

# 2<sup>0</sup>day N<sup>E</sup>Fast

**Devotional Guide**



# CONTENTS

<b>Fasting Frequently Asked Questions</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Resources</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Week 1: Weighing the Cost</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Week 2: Fellowship of Suffering</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Week 3: The Joy Set Before Him</b> .....	<b>21</b>

*\*\* No part or portion of this material may be reproduced or used by any means without permission from Beltway Park or contributing writers.*

**Please share any testimonies of God’s faithfulness during and after your time of fasting by calling the Freedom office or by email.**

**Contact:**

Sherrie Saltzgaber at [sherriesaltzgaber@beltway.org](mailto:sherriesaltzgaber@beltway.org) or call 692.6540.

## WHAT IS A FAST?

Fasting is primarily a tool by which we humble ourselves before God by submitting the flesh’s will to the Spirit’s will in reverence to God. Biblically, fasting is abstaining from food, drink, sleep or sex to focus on a period of spiritual growth. Specifically, we humbly deny something of the flesh to glorify God, enhance our spirit, and go deeper in our prayer life.

*“This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.” Isaiah 66:2 (NIV).*

You must devote yourself to seeking God’s face, especially during those times in which you feel weak, vulnerable or irritable. Read God’s word, pray and worship during mealtimes or during cravings of the specific thing you have chosen to fast. Meditate on Him when you awake during the night, sing praises to him when you are hungry. Focus on your Heavenly Father, depending on Him for comfort, strength and satisfaction as an act of worship.

## WHY SHOULD I FAST?

You can go a certain distance in your relationship with God and experience many things without fasting, but scripture shows that the highest, richest and most powerful blessings go to those who, along with other disciplines, fast often unto God.

Without a purpose, fasting can be a miserable, self-centered experience. We cannot use fasting as a way to impress God and earn His acceptance and it has no eternal benefit for us until we have come to God through repentance and faith.

Some of scripture’s most noted characters, with the possible exception of Abraham, were men of fasting and prayer. Jesus himself was a man of prayer and fasting (Mt. 4:2), as was Paul (2 Cor. 11:27), Moses (Ex. 24:18), Elijah (1 Kings 19:8), Joel (Joel 2:15), the disciples (Lk. 5:35) and the church (Acts 14:23) and Jesus admonished His followers to fast (Mt. 6:16).

## WHAT ARE SOME BIBLICAL REASONS FOR FASTING?

- Fasting was an expected discipline in both the old and new testaments.
- Fasting is a biblical way to humble yourself in the sight of God (Ps. 35:13 & Ezra 8:21).
- Fasting enables the Holy Spirit to reveal your true spiritual condition, resulting in repentance, brokenness and a transformed life.
- Fasting can transform your prayer life in a richer personal experience.
- Fasting and prayer can restore your 'first love' for your Lord and result in greater intimacy.
- Fasting can result in a dynamic personal revival and make you a vehicle of revival for others.

The question to us becomes, "if we as followers of Christ are called to fast, do I need a specific reason to fast?"

## WHAT ARE SOME PERSONAL REASONS FOR FASTING?

- Do you desire a deeper, intimate and powerful relationship with the Lord?
- Are you in need of a fresh encounter with God?
- Do you need to break the bonds of oppression that may hold you captive?
- Do you desire greater sensitivity to God?
- Do you desire the tender touch of God in your life?
- Do you desire to know more of God's will for your life?
- Are you in need of healing or a miracle?
- Is there a dream inside you that only God can make happen?
- Is there a friend or family member that needs salvation?
- Do you struggle with hidden sin?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then fasting may be the avenue through which you can set your heart on seeking and hearing God.

## SHOULD MY KIDS FAST?

What a great learning opportunity for kids of all ages! A simple fast is a great way for children to grasp the basic idea of giving up one thing in order to gain something of greater worth and significance. We want to teach our children that gaining more of Jesus and His presence in their lives is worth giving up a few worldly pleasures.

When it comes to fasting food items, it is not recommended that significant changes be made to the daily diet of a child without first consulting their pediatrician or your family physician. Giving up smaller food items (desserts, sugary treats, etc.) that ultimately lead to healthier eating habits are usually enough to alert a child to the importance of the fast. As in all parenting matters, there is a measure of discernment that parents must walk in here.

Children of all ages can fast non-food items such as television, video games, cell phones, Facebook, etc. Younger children will need greater supervision and instruction related to fasting, while older junior high or high school students are encouraged to make their own decisions about what to fast and be self-motivated to remain faithful to it. Talking about fasting openly as a family and holding each other accountable can certainly lead to some powerful moments of teaching. Remember, the goal is not just to giving up something – it is about encountering Jesus and deepening our relationship with Him.

## WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO FAST?

There is no set 'formula' that is the 'right' way. Fasting is about the condition of the heart, not the number of days or the type of fast you chose. Each time of fasting should be as a prompting of God and for His glory.

There are several types of fasts mentioned in scripture:

**A Traditional Fast** – A traditional fast means refraining from eating all food. Most people still drink water or juice during a traditional fast. In Matthew 4:1-2 when Jesus fasted in the desert, the Bible says, *"After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry."* This verse does not mention Jesus being thirsty.

**A Complete Fast** - A complete fast – is just that - no food and no drink. Acts 9:9 describes when Paul went on a full fast for three days following his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus: *"For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything."* Esther also called for this type of fast in Esther 4:15-16: *"Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 'Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do.'" It is recommended that this type of fast be done with extreme caution and not for extended periods of time.*

**A Partial Fast** - This type of fast generally refers to omitting a specific meal from your diet or refraining from certain types of foods. Daniel 10:2-3 says, *"At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over."* In Daniel 1:12, they restricted their diet to vegetables and water: *"Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink."*

**A Sexual Fast** – A sexual fast is by mutual consent between a husband and wife for a specific length of time, for a specific purpose. 1 Corinthians 7:3-6 says, *"The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."*

Seek the heart of God and allow Him to lead you to the fast that will allow you to focus your attention, heart and devotion on Him.

### During this call to a 21-day fast you may choose from several options:

- Sunrise to sunset - a day-long fast broken at evening meal
- A specific meal – fasting one or two designated meals a day
- A specific type of food – fast from sweets, drinks, meats, breads...
- Decreased portions – fast by restricting portion size
- Solid foods – restricting diet to liquids and soft foods
- Alternative methods of fasting: sports, television, books, dining out, movies, internet activities...

## HOW DO I FAST SAFELY?

If done properly, fasting will be not only a spiritual blessing, but a physical blessing as well. If you have any of the following health concerns, consult your physician before beginning your fast.

- Those who are physically too thin or emaciated
- Those who are prone to anorexia, bulimia, or other behavioral disorders
- Those who suffer weakness or anemia
- Those who have tumors, bleeding ulcers, cancer, blood diseases, or who have heart disease
- Those who suffer chronic problems with kidneys, liver, lungs, heart, or other major organs
- Those who take insulin for diabetes or suffer any other blood sugar problem such as hypoglycemia
- Women who are pregnant or nursing

For those of you that fit into any of these areas, discuss fasting with your physician. Alternative forms of fasting other than food may be a great choice. Fasting from activities, sports, television, books, soda, caffeine, eating out, movies, or internet are a few examples.

## WHAT ARE SOME PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF FASTING?

Fasting is primarily a spiritual discipline that begins in the physical realm. Although fasting can be an indescribable blessing, it is not always easy. In this time of discipline, self-sacrifice and reflection, do not be surprised if you experience mental and physical discomforts.

You may experience some inner conflict when you deny yourself the pleasure of eating delicious food. Any sort of fast may sometimes leave you feeling impatient and irritable. After all, our flesh is not comfortable when we deny it.

During a fast the struggle can intensify toward the end. It will be the perfect time for the “self” to rise up and say, “This is as far as I want to go. I have had enough.” Prayer will get you through this phase and on to victory.

### **Other physical effects of a fast may include:**

- hunger pangs
- bad breath
- headaches
- stomach aches
- coldness
- changes in sleeping and dreaming patterns
- heightened body odor
- light-headedness
- dizziness (stop for a second or two, make slower movements during your fast)
- changes in elimination (constipation or diarrhea)

These are often the very things the enemy uses to discourage and defeat the believer into giving up and quitting before the end of the fast. The benefits of fasting far outweigh what the enemy will try to use to distract you from receiving the blessing of drawing closer to God in a deeper, more intimate relationship.

## WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS OF FASTING?

Receiving God's blessing from a fast requires a solid commitment. Arranging a special time each day with God is crucial in attaining intimate communion with the Father. Your motive in fasting must be to glorify God, not to have an emotional experience and not to seek personal happiness. When your motives are right, God will honor your seeking heart and bless your time with Him in a special way.

### Many benefits of fasting can be found in Isaiah 58:

- God's favor
- Healing
- God's presence
- God's protection
- God's guidance
- Strength
- Greater depths of spiritual sensitivity and understanding
- Greater growth and self-discipline
- Knowing God more intimately
- Equipped for spiritual warfare
- Greater satisfaction in Christ

Although a renewed closeness to God and spiritual blessings often result from a fast, do not be disappointed if you do not have a mountain-top experience. Many people who have completed a fast tell of feeling a nearness to God they have never known before, while for others the fast was physically, emotionally and spiritually grueling. Though they experienced different outcomes, both knew they had been called by God to the fast and faithfully finished as an act of worship unto Him. God will honor your commitment and obedience and the time spent focused on Him is never in vain.

## RESOURCES: For More Information On Fasting

### BOOKS:

*The Hidden Power of Prayer and Fasting*

by Mahesh Chavda

*The Rewards of Fasting*

by Mike Bickle, Dana Chandler

*Fasting* by Derek Prince

*Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough*

by Elmer Towns

*Beginners Guide to Fasting*

by Elmer Towns

*Fasting* by Jentezen Franklin

*A Hunger for God* by John Piper

*101 Reasons to Fast*

by Dr. Bob Rogers - Free Download

### WEBSITES:

[www.spirithome.com](http://www.spirithome.com)

[www.new-life.net](http://www.new-life.net)

[www.jentezenfranklin.org](http://www.jentezenfranklin.org)

[www.christ-web.com](http://www.christ-web.com) - Daniel Diet

# Turning a Stony Heart Into a Heart of Flesh : Day 1

*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.*  
- Ezekiel 36:26

Ezekiel 36 is clear that Israel had defiled their land by their conduct and actions. In fact in verse 17 the prophet received a very graphic description of her sinfulness and it is evident that as a people Israel was seen as unclean. Sometimes sin sneaks in the back door and other times it kicks the door open and comes through the front. Israel was participating in both. She left her first love and was no longer rejoicing in the ways of the Lord. Her heart had become cold. Although these people were scattered to the corners of the earth because of this, we also see the faithfulness of a loving God who does not break covenant with the apple of His eye. You see, God finds pleasure in taking us out of weakness and transforming us into a holy people (1 Peter 2:9).

Have you ever found yourself with a cold heart? Most of the body of Christ has at one time or another. Have you ever had good intentions of following the ways of God and discovered one day you were nowhere near the place you would like to be with God? If so, it is time for a heart transplant. As we start day one of this 21 day fast we must be challenged to do heart surgery. God wants

to give us all a new heart. He wants us to have a new mind, will, pure motives and principles for action. The heart is the main source in order to become more like Christ. In his book, "The Pleasures of Loving God" Mike Bickle states, "Fasting is a divine catalyst that increases your capacity to receive more from the Spirit." This is why the heart is so important. The heart is where we receive from Father God. In Proverbs 4:23 Solomon says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." You are a deep well and your Father wants to pour into you.

God has and will always be about the heart. Because we are His family, He wants us clean and He desires to share His heart with us. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God. Ezekiel 36:27-28

- Read and pray Psalm 139:23-24.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Day 2 : Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

- Matthew 5:3

When reading this famous sermon many might think, “well I’m not really poor so this scripture doesn’t apply to me.” It would be easy in regard to the poor in spirit, to imagine a Haitian man searching through a pile of rubble for friends, family, and loved ones, or a little African boy in Mozambique who makes his home in a giant garbage dump, or even the homeless woman who visits a local soup kitchen or homeless shelter in search of a place to lay her head. Was Jesus just talking about people who have no money, clothes, jobs, etc.? Regardless of your socio-economic background we are all poor in spirit.

To be poor is the result of being in need. The poor in spirit are those who consciously depend on God, not on themselves; they are “poor” inwardly, having no ability in themselves to please God<sup>1</sup> We are all in need of Jesus. We are all spiritually lacking and can only become filled by realizing our need for more of Him. In order to fill this need Father God sent His Son to dwell amongst us so that our lack would be filled with the endless measures

of His love. (You) may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. Ephesians 3:18

When we all come to this place of realizing our own poverty, it is in that moment we become rich in substance. It is then we have full access to the kingdom of heaven. Often, it can become very easy to look to the future for God to interact with our circumstance, but the moment we acknowledge our need for God He exercises His kingly authority in every part of our life.

- Read Matthew 5
- If you have never acknowledged your need for Jesus Christ do so now.
- Think about situations in your life where you need God.
- Now ask for the Kingdom of God to invade those situations.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Mt 5:1–12). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

# He Must Increase and I Must Decrease : Day 3

*He must become greater; I must become less.*

- John 3:30

In the first and second chapters of John we are told that John was a man whose destiny was to prepare the way of the Lord. He had built quite a reputation as a preacher of truth and was known all over as a man who lived a radical lifestyle for God. In the third chapter we find John's disciples coming to him because they were disturbed that Jesus was baptizing and the crowds were now flocking to Him. It's important to know that Jesus was not always the one baptizing when the crowds would come. Often He would turn those duties over to His disciples, as was the case with John the Baptist. In the third chapter we see a bad case of jealousy rise up amongst these guys. In other words, these guys were really saying, "John I know you came to prepare the way of the Lord, but why do those guys get all the glory? What are we, chopped liver?"

John then goes into this beautiful description of Jesus as the bridegroom coming for His bride and himself as the best man. John was saying that he was not the main participant in the marriage. As the best man (the friend of the bridegroom) John's role was to make all the preliminary arrangement before the ceremony. John considered it pure joy, when he heard the Bridegroom

coming, to step back and watch as the Bridegroom took the hand of His bride (the church). Therefore Jesus must become greater and John had to become less.

It is very easy to identify with these insecure young men. We often struggle with jealousy, envy, wrong motives and the list goes on and on. Like Nacho the Luchador said in the movie Nacho Libre, "I want to taste a little bit of the glory!" How often we say the same thing in our hearts. What a great example to follow in John the Baptist. We must be a people who become less and allow Jesus to become greater in every part of our lives. It is our role as friends of the Bridegroom to assist Him in any way He desires in preparation for His wedding day. Oh what a glorious day it will be when Jesus is face to face with His church.

- Are there any places in your life where you should become less and allow more room for Jesus? If so, write them down.
- Read Revelation 19:1-10.
- How can you partner with Jesus in preparation of His coming?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Day 4 : My Food Is To Do His Will

*But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."*  
- John 4:32, 34

Jesus, being tired after a long journey comes to a water well in Samaria. His disciples leave and go into the city to buy food. A Samaritan woman comes to the well and Jesus begins to have a conversation with her telling her everything she had ever done. The woman is blown away by His knowledge of her life. Jesus explains to her that He is the Messiah that she and her people are waiting for. She drops her watering pot, goes to the city and tells everyone she knows about a man who knew everything about her life. As she was ending her conversation with her Messiah, the disciples returned and were astonished that Jesus was having a conversation with someone the Jews did not talk to. Thinking that Jesus was acting strange because of the heat, the disciples encourage Him to eat, drink and take a load off. Jesus' response to them left them somewhat taken back, but there was a lesson to be learned in this.

Jesus was being about His Father's business. Even though He was tired, hungry, and in need of rest Jesus was tuned in to what the Father was doing. How often, when tired and weary, do we take down our spiritual radar. Frequently we may even run to things that never replenish our body, soul, and spirit. Jesus was always looking for a golden moment to encounter His Father. He easily could have checked out when the woman came to the well, but His Spirit came alive by tasting

of the goodness of Father God. He was refreshed, yet His disciples could not understand where he gained His energy from. Could someone have brought him food? John 4:34 It wasn't that Jesus was not still in need of food and water, but there was a passion inside of Him that fed His Spirit on doing the will of the Father.

The fourth chapter of John gives us greater insight to a similar story. In the fourth chapter of Mathew, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness. While fasting from food and water for 40 days, the devil tempted Jesus three different times and each time Jesus resisted with the Word of God. Was He tired? Yes! Was He hungry? Yes! Was He thirsty? Absolutely! For 40 days Jesus fed His spirit on God moments. He talked with God. He fed his Spirit on the Word of God, and even found strength while doing the will of God. Be encouraged today. Look for God moments. Feed your heart on the living Word of God and find your Spirit renewed as you partner with His will.

- Read Deuteronomy 8:3.
- Search for the will of God today.
- Pray for boldness to share God's word with someone today.

---

---

---

---

---

*Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."* - Mark 10:21

One day Jesus was walking along a road. A rich young man ran up to Him, fell at His feet and asked, "Good teacher, what do I have to do to inherit eternal life?" Little did he know what a loaded question He was asking. Instantly Jesus could see the motives of his heart. It was not common for Jews to call their Rabbi "good teacher". His eager approach, kneeling posture, and profound question revealed his earnestness and respect for Jesus as a spiritual guide. His question also indicated that in this young man's heart was the idea that one could earn eternal life by doing good works and also that he felt unsure of his eternal security. Jesus began to explain to Him that God was the only standard of goodness. By saying this he was not telling the young man that he was not good, but merely communicating that regardless of how good a man is all human beings fall short of God's goodness. He would later demonstrate His Godliness by asking this rich young ruler to follow Him.

Jesus then quoted five commandments that were considered in Jewish culture the easier of the ten. The young man proclaimed that He had kept all of them since his Bar Mitzvah (the time when young boys promised to take personal responsibility for keeping the law). This young man was a rule keeper. He was doing everything right. He was toeing the line and following

the rules and more than likely hoping for one more commandment to check off his list so that he could feel good about his future after death. How many people have you had that conversation with? The more this guy talked, the more he exposed his heart.

We can assume that, by keeping the law, this man was a pretty good guy. He probably treated people well, helped little old ladies across the street, volunteered at the local community center, and more than likely gave financially to good causes. But this was still not enough for Jesus. He was able to see past this young man's religious devotion and see his heart. He even gave him more commandments to follow: sell everything you have and follow me. Scripture says he put his head down and walked away because he was rich. Is it wrong for a person to be rich? Absolutely not! The problem was not that the man was rich, but this man's riches had become his idol. Therefore, since his youth he was also unable to keep the first commandment. ***You shall have no other gods before me. Exodus 20:3*** How does one obtain eternal life? By loving the Lord your God with all of your heart.

- Read the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17.
- Read Matthew 22:37-40.

## Day 6 : Weighing the Cost

*While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.* - Mark 14:3

Mary of Bethany had history with Jesus. You may recall another story regarding a man named Lazarus who was raised from the dead by Jesus Himself. Mary was the sister of this man. The scriptures say that Jesus loved Mary. ***Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. John 11:5*** This was not some crazy woman who had wandered in off the street to disrupt a local gathering. She was a friend of God. Three times before Mark 14:3 Jesus predicts His death and resurrection. Mary, being a follower of Christ, would have been familiar with these statements. On this night she was starting to get it. She was beginning to understand what was going on. She had just watched her brother walk out of a tomb after three days. She heard Jesus speak His living word that put life back into Lazarus' body. Putting all the pieces together, Mary was now realizing what lie ahead of the Messiah. She had loved Jesus before, but on this night she was face to face with her Savior. She was staring into the face of the Son of God. The one who stepped out of heaven onto the earth because of His love for human beings. ***God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood - to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished - he did it to***

***demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. Romans 3:25-26***

On this night Mary was overcome with love for God. This sounds very strange, but this is one of the greatest acts of worship recorded in the Bible. Who would have thought that breaking a bottle of perfume, pouring it upon the Son of God, and wiping one's hair upon the face and feet of Jesus would be considered such a great act of worship? This was not some bottle of cheap cologne like Brut for Men, but rather a perfume that was considered of great value to Mary. It moved the heart of God on such a level that scripture records Jesus saying in Mark 14:9, ***"Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."*** Mary was giving her all. It did not matter what anyone said, she was laying all on the line. And God smiled!

- Block out some time during the day to worship.
- Consider using worship music, write God a letter, or maybe even go for a walk and talk with God.
- Just worship.

*Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*

- Mark 8:34

It is a strange thought to give up something in order to gain something of great value. This goes completely against the American culture, but is so necessary in the Kingdom of God. God is after our hearts more than our words and more than our stuff. The only sacrifice He requires from us is everything that hinders love. When we lay down our selfish interest and earthly securities we are actually receiving more than we are losing. For each one of us this will look very different, but the result will be the same. We will gain Jesus. He is your reward, far better than anything we could choose to entertain the flesh. Taking up the cross set before us sounds scary, but when we lay down everything that hinders love we will receive boldness for the things to come. It is in the moments of gaining more of Jesus that we will also receive the courage, strength and faith to follow Him.

Jesus would never ask us do something that he did not think we could handle and throughout scripture he asks some pretty ordinary people to do extraordinary things. God has the ability to see how great we can be when we are willing to lose everything and fill our loss with His Son. It is an amazing concept. God is calling every one of us to follow him. There are times when that seems scary, hard and impossible, but that only comes when we take our eyes off his Son. Let us be reminded of a few of the "Faithful" from Scripture that victoriously denied themselves, took up the cross and went after Christ with all they had. Luke chapter 2 speaks of two that had devoted the remainder of their years to serving and following righteously after

the Lord and what was their reward? They laid their eyes on Jesus, the Messiah, the One born as Saviour. Simeon and Anna, spent their lives putting God first. They worshiped, fasted, prayed, served and obeyed and what was Simeon's response when Jesus was placed in his hands? "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace." That's right, peace! The enemy works so hard to produce fear, in hopes it will keep us from following Jesus, trusting and laying down what we think is secure for the ability to take those steps of faith, waiting, trusting even when time seems to be passing by. . . Anna waited year after year to see the fulfillment of the promise, with what on the service seemed like to no avail. However day after day she believed in faith, that the greater price was to deny herself and follow regardless of what was seen or felt. And her reward, Jesus! Both Simeon and Anna, laid down their lives to live for a greater purpose, Jesus! Not just in the big decisions of life but in everyday life, they learned day after day to say "no" to themselves and "yes" to pursuing the things of the Kingdom.

- What is God speaking to you in the area of denying "self"? What would He have you say "no" to today?
- Have you determined, really determined to "live" for Jesus? Not just in eternity but in the "here and now"? That means HE leads, you follow. . . how are you doing at following these days?

## Day 8 : The Fellowship of His Sufferings

*I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*  
- Philippians 3:10-11

We do not like to suffer. Everything in us is bent towards comfort, towards producing the greatest amount of pleasure with the least amount of effort. And when we do encounter difficulty, our first reaction is to run from it as quickly as possible. Some deny altogether that they are struggling simply to avoid the appearance of weakness. Most others search diligently for some form of escape, for a short-term means of coping while they feel the sting of hurt, frustration, disappointment, or anger. Some cope with hours of television (watching endless episodes of *The Bachelor*, *American Idol*, or ESPN). Others find escape in sports or athletics, especially those of their children (driving to countless practices, games, and weekend tournaments). Some think that ministry involvement is the answer, that somehow God will honor their service by simply removing their struggle.

Paul in the New Testament did not seek to escape, nor did he shy away from struggle. In fact, Paul counted all things loss for the sake of knowing Christ Jesus – that was his primary aim and goal. He intensely wanted to gain Christ and to be found in Him, to be conformed to His likeness. He desired to know Christ so closely that he was willing to share in the sufferings of Jesus, in order to somehow attain to a similar resurrection. There was no

avoidance in his mind. He was willing to face and press through difficulty so that he could taste of something of infinitely greater worth and importance.

Running away or escaping from our pain and struggles is not the heart of the Father. Jesus certainly did not shy away from the cross and the ruthless, painful road to that hill. He understood that facing and walking through suffering would lead to a greater reward, not only for Him but also for us. He understood that God wanted to accomplish something of eternal weight and significance through His pain. The same is true for us as God's children: He wants to accomplish something of eternal weight and significance in us through our suffering and difficulties. He wants us to face and press through them with a heart set on the redemption and resurrection that is to come.

- How do you respond to struggle or pain? Are you prone to escapism? If so, what do you run to for escape?
- Take a few minutes to profess to the Lord a desire to face your struggles with His help and not run from them. Confess if you tend to seek escape and ask Him to change your heart.



## Day 10 : Consider It Pure Joy

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

- James 1:2-4

On the surface, there is not much difference between a trial and a temptation (James 1:2, 13). In fact, they are variations of the same root word in the original Greek of the New Testament. Both produce a measure of tension and conflict within our hearts and our relationships with others. Both are unpleasant in the moment and both require critical decisions in how we respond. So what is the difference between these two words and why does it matter?

The answer lies in the outcome of the situation, in how we respond. God intends to use a difficult circumstance to refine us, to produce in us perseverance, to lead us to maturity and wholeness. He wants us to find joy in the midst of our difficulty because He is working in us to bring about freedom, healing, and redemption. This is a trial or a testing of our faith. The enemy, on the other hand, intends to use a difficult situation to destroy us, to entice and drag us away by our own desires. He wants to foster sinful longings, which lead to outright sin, and

sin ultimately produces death. This is temptation. Both the Lord and the enemy are standing on either side of us, waiting to see which way we will turn as we begin to feel the weight and pressure of the situation.

Will we turn towards Jesus and cry out to Him with desperation? Or will we turn towards the enemy and succumb to the sinful desires that lurk within us? In our brokenness will we receive the love and truth of our heavenly Father and trust that He knows what is best for us? Or will we begin to agree with the lies of the enemy that promise immediate relief but lead to even greater hurt and struggle?

- What is the Holy Spirit speaking to you? What does He want to foster or develop in you through circumstances you are in right now?
- What possible lies is the enemy trying to tell you?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. - 2 Corinthians 12:7-10*

The power of God is made perfect in weakness. This is incredibly counterintuitive and counter-cultural. Most people spend their days fighting to hide their weaknesses, to minimize their flaws, to put their best foot forward, and to appear as though they have it all together. It is how you get ahead in this world: selling yourself. No one wants to admit they have issues, to confess that they wrestle and struggle. It does not look good, and it certainly does not sell. And if someone actually comes to terms with their weaknesses, they usually make a beeline for the self-help aisle at their local bookstore.

God wants a different reaction from us. He wants us to delight in our weaknesses, in our hardships and difficulties, because it provides an opportunity for Him to show up with incredible power. When we cry out to him in brokenness and humility, he loves to demonstrate that He is good and that He cares for those who turn to Him. He loves to lavishly pour out His Holy Spirit. He wants

us to know that He is sufficient and that this grace is sufficient. He desires that we depend solely upon Him, to know deeply that every good and perfect gift comes from Him (James 1:17).

God did not remove Paul's thorn in his flesh (a messenger of Satan), despite his repeated pleas. Instead, the Father had a bigger plan and greater purpose beyond Paul's ease and comfort. God wanted to reveal Himself, to perfect His power through Paul's weaknesses and difficulties. He is in control and He holds all authority. His grace is more than enough to sustain us in the midst of any storm.

- What are your weaknesses (your thorns in the flesh), and how open or honest are you about them?
- Do you tend to downplay your weaknesses? If so, why?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## By His Wounds We Are Healed : Day 13

*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*  
- 1 Peter 2:24

Easter Sunday is an amazing day of celebration. And it rightfully should be, since the resurrection of Jesus is the defining moment of all history, when He proves to be victorious over death, sin, and the enemy. On Easter Sunday, with our best duds on, we gather with our church family to sing joyful songs, we hear an incredible, gospel message of hope, and we eat an Easter feast with close friends or loved ones. It is a good day, a glorious day.

But if we are not careful, we can easily gloss over the road Jesus took that led Him to His resurrection. It was not an easy road, nor was it a road that He deserved. In the Gospel of Matthew, on the night that He is arrested, Jesus is betrayed and disowned by his closest friends. He is mocked, spat on, slapped and beaten by the temple guard. The Roman governor, Pilate, succumbs to the pressure and shouts of the Jews and has Jesus flogged by Roman soldiers. After He is flogged, the soldiers strip him, mockingly put a scarlet robe on him, and set a painful crown of thorns upon His head. They too spit on Jesus and strike Him in the head with a staff over and over. After putting his own clothes back on Him, the soldiers lead Jesus to Golgotha, where they nail his

hands and feet to a wooden cross, piercing muscle and bone in the process.

Take a moment to think about what Jesus endured. Reread Matthew 26:47-27:56. Let it really sink in to your heart and mind. The glorious resurrection of Jesus could not have happened if He had not first suffered and died. It was the only way He could lovingly take on our due punishment, that He could carry our pain and suffering. He was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities so that **by His wounds we could be healed** (Isaiah 53:5). He pressed through the suffering for our sake, so that by His resurrection we could experience both physical and spiritual healing, so that we can have fellowship and relationship with our heavenly Father.

- Take purposeful time to slow down and truly feel the weight of what Jesus endured. Offer Him praise and adoration for the sacrifice He endured for you.
- What do you need healing for today?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Day 14 : Eternal Glory Awaits

*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.*  
- Romans 8:18

*Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*  
- 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Paul knew suffering. He was imprisoned, flogged, and exposed to death again and again. Five times he received thirty-nine lashings from the Jews. Three times he was beaten with rods and once pelted with stones. Three times he was shipwrecked, once spending a night and a day in the open sea. He lived under constant threat from both Jews and Gentiles, which forced him to stay on the move. He faced the danger of rivers, of bandits, and of unbelievers. He knew what it was like to go hungry and thirsty, to be naked and cold. Why would he subject himself to such hardship over and over?

Paul had his eyes fixed on something beyond his momentary troubles. He did not lose heart because He knew that an eternal glory awaited him, a glory that was not yet seen or known. It was the hope of that glory that motivated him to persevere, to stay the course. He believed deep within his heart and spirit that the glory to be revealed in him would outweigh all the hardships he was experiencing.

The glory Paul anticipated is available to us as well. It is the essence and mystery of the gospel: Christ in us, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). We can endure any hardship – we can be victorious over sin and the schemes of the enemy – when our eyes are fixed beyond this life, beyond our momentary troubles, on the eternal glory of seeing and knowing Jesus fully (1 Cor. 13:12). When we have this eternal perspective and anticipate the wonder of heaven, it gives us hope and joy regardless of our circumstances and struggles. It serves as an anchor in a chaotic, ever-shifting world (Heb. 6:19).

- What are your eyes fixed on right now? What is captivating your mind and attention? Is your heart fixed on Jesus and His glory in you?
- Ask the Lord for a greater measure of hope and joy in the glory that is to be revealed in you. Make a list of the things you long for in heaven.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## The Joy Set Before Him : Day 15

*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith. Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. - Hebrew 12:2*

Before the foundations of the world were ever laid, God chose us to be with Him. He desired that we would be Holy and without blame before His face (Eph. 1:4). Jesus, being the perfect Son in whom God loved, loved the Father so much that it was His desire, His joy to give to the Father what would bring Him great pleasure. The fullness of Father God's pleasure is His love being poured out on His children (John 3:16). Jesus endured the cross because YOU were the joy, the prize He set His life on to win! Jesus went willingly to the cross, He endured its shame, rejection, punishment, wounding, curse, so that He could give up His life to purchase for Himself a people of His very own (Titus 2:13b-14).

We are the treasure of Christ, the Joy that gave Him the endurance to pay the price to redeem us from the world and from the wickedness of sin, purchasing and cleansing us with His blood which was a costly price for such a prize. You are so individually and personally valuable to the Lord that He was willing to give EVERYTHING He had to redeem YOU. What the enemy of our soul had passed off as worthless junk to be

destroyed (John 10:10), Jesus recognized as a treasure of great worth and value (Matthew 13:45-46). Jesus willingly gave up all the riches of heaven just so He could have YOU!

No matter who you are, no matter what your past or background or what others may think of you, it doesn't even matter what you think of you, Jesus looks at you and sees a valuable pearl of great prize. What matters now is who you are because of the blood of Christ and who you are becoming by the power of the Holy Spirit. You are the joy of Jesus that gave Him comfort and strength to endure the cross. He paid full price, no cheap sale, no discount or short-cut but the extravagant cost of His own lifeblood as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

- Have you accepted Jesus' sacrifice for your sin?
- In your own words, why do you think it "pleased the Father" (Isaiah 53:10) for Jesus to go to the cross?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Day 16 : The Victory of the Resurrection

*I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*  
- Revelation 1:18

The Bible affirms that Jesus won an absolute, total, complete victory! His triumph is as real and thorough today as it was 2000 years ago. The resurrection of Jesus was and is the greatest event that ever took place. Satan IS defeated!

Jesus has paid the penalty of man's transgression. He met completely the demands for perfect justice. The resurrection of Jesus made way for perfect love to be let loose. It enabled God the Father to give eternal life, for out of the dark empty tomb stepped the light of the world (John 8:12). The resurrection of Jesus means Satan was defeated and we who were once his slaves would now become Satan's master. The bound are set free, the captive released! Every new creation would become a conqueror ( 1 John 5:4-5). Jesus came, He lived, died and was raised from the grave so we could be free - free from the power and fear of death, free from sin, free from sickness and every kind of bondage, free to love and be loved, free to be sons and daughters of God.

Colossians 2:15 speaks of Jesus' absolute triumph over the devil and all of the demonic principalities that govern this world. The resurrection of Christ confirmed their defeat. *For this purpose the Son of God was manifest that He might destroy the works of the devil* (1 John 3:8).

*"Death has been swallowed up in victory." Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.* 1 Corinthians 15: 54-58

Let nothing move you! There is victory in Jesus!

- What does Jesus' victory mean to you personally?
- In what areas of your life have you personally experienced freedom from the "works of the devil" due to Jesus' victory over the enemy?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Jesus' Victory is Our Victory : Day 17

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.* - Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus purchased all authority on the cross and when we are in Christ we can walk in the same authority and victory that Jesus has. ***Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11*** The NAME, there is power and authority in the NAME! Every child of God has legal right to use it and the authority it represents.

The following verses remind us of the weapons we can use to enforce Jesus' authority to overcome the enemy, our accuser. The blood of Jesus, our testimony and the surrender of our lives. ***Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Revelation 12:10-11***

The fact that Jesus has already won a complete and final victory does not mean the devil will leave us alone.

Jesus broke the stronghold of the enemy's authority and destroyed the works of the devil, not the devil. We still have an enemy that prowls around looking for someone to destroy. ***Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 1 Peter 5:8***

God knew that the enemy would resist us and try to deceive us out of believing everything Jesus did for us at the cross. As we walk in the victory of the cross, we must appropriate the ***exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which he worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named. Ephesians 1:19-20***

- When was the last time you were truly "moved" just at the mention of the NAME, Jesus?
- What areas of your life do you need to be reminded that the NAME of Jesus is far above every other name that is named?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Day 18 : How Can We Live in Victory?

*Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*  
- Matthew 16:24-25

If we are going to be disciples and live the resurrected life, we are going to have to walk according to Matthew 16:24-25. Many were following Jesus, but few were committed to what Jesus said it was going to take to live the life of victory. Let's be honest, how often here in America do we deny ourselves of anything? Are we really willing to lose our lives for His sake?

What does it mean to lose our lives, to deny ourselves? It means you will say "no" to "self" rule, "self" leading, "self" being in control of your life. We must learn to master the soul, in order that we might freely submit to the Lordship of Jesus, allowing Him to lead us, Him to rule over every decision, Him to direct, shape and mold attitudes, ideas and directions. ***For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be Spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:5-8***

It is when we die to the flesh that Christ can live fully in us. ***I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the***

***body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20-21*** How do we live in victory? By living by faith in the Son of God! Believing that He lives in you! He is victorious, He is an overcomer.

WHO He is, is IN you! You died with Christ and He now lives in you. ***You dear child are from God and have overcome them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 1 John 4:4*** You and I can live in victory as we remain in, abide in the victorious One...why? Because the Word of God says we not only have God in us but Romans 8:31 declares that God is for us. God is on our side... we win! Praise Him!

- In what areas of your life do you still need to die to the flesh? Spend some time talking to Jesus about those areas.
- Ask the Lord to show you what your life would look like if He were not for you...then spend some time praising Him for His activity and presence in your life.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Day 20 : Jesus Enters the Throne Room

*My dear Children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. - 1 John 2:1-2*

Are you grateful to Jesus for being your Savior, the mediator between you and a holy, righteous God? You and I had no hope of saving ourselves. It is only by grace through faith and not of ourselves, it is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). But Jesus is so much more than Savior and it will take us all of eternity to uncover the depths of who He is. Take a few minutes to look at two other aspects of who Jesus is.

Jesus as intercessor: ***Wherefore also He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near to God through Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them. Hebrew 7:2*** It makes no difference the depth of need, the difficulty of the problem, how grim things may look. We have a full-time intercessor named Jesus that day and night pleads and converses with the Father on our behalf. The Word of God says He never sleeps nor slumbers, He does not grow tired or weary. He never needs to take a break or feels overwhelmed by our lives, our schedules, or our needs. He just keeps talking to the One who knows what is best in any and all things. Wow, we are never alone in any circumstance. He is there speaking to the Father, capturing the very heartbeat of Heaven concerning you and declaring that into your world. Wow!

The Good News just keeps getting better. Not only is Jesus our intercessor, but He is also our advocate. He is the appointed Attorney General for the family of God. ***If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,***

***Jesus Christ the righteous. 1 John 2:1*** This is one of the most thrilling of all Scriptures written in the New Testament! Oh, how it brings tears to my eyes to think about how many times through my own selfishness I have sinned and broken fellowship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. NOT that they break fellowship with me - but my selfishness and sin separates and breaks fellowship causing unnecessary distance between us. Praise God, Jesus is our advocate! He has provided the way to reconnect. ***If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9*** When selfishness entices us to leave the realm of love and enter into the realm of deception and darkness we lose contact with the Father. When this happens we need a righteous advocate who can go before the presence of our Holy Father and plead the blood of Jesus that cleanses and covers our sin, hiding us in Himself. Because Jesus is seated in the heavenlies with the Father we never face a battle unprotected or alone.

- What areas of your life do you need to turn over to Jesus your intercessor? Ask Him what He and Father God are saying about those areas.
- Ask the Lord to reveal to you any places where you are living in broken or hindered fellowship with Him. Would you be willing to confess it and allow Him to purify you from the unrighteousness of it?





**BELTWAY PARK**  
BAPTIST CHURCH

4009 Beltway South, Abilene, TX 79606  
325.692.6540 | [www.beltway.org](http://www.beltway.org)