort of activity for your body and mind to make it a habit. Meaning, that if we were to do something for that many days in a row, it will be easier for us to do that activity because our mind has now made it a normal part of the daily activity. The challenge comes in being consistent with prayer each and every day of the 21 days.

Our hope is that this guide will help direct prayers to God about 21 different topics and that, after this challenge is completed, prayer would be a part of daily life because then it's a daily habit of ours. It's always nice to have direction when praying because sometimes we can feel like our minds wander. Even when this challenge is completed, it can be done over and over again with something intentional to pray about each day.

DAY 1: YOUR HEART

Thanks for joining us for 21 Days of Prayer. On the first day we are going to take a look at our hearts. Your heart might be right where it needs to be with God or your heart might be hardened to what God wants to do in your life. Either way, this 21 Day Challenge will help you align your heart with God's heart and that is our prayer for you!

Today, pray for your heart to be softened and opened to what God has to say for the next 21 days. Take some time and reflect on these passages about your heart.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

And I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their stony, stubborn heart and give them a tender, responsive heart, so they will obey my decrees and regulations. Then they will truly be my people, and I will be their God. EZEKIEL 11:19-20

This comes through self-examination and repentance of our stony, stubborn hearts which is contrary to the tender, responsive heart God intends for us. When we stay daily in His word and meditate on what it is saying to us, He begins transforming our hearts to be like His.

What you put into yourself – is what comes out of you.

A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. MATTHEW 12:35

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

Often, softening your heart involves breaking the resistant parts ... so if there is pain, continue to hang tight to Jesus. You are asking for your heart to feel again. He will carry you through the pain.

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Reveal what hardened my heart.
- Break my heart for what breaks yours.
- Reveal Yourself and soften my heart in the next 21 days.

DAY 2: FAITH

We all have something we want to accomplish. We all have goals and are told to dream big, but where is the line between just saying it and actually making it a reality?

I can't even begin to tell you how many times I have heard someone say, "just have faith." Sometimes it's harder than it sounds because of the situation we are going through at the time. "Having faith" is essential in our walk with Jesus, but having faith and showing that you have it are two completely different things. Anyone can say, "I have faith," but if we are not ready to prove that we do, what good is it?

Jarrid Wilson once wrote, "Sometimes having faith means engaging in something so bold that you will end up looking stupid if Jesus doesn't come through. Ultimately, hearing the Word initiates faith; speaking the Word activates faith; doing the Word demonstrates faith."

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

For we live by believing and not by seeing. **2 COR. 5:7**

So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ. **ROMANS 10:17**

So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. **JAMES 2:17**

Open up your bible and read Hebrews 11:1-39.

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Reveal where my faith is at this point in my life.
- Reveal where in my life my faith needs to be seen in action and not just in talk.
- Where in my life do I need to have complete faith in Jesus or where might I look like a fool if Jesus doesn't come through?

DAY 3: HOPE

There are times in my life where I feel that whatever I'm doing is just not enough, like everything I'm doing is pointless. I question my meaning, and I feel like I am just wandering this earth with no true purpose. People seem to be telling me what I'm doing is "blah" and I should be doing "blah" instead. Have you ever felt like that? Completely hopeless?

While all of those things might feel very real to you, they are actually lies. Every single one of them. The truth is, you have a purpose, a very significant one.

God is hope. God is the author of hope. His very name and His being is the definition of hope. God gives us comfort in our discomfort. He frees us from whatever bondage we feel like we are in. When we don't feel like getting up in the morning, He is the reason we can get up. Jesus is risen and He is the hope of the world. When our hope is in God, the world cannot crush our spirit.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

You are my refuge and my shield; your word is my source of hope. **PSALM 119: 114**

So be strong and courageous, all you who put your hope in the Lord! **PSALM 31: 24**

I say to myself, "The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!" **LAMENTATIONS 3: 24**

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life **PROVERBS 13: 12**

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Give me the ability to not listen to other's opinions of You, just Your opinion.
- Give me the hope that the Scriptures claim.
- Fulfill Your purpose in my life.

DAY 4: LOVE

Love is one of those words we throw around quite loosely, isn't it? You love candy and your parents and God. But, God has called us to live our entire lives based upon love. We are called to love the Lord our God with all of our hearts and also to love our neighbors. Neighbors are those that surround you on a weekly basis—students in your class, on your team or at your work. How can we love these people who can be hard to love? This isn't something that happens in a single moment. It takes small steps of action to begin to love someone the way Jesus would.

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever! **1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-8**

We do everything in our power to do these things in love, but we are imperfect people who worship a perfect God. However, this is the goal to which God calls us to love others.

Read this passage and say YOUR NAME in the blanks:

_____ is patient and kind. _____ is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. _____ does not demand its own way.

_____ is not irritable, and _____ keeps no record of being wronged. _____ does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. _____ never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

When I put my name in there, it doesn't really describe me perfectly. I'm not naturally any of those things. No one is except God. When we put our names in, it doesn't match. However, when we place *God* in the blanks, it becomes true. Go back and say *God* in each of the blanks.

Isn't that amazing? By ourselves, we are not perfect in love, but God is. We cannot love others the way He loves us until we recognize we need Him in our lives.

We love each other because he loved us first. **1 JOHN 4:19**

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Help me to feel the love You have for me.
- Give me the heart to love others as You love them.
- Reveal one of the ways You love perfectly that I can work on this week. (patience; kindness; not jealous, boastful, proud or rude; not demanding my own way; not irritable; not keeping lists of wrongs; rejoicing in the truth; never giving up; never losing faith; always hopeful; enduring through every circumstance)

DAY 5: SEEING GOD'S GLORY

Glory defined—magnificence or great beauty.

The glory of God is the beauty of His holiness. God's beauty is not a normal or material beauty but an everlasting one. A person can exhibit good character and good action yet not experience God's glory. We make two mistakes when we seek glory in ourselves or in earthly things. Seeking glory in ourselves always falls short because we are sinful by nature. Seeking glory in earthly things or in relationships falls short because these things are temporary and will fade over time. Seeking glory in these things only leaves us hurt and empty.

God sent His son Jesus to be a sacrifice for our sins so that we can experience His holiness. The beauty of God's holiness is that it is eternal. When we experience the forgiveness of our sins and rely on Jesus as our savior, we see God's glory on display in our lives.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. JOHN 1:14

O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth! Your glory is higher than the heavens. PSALM 8:1

By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. 2 PETER 1:3

ASK YOURSELF:

- In your life, what temporary or earthly things have you given more attention to above Christ? (i.e. friends, adults, relationships, talents, goals, etc.)
- Have they lasted? Why or why not?

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Reveal Your glory in my life.
- Give me strength to not be tempted to follow temporary glory of things that will not last.
- Let my eyes look to you in hope to see Jesus' glory for what He has done for us on the cross.

DAY 6: SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE

OBEY! When I hear that word, I cringe a little bit. Do what you tell me to do? Come on. But a spirit of obedience is more than doing what your parents tell you to do. It's more than a list of commands, it's more than actions out of duty.

Obedience is defined as “dutifully complying with the commands, orders, or instructions of one in authority.” When we look at this dictionary definition, it turns us off to the idea of obedience even more. However, if we understand this from a biblical point of view with the ever present truth that Jesus died for us because He loves us, we can learn from it. “Dutifully” means we are responsible to obey God just as Jesus fulfilled His duty of dying on the cross for us. “Commands, orders, or instructions” refer to the Bible and all of the teachings God has laid out for us in this amazing book. “One authority” is God Himself, whose authority overrides everything else in this world. A spirit of obedience means complying with everything God has commanded.

There's a difference in obeying and a spirit of obedience. If your parents gave you a list of things to obey and do and you just do it because you have to or else you'll get in trouble, your relationship with your parents would seem like a burden. If you were obedient to them because you love, respect and trust them, then your relationship with them would be more authentic because you WANT to. It's the same with God. If you were to look at obedience like a list of things to get done because you HAVE to do them, of course you are going to resist it and think it is a burden. When you

have the mindset of love and respect for God, and have the spirit of obedience, you obey because you WANT to, out of gratitude for what Jesus did for you.

We are not going to do this perfectly. We are imperfect people. If we love God, we will obey Him to the best of our ability and have the desire to do so, so that our lives will be evidence of that desire. When we love God and obey Him, we naturally have love for one another. Obedience is commanded by God. It is a must, not only because it glorifies Him, but because His commands are best for us. Obedience brings joy, comfort and peace in a world where such things are hard to find.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

Listen, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. DEUT. 6:4-9

“You are my friends if you do what I command.” JOHN 15:14

For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

GALATIANS 5:13-14

Jesus replied, "All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them. Anyone who doesn't love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me." **JOHN 14:23-24**

ASK YOURSELF:

- Am I obeying God? What has He prompted me to do that I have not yet done?
- What are things in my life that I have not listened to God about?
- Have I even been open to what God has to say about my life?

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Give me the spirit of obedience.
- Allow others to see love pouring out of me because of my obedience to You.
- Reveal anything in my life that You have called for me to do but I have not been obedient with.

DAY 7: TRUST

“Trust me.” It has to be one of the scariest things that someone can ever say to you. It goes without saying that we cannot trust someone that we do not know. It goes against everything inside us. There is a secret to learning to trust God: we have to get to know Him. When someone says to us, “Trust me,” we have one of two natural reactions. We either say, “Ok, I’ll trust you,” or we say, “Why should I?” When we are talking about God, trusting Him naturally follows when we understand why we should trust Him.

Unlike people, God never lies and never fails to come through on His promises. Unlike people, God knows the purposes of why we are in the situation we are in. God’s plans are perfect, holy and righteous. If we are constantly seeking Him in prayer and reading through Scripture, we will see that He is worthy of our trust and our trust is best held in Him. The more we look back at our lives and see how faithful He has been, the more our trust will grow in Him.

To know God is to trust God.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. **EPHESIANS 2:8-10**

For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation. PS. 100:5

ASK YOURSELF:

- Am I really trusting God with my life?
- What is holding me back from fully trusting in Him?

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Let me trust in You to know that Your plans are better than my plans.
- Give me determination to know You more because to know You is to trust You.
- Whatever is holding me back from fully trusting in You, reveal it to me and help me deal with it.

DAY 8: FAMILY & FRIENDS

When it comes to friends and family, there are no other people on this planet that I would rather spend a majority of my time with. No family or friend groups are perfect; they all have their shortcomings and annoyances. But for the most part, they are people you love and respect. Most likely, you have friends and family that do not know how much God loves them or know Jesus the way you do.

One of the greatest things you can do for your friends and family is pray for them.

Pastor Rick Warren gives four ways in which we can pray for our family and friends:

1. Pray for an opportunity to talk about Jesus (Colossians 4:3). Ask God to give you an opportunity to tell those you love about Christ and to invite them to your church.

2. Pray for God to prepare hearts. Anytime you see someone going through a storm in life, you can know God is softening a heart. God never wastes a storm.

3. Pray for God to burden your heart. Ask God to make your heart tender toward a specific person or group of people.

4. Pray that God's Word will simply take off. Pray that the words of Jesus "will simply take off and race through the country to a groundswell of response" (2 Thessalonians 3:1 MSG), just as they did among the early Christians.

God loves your family and friends more than you do. He is a good God. We need to remember to pray these things in faith. Faith energizes us; it allows us to be close to God continuously. Change could happen tomorrow or it could take 20 years, but we have to be patient and allow God to work.

Take time, right now, to go over the four ways to pray for friends and family. Remember to pray with a humble and repentant heart. Pray that God would move today in the lives of your friends and family.

DAY 9: SHARING YOUR FAITH

Probably one of the most important – and scariest – things we can do as Christians is sharing our faith with our friends and family. Since you have prayed and prepared for them, opportunities will come up to speak to your family and friends about Jesus. It is up to you to take them. If you ask God to make you bolder, does He automatically make you bold? Or does He give you opportunities to be bolder? When you ask God to give you more patience, does He automatically give you patience? Or does He give you opportunities to be more patient? When you pray for them, God will present opportunities for you to speak to those around you to share your faith in a real, authentic, natural way.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone." **MARK 16:15**

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for fragrant offering, a sacrifice to us and to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. **EPHESIANS 5:1-6:24**

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Work in the people I know who are not close to You.
- Let me live authentically and real. Let my life be different than those around me.
- Give me opportunities to share You with friends and family.

DAY 10: LIVING SACRIFICE

In Romans 12:1, Paul says, “And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.”

So what does this look like? Romans 12:2 says, “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.” We are a living sacrifice by not being “in” the world. In 1 John 2:15-16, it defines the world to be the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. All the world has to offer can be reduced to these three things. The lust of the flesh includes everything that appeals to our appetites and involves excessive desires for food, drink, sex and anything else that satisfies physical needs. Lust of the eyes mostly involves materialism, coveting whatever we see that we don’t have and envying those who have what we want. The pride of life is defined by any ambition for that which puffs us up and puts us on the throne of our own lives.

How do we practically not be of the world? We do this by “renewing our minds,” through the study of God’s Word.

The Word of God is the only power in this world that can completely transform us from worldliness to true spirituality. The result is this: “then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect” (Romans 12:2b). It is the will of God for every believer to be a living sacrifice for Jesus Christ.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

*So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ. **ROMANS 10:17***

God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near.

REVELATION 1:3

*And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul’s message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth. **ACTS 17:11***

*How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word. I have tried hard to find you—don’t let me wander from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. **PSALM 119:9-11***

*But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do. **PSALM 1:2-3***

THINK ABOUT:

- Am I “of the world” in how the Bible describes it?
- How so? In what areas of your life do you fall into the lusts of the flesh, the eyes, or pride of life?
- How often are you reading God’s Word? Is it as much as you should be?

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Reveal the parts of me that are lost in “the world” as described in the Bible.
- Use Scripture to transform my mind.
- Allow me to be the living sacrifice, offering all of myself to and for You.

DAY 11: CHANGE

No one really likes change. It can be some of the most stressful times of our lives. Even when change is wanted, it is within our human nature to naturally resist it. When we do something over and over, it becomes part of our daily habit and we become so used to it that if anything knocks it out of balance, we freak out a little bit. This is why change takes so much effort and why we want to resist it.

But, change is going to happen: it’s normal and it’s inevitable. We face changes when we grow up. Our bodies change, our likes and dislikes change, our friends change, and the way we interact with the world around us changes. We also know that when you become a Christian, change is desirable. It is actually God’s plan for us when we come to know who He is.

We die to our old selves and Christ makes us new. We want to become more like Jesus; we want to change. 2 Corinthians 4:16 says, "our spirits are being renewed every day." When we submit to God, we change to become more like Christ.

So what about the change we don't want? Parents lost their job? Friends moving away? We don't want the hurtful changes. Romans 8:28 says that God is working all things for the good of those who love Him, that He is working everything according to His purpose and we know His purpose is always good. So we can trust that even the changes that are undesirable are working for our benefit down the line. It may be that an illness will bring us closer to God or draw the family closer together. It may be God calling you to a new season of life.

Adjusting to change is less painful than resisting it. Growth requires change. Let's look at change in our lives as a season of growth. Instead of resisting change, let's try to remember that God has NEVER changed and will NEVER change, and He is up to something good.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

*And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. **ROMANS 8:28***

“I am the Lord, and I do not change. That is why you descendants of Jacob are not already destroyed. Ever since the days of your ancestors, you have scorned my decrees and failed to obey them. Now return to me, and I will return to you,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. “But you ask, ‘How can we return when we have never gone away?’” **MALACHI 3:6-7**

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

HEBREWS 13:8

TRY TO DO SOME OF THESE TO HELP WITH CHANGE:

- Talk to God about the change you are experiencing. Be honest.
- Listen to His response to your questions.
- Express thankfulness for what you have in your life.

He does not change, but He is there in the middle of the change with you.

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Be with me and the change that is happening right now in my life, good or bad.
- Thank you for never changing, and being the only constant in my life.
- Change me to be more like Jesus.

DAY 12: OVERCOMING FEAR

There are two types of fear. One is good and is encouraged and the other is a fear that is to be overcome. The first one is the fear of the Lord. This doesn't mean to be afraid of God; rather it is being in awe of God, realizing all of His power and glory. It is having respect for His wrath and anger. This type of fear is total acknowledgment of all that God is, which comes through knowing and studying Him and His attributes.

The second type of fear is "the spirit of fear." This type of fear is mentioned in 2 Timothy 1:7 which says, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline." It is a spirit of fearfulness and timidity that does not come from God.

There are times when I'm afraid. I don't care how old you are, when you are by yourself and you hear weird noises at home, you freak out a little bit. There are things in our lives that scare us. Whether it's a conversation we have to have, something to overcome, or a sin we need to deal with and confess, the "spirit of fear" takes over. It's in this time we need to trust God completely. No one is perfect and God knows this. This is why He intentionally put encouraging verses about overcoming fear throughout the entire Bible. From Genesis to Revelation, God tells us to "fear not."

God tells us not to be afraid of being too weak, of being alone, of not being heard by Him, of lacking physical necessities.

We are afraid in all these ways from time to time. Trusting in God is refusal to give into fear. It is us turning to God in the darkest of times and trusting Him to make things right.

Once we have learned to put our trust in God, we will be able to overcome anything that stands in our way.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.

1 JOHN 4:18

*Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. **ISAIAH 41:10***

*I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me? **PSALM 56:11***

*But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them sing joyful praises forever. Spread your protection over them, that all who love your name may be filled with joy. **PS. 5:11***

*What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? **ROMANS 8:31-32***

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Give me a healthy fear of You, acknowledging all Your power.
- Take away that “spirit of fear” inside of me.
- Whatever I am afraid of, let me give it to You and place all my trust in You.

DAY 13: COMPASSION

Compassion is not something that I think about on a daily basis or consider how to pray about it in my life. I know it’s a good thing to have and to show people, but I don’t go out of my way to think about it.

When we talk about compassion, there is no way that you cannot talk about Jesus because the very nature of His being is that of compassion. The Hebrew and the Greek words translated into English literally mean “to have mercy, to feel sympathy and to have pity.” According to the Bible, God is “compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love” (Psalms 103:8).

Jesus showed all of God’s compassion while He was on the earth. When his friends were weeping about Lazarus’ death, he wept alongside them. Jesus was moved with compassion for the suffering of others, so He healed large crowds and individuals who came to Him. When He saw how the large crowds were like sheep without a shepherd, He had compassion on them and taught them. While the priest and the Pharisees neglected the “common” people, Jesus had compassion on them and spent time with them.

Jesus was all about caring for people. In Matthew 22:34-40, Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, and He said it is to love God with all our heart, mind and strength. But, He added that the second commandment, "is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" The Pharisee asked Him which single command of God is the greatest, but Jesus provided two, stating not only what we are to do, but also how to do it. To love your neighbor as yourself is the natural result of our loving devotion toward God. The Bible is clear that compassion is an attribute of God and for God's people as well.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. **ROMANS 12:15**

If you help the poor, you are lending to the Lord—and he will repay you! **PROVERBS 19:17**

This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. **1 CORINTHIANS 12:25-26**

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Where in my life do I need more compassion?
- Who in my life do I need to have more compassion for? (i.e. people at school, your family, friends, strangers, etc.)

DAY 14: EMPATHY

I always get empathy confused with some other very similar words: sympathy and compassion. They are all in the same family but there are important differences. Empathy is something we can work on to show others Jesus.

Empathy is not found in the Bible, but the Bible describes situations in which empathy is a direct reaction of God's character to us. Empathy means, "the capability to share another's emotions and feelings." It is different than sympathy, but a characteristic of compassion. Sympathy is feeling the same feelings with someone because you too, have shared similar circumstances as the other person. So you know how they are feeling. Empathy is sharing in the feelings of that person but not having gone through their circumstance. You feel their pain so much that it moves you to have compassion.

Jesus shows empathy in how He acts toward people all throughout His ministry on earth. God's Word says, He "traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:35-36). Jesus' greatest empathy was for their spiritual weariness, a condition He came to rectify.

Girls sometimes seem to have more empathy than guys (sorry guys, that is the truth). Girls can see another girl crying, and they will start to cry with them and be there for them. A guy sees a girl crying, and he walks the other way because a crying girl is the scariest thing in the world. But, when we are “happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15), we show empathy towards others like Jesus showed to us. This tears down walls between people and allows you to show that person the love of Christ by loving them in a time of need. As we humble ourselves before others, we can care for them . . . just as He cares for us.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

*When three of Job’s friends heard of the tragedy he had suffered, they got together and traveled from their homes to comfort and console him. Their names were Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and nights. No one said a word to Job, for they saw that this suffering was too great for words. **JOB 2:11, 13***

Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

PHILIPPIANS 2:2-4

This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. **1 CORINTHIANS 12:25-26**

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Open my heart to empathy. Help me notice when others are hurting around me.
- Help me to notice others in their time of need, to be sensitive to it, and to respond with empathy.
- Give me compassion to react and show them God's love.

DAY 15: WORSHIP

When we talk about worship, we tend to immediately assume we are talking about music. Music is one type of worship, but it is much more than just singing to God. Worship is a lifestyle, a way to live that brings glory to God in everything we say and do. The act of worship is to show our respect and to honor God as our Father. Worship is a time in which we show deep respect, sincere love and a healthy fear to the One who has made us.

When we live out worship as a lifestyle, we develop His traits such as kindness, love, forgiveness and tenderness. True worship is not just in a church or in open praise (although both of these things are great and needed). True worship is the acknowledgement of God and all of His power and glory in everything we do. The highest form of praise and worship

to God is our obedience to Him and His Word. To do this, we need to know God and know what He says.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. PHILIPPIANS 2:9-11

You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased. REV. 4:11

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

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- What areas in my life am I not worshipping You?
- Let me live, in all areas, a life of worship to You.
- That everything I say or do, glorifies You, and You alone.

DAY 16: KINDNESS

Being kind isn't something you just are or you aren't. Kindness is actually a fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and is a huge characteristic of Jesus.

The Greek word for kindness means “tender concern and uprightness.” It's kindness of the heart and kindness of action. God showed us kindness by not putting us to death like we deserved because of our sin. Instead, He sent Jesus to die for us. It's God's kindness that makes Him want to protect and care for us. It's because God is kind to us that we need to be kind to others.

When we are kind to others in a world where kindness is taken for granted, it really sticks out to people. Have you ever come across a kind person and thought, “Wow, I wish more people were like that. There is something different about them”? This is what kindness does. You stick out. If we are to be more like Jesus in our words and actions, we can't help but be kind.

When we exhibit the kindness of God, we are tender, benevolent and useful to others. Everything we do, every action, every word that comes out of our mouth, will have the flavor of grace in it. This is how people around you can see God in you. They will point at you and say, “Wow. There is something different about them.”

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need. **PROVERBS 17:17**

Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

EPHESIANS 4:32

Most of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. **1 PETER 4:8**

But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don't try to get them back. Do to others as you would like them to do to you. **LUKE 6:27-31**

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Fill me with a spirit of kindness.
- Let me be the example of kindness and Jesus to the people I am surrounded by every single day.
- Because of my kindness, others will know the kindness of God.

DAY 17: EVANGELISM

When we think of ourselves sharing Jesus with our friends, people at our school, or even our families, we automatically get sweaty palms. Why? Let's just be honest, we feel weird talking to them about our faith because we're worried what people may think of us.

As followers of Christ, we are expected to share the news about Jesus' life and resurrection. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus says, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." As Christians, we are responsible to share with others about Jesus. There are some great ways in which we can share Jesus with others without just blurting it out like a freshman boy asking a girl to a dance. But, rather, living in a way that will eventually end up with you explaining who Jesus is and the good news that He brings.

PRAY FOR THEM

The most important thing we can do is pray for them. Pray that God would change their hearts and open their eyes (2 Corinthians 4:4) to the truth of the gospel. Pray that God would convince them of His love for them and their need for salvation through Jesus Christ (John 3:16). Pray for wisdom as to how you can minister to them (James 1:5).

LIVE IT FIRST

We know that living a Christ-like life looks different compared to how the rest of the world lives. When we are studying the Bible regularly, our lives are changed. When it comes time to share what you have learned with others, it will be more meaningful to you. When your friends see how the Bible has changed your life, they will be more inclined to change their lives. This form of evangelism focuses on building relationships with one person at a time. Through our friendships, opportunities arise to share the gospel.

BE REAL

One of the most effective ways to minister to people around you is just to be real. One of the top reasons why people are so turned off to Christianity is because people are too fake. It is really hard to be fake with people who see your ups and downs, successes and failures, who hear how you talk in your best and worst times, and who you see every single day for 8 hours at school. When you mess up and use bad language, call yourself out. That will do more ministering to the people around you because they will wonder why you don't want to speak like that. Saying, "Just be like Jesus" is not realistic. Jesus was perfect. Followers of Jesus are not perfect at all. When non-believers see that you are just like them and mess up, then see how you handle messing up, they will take note of that far more than anything else you do. So long as lifestyle evangelism does not replace the verbal sharing of the gospel, it is a legitimate ministry tool. Lifestyle evangelism can be a wonderful way to show faith in action in a world that needs to see what true Christianity looks like.

SPEAK IT

The goal in evangelizing to the people around you is eventually speaking to them about the Good News of Jesus. You have prayed for them, you live out what you learn from reading the Bible, and are being real. There will be opportunities that come up to speak to those around you about Jesus; it is up to you to take them. Pray for opportunities and speak up about your faith in a real, authentic, natural way.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. 2 CORINTHIANS 4:4

For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. JOHN 3:16

This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. 1 JOHN 1:5-7

There are people in our lives that are far from Christ. Go ahead and picture them right now in your head.

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Give me the ability to live out what the bible says first, as a way to show others that I am a follower of Jesus.
- Let me be real. Break down my walls and let me be approachable.
- Provide opportunities for me to tell those around me about Jesus, and help me actually do it.

DAY 18: SURRENDER

We live in a very fast paced world. As a student, you are likely busier than I am. You have school, homework, sports, band, family, friends, church, small group, etc. It's easy to get caught up in the daily grind and lose sight of our true purpose in life—worshiping our Creator. This looks different for each of us. Everyone has a way in which they connect with God.

There is something that we all need to do in order to be focused on God in our lives daily: surrender to Jesus Christ. Surrender your life: needs; worries; pains; joys; and surrendering the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual battles. When someone surrenders his or her life, it's all about trust (if you need to, go back and read day 7 again). It's trusting that God has your best interests at heart. Surrender takes all of the focus off of you and puts it on Christ. Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church writes, "Surrender is not the best way to live; it is the only way to live. Nothing else works. All other approaches lead to frustration, disappointment and self-destruction." There is no better way to stay focused as a believer than to completely surrender my life to my Lord and Savior.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

MATTHEW 6:33-34

Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me." LUKE 9:23

Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. ROMANS 6:13

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- I want to connect everyday with You. Help me make this a daily priority.
- I want to have the ability to surrender it all to You: my life, my needs, my worries, my pains, my joys.
- I want to trust You with everything. Take all of my worries.

DAY 19: SERVING

When I was in high school and all the way through college, I was a server at a restaurant. I loved it. I would be so nice to the customers and get them whatever they wanted because, as a server, the better you were, the more money you got in tips. It was great. But this type of serving was fueled by the wrong purpose. I just did it because I wanted more money. When it comes to serving God and serving people the way He called us to, it should be with a genuine heart for God and for people. Jesus Himself served God and He served people on a daily basis while He was here on this earth.

Every gift that we have, every talent, passion and desire, is a gift from God. He gave these to us for two reasons and two reasons only: to serve others and to bring praise to God. Serving is not about us receiving attention or glory; it's for Him to receive glory. In 1 Peter, he tells us that believers should realize that we are speaking and serving directly on God's behalf to other people. He gives us the ability and strength to do so. When we take the focus off of ourselves and point it to God, others see the life-changing difference that a relationship with Jesus can bring. It validates our faith in front of others. When you serve them, you might be the only visible representation of Jesus they will ever see.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God

himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen. 1 PETER 4:10-11

God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. 1 JOHN 4:9-12

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Show me how I can use my gifts to serve others.
- Let my body, my talents, my mind, my life, be used to serve both You and others.

DAY 20: SELF-CONTROL

Self-control, when it comes to our lives, is something we need to keep in mind if we want our Christian walk to be stronger.

Self-control has to do with moderation constraint, and the ability to say “no” to our fleshly desires. One of the proofs that God is working in our lives is the ability to control our own thoughts, words and actions. It is not that we are weak or that we need to be aware of this but it is because we are under the influence of sin. One definition of sin is “filling a legitimate need through illegitimate means.” With the Holy Spirit’s help, we can determine and choose the best way to meet our own needs. Even if we know what is best, and we know what we need to do, without self-control we can fall into that sin more and more. If we don’t show self-control in our actions, we will continually fall back into the things that pull us farther away from God.

Self-control naturally leads to perseverance and the ability to abstain from instant gratification of the world. It is a gift that frees us. It frees us to have a healthy body, and to be free from a guilty conscience. It also restricts us from falling into our foolish desires. If we have self-control, we will be able to love and live as we were meant to.

READ AND REFLECT ON THESE PASSAGES:

For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. **PHILIPPIANS 2:13**

We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. **ROMANS 6:6**

So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.

GALATIANS 5:1

I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin. **ROMANS 7:21-25**

...and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness... **2 PETER 1:6**

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Reveal areas in my life where I need more self-control.
- Fill me with the Holy Spirit. I know I can only have self-control with the Spirit present in my life.
- With the Holy Spirit's help, teach me to take control of my desires.

DAY 21: POWER OF PRAYER

Prayer is the communication tool to the God of the universe. How cool is that? Here are some things to consider when thinking and praying:

God can do all things; there is nothing impossible for Him.

“For the word of God will never fail.” **LUKE 1:37**

God invites us to pray to Him. Prayer to God should be consistent, be made in faith and be within the will of God. All for the glory of God.

- Luke 18:1 (consistent)—One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up.
- Philippians 4:6 (thanksgiving)—Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.
- James 1:5 (faith)—If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you.
- Matthew 6:10 (within God's will)—May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
- John 14:13-14 (God's glory)—You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!
- James 5:16 (Heart right with God)—Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may

be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

God hears the prayers of His children. He instructs us to pray, and He promises to listen when we do pray.

But in my distress I cried out to the Lord; yes, I prayed to my God for help. He heard me from his sanctuary; my cry to him reached his ears. PSALM 18:6

When we pray, there are no special words that we say or a formula to make God answer our prayers. The power of prayer strictly comes from God, not because of who we are but because of who He is. Prayer places us in contact with our Creator. We should expect almighty results, whether or not He chooses to grant our petitions or deny our requests. Whatever the answers are to our prayers, God is the source where all power comes from. He can and will answer prayers according to His perfect will and timing.

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO PRAY THESE THINGS TO GOD:

- Let my prayer life with You be multiplied more than I have ever experienced before.
- Allow my prayer life to become a part of my daily life.

They say 21 days makes a habit, and it takes 21 more days to make it a part of your everyday lifestyle. If you want prayer to be a normal part of your daily life, go through this for another 21 days. You will be able to connect with God on a whole other level. Every three weeks, come back and pray about the same thing and see how God is moving in your life.

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