



COMMON GROUND RETREAT
**21 DAYS OF
PREPARATION**



Psalm 24: 3-6

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?

And who shall stand in his holy place?

He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to what is false
and does not swear deceitfully.

He will receive blessing from the LORD
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

21 DAYS OF PREPARATION

Join your brothers and sisters in preparing to meet with God at the Common Ground retreat. Together, let's call out to the Lord in desperation. Use this guide to commit the next 21 days to a purposeful pursuit of being "conformed to His image."

You are also invited to join together in a 21 day fast. We are doing a modified Daniel Fast by eating

- no meat
- no dairy
- no artificial sugars

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DAY 1: PREPARATION

“The opportunity of a lifetime must be seized within the lifetime of that opportunity.”
Bill Wilson

Once opportunity is gone you can never get it back. What causes some people to take hold of opportunities and others to miss them? How do you recognize an opportunity? How can you be sure to take hold of it?

The key is preparation. Before every opportunity comes a time of preparation. Read [Matthew 25:1-13](#)

Four important lessons about preparation:

1. The central issue in preparation is the development of our character.

The ten virgins were the same except that five were foolish and five were prudent. Preparation is primarily about developing our character in order that we will be able to receive what God has to give us and take hold of His opportunities. Many times God will wait to present us an opportunity until we have the character to handle it faithfully. The Israelites had to wander for 40 years in the wilderness until they were ready to receive the Promised Land. God is looking for people who will take preparation seriously and become people of character so that He can entrust His riches to them.

2. Life rarely goes as expected. You must be prepared for the unexpected.

Five of the virgins stopped preparing and only prepared enough for what they expected to happen. They felt comfortable and confident that they had everything under control. But, things didn't play out as expected. They ended up not having any reserves to get them through. Many times we can be the same way. In our hidden time with the Lord we develop secret reserves that we can draw on in times of trouble. We develop a deep strength, character, and reliance on the Lord that will get us through the unexpected. But when things are easy, and we feel comfortable, we can be tempted to get lazy and neglect our spiritual disciplines. We think that we have it all figured out and that things will continue to go smoothly. But the truth is that many opportunities come unexpectedly and not in the way that we expected. Sometimes they come disguised as tragedy and difficulty. In those times will you have a secret history with God in which you have developed deep reserves to get you through?

3. You can't rely on other people's reserves.

Everything we enjoy in our lives, we enjoy because someone else prepared. There is a saying, “You can't eat a cake unless someone prepared it.” Think of everything you enjoy because of other people who worked hard to get it for you. We have a lot to be grateful for. But opportunities will come that you must seize and no one else can do it for you. And another person's preparation can't get you through the difficulties that will come in your life. There are many people that we look up to and rely on, but a time will come when they will be gone. A time will come when it is our turn to lead, and advance the Kingdom of God. There are battles in the future that we must fight and opportunities that we must take hold of. When they come will we be ready? In those times we cannot rely on another's reserves but we must have reserves of our own. We must be prepared.

DAY 1: PREPARATION- CONT.

4. When it's too late, it's too late.

This is the most difficult lesson to learn. Maybe you have felt the pain of a missed opportunity, the ache of knowing that you can never get it back. Mark Hoffman has said, "Opportunities have a shelf life." Once it's gone there is no getting it back. God, in His grace, will provide us with more opportunities, but the ones missed can never be retrieved. Whether or not we take hold of these opportunities will depend on how we prepare.

We have a great opportunity before us at the Common Ground Retreat. This is a divine appointment with the Lord. Whether or not we seize this opportunity and get a hold of what God has for us will depend on how we prepare now.

What do you need to do to prepare yourself to meet with the Lord? It is so easy to become distracted with all the amusements and busyness of life that we neglect the far more important things. The greatest opportunities in life will go to those who have taken the time beforehand to prepare. The greatest riches of the Lord will go to those who have worked to become the kind of people that God can entrust them to. The Kingdom of God is for those who are prepared to receive it. God is calling you to be that person.

DAY 2: SOLITUDE

Read [Psalm 62](#) and [Luke 5:12-16](#)

[Luke 5:16](#) “But He would withdraw to desolate places and pray.”

On several occasions, the Gospels note that Jesus would withdraw from everything to be alone with His Father. Jesus valued solitude. He valued it as much as He valued His outward ministry. After performing miracles and healings, Jesus would withdraw to be alone with God and allow His Father to pour into Him. Jesus understood the importance of keeping Himself in submission to God.

[Psalm 62:1](#) “For God alone my soul waits in silence.”

Solitude is the act of being alone with God. This isn't just a physical act. It means also removing yourself from your day and the tasks at hand. Silencing all thoughts, except Him and His Word. Pushing out worries. It means bringing peace to your mind and heart, and trusting God to meet your needs.

[Isaiah 55:3](#) “Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live.”

Solitude is also the act of listening. We can be so focused on praying out our daily needs and bringing our daily checklist to God that we forget to listen to Him. God's direct and personal word to us is more important than our prayers. Giving God a time of silence gives God an opportunity to speak life to you.

Time is highly valuable to many of us. “Time is money” the saying goes. However, solitude is all about giving time for God to speak to you. It shows God that you value being with Him. Is there any wiser way to spend your time, than to spend it before the God of the universe? Silence allows God to search you, challenge you, and encourage you. Spending time alone with God every day opens the door of God's wisdom.

Your challenge today is to devote time to being in solitude with the Lord. Pick a time you would normally talk to your friends or family, and instead get alone with God for that time.

DAY 3: THE FIGHT AGAINST LAZINESS

Proverbs 10:4

Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.

Some people work with energy and joy, taking care in each detail of their work. Others try to get by with the bare minimum of what is required as slowly as possible, with indifference and neglect. Where do you stand? Would you be labeled diligent or negligent? Or is it somewhere in between?

1 Corinthians 10:31

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it ALL for the glory of God.

How would your life look different if everything you did was for God's glory? How would the world look different? What if God's people applied the gifts and talents He gave them to ALL areas of life, not just what goes on inside the church? Hard work and sacrifice are values lost in this instant gratification generation. What is even worse is how we can spiritualize our own laziness.

Have you ever easily given up on a vision or dream because, "God didn't open the door?" What if Abraham gave up on the promise of a son because he was getting really old, so God must have closed the door on that one? But Abraham didn't give up and trusted the Lord, and it was credited to him as righteousness ([Romans 4:3](#)).

Hebrews 6:11

And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through the faith and patience inherit the promises.

The heroes in the Bible who inherited God's promises did not obtain them overnight. For most if not all of them it took years of hard work, disappointment, blood sweat and tears before they received the great promises of God. Because of their diligence and faith in action we get to share the blessings of their achievements. You cannot leave a legacy by passiveness or complacency, only by faith and diligence. Every child of God should realize that they were created to glorify God with excellence in all they do.

Additional reading:

[Proverbs 13:5](#)

[Psalm 128:2](#)

DAY 4: LIVING OUT JOY

Many people today suffer with depression, which takes a toll on every area of life. Depression affects work, it conflicts with school, it upsets relationships, it can ruin health and it taints how people view God. This doesn't have to happen. No matter what kind of experiences a person has had, there is no need to live with depression. God wants to give us a true joy that sets us apart from the standard "victimized" worldview that so many people struggle with. Maybe you aren't struggling with depression but are dealing with negativity in your own heart and find yourself lacking in joy.

It's easy to tell which people carry negative emotions inside and which ones have a spirit of joy. The joy of the Lord is rich and deep and causes anyone who walks in it to be likewise. That's because joy doesn't have anything to do with happy circumstances; it has to do with looking into the face of God, realizing that HE is good, and knowing He's all we'll ever need. That kind of perspective and that type of joy is a choice. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, which means when we are filled with the Spirit, joy is a result. That's not to say we'll never have a negative thought or never experience emotional pain, but that negative emotions should not be a way of life.

God says in [Jeremiah 31:13](#), "I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow." That is God's will for you. Give Him your sorrow, and let Him replace it with joy!

[Isaiah 61:7](#) says, "Instead of shame they will have a double portion, and instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. They will possess a double portion in their land; everlasting joy will be theirs." Even if you have next to nothing, you still have God; He is your portion. Just that can give you joy! Today, pray that God would enable you to shout for joy over your portion, that He would free you from a lifestyle of negative and victimized thinking, and that He would give you a glimpse of His glory through the Joy of the Lord!

DAY 5: THE EXPANSE OF GOD'S LOVE

1 John 3

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!

When you think of your Heavenly Father, what is the first picture that comes to mind? Do you picture Him maybe as you would picture some earthly fathers- easily angered, always keeping record of your wrongdoing and bringing it up at a later time, not there when you really need him? If so, then you have a faulty view of God. The Scriptures teach us that our God not only loves us intimately; He IS love and to know and walk in the expanse of His love is what we were created to do! King David spoke of this amazing love in [Psalm 63:3](#) when he said, [“Your love is better than life; therefore, my lips shall glorify you!”](#) The fullness of God’s love was revealed to us 2,000 years ago when the Son of God hung on the cross for our sins. As [Romans 5:8](#) puts it, [“But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”](#)

The love of God is something that He has graciously lavished upon us, not only for our good and enjoyment, but so that we would share it with others. God loves us so much that He created us in His image, became one of us, served us, died a horrible death on a cross for us (while we were still His enemies) and then rose on the third day! As Christians, we have been completely justified in the sight of God, filled with His Spirit, and called to share the love of God with a lost and hurting world.

If we just bask in the love of God but refuse to share it with others, then we have not truly experienced it ourselves. Our challenge for today is to humble ourselves and show the love of God to someone in need. This could be by buying lunch for someone who looks hungry, taking out your elderly neighbor’s trash for them, or whatever opportunity the Lord opens up for you. As you do this, remember the words of Christ, [“Freely you have received, freely give.”](#)

DAY 6: WALKING OUR FAITH

Read [Matthew 14:22-33](#)

Take a second and think about this passage. Would you have done that? Would you have tried to walk out to Jesus? What would stop you from doing it?

Walking out your faith is putting your faith into action. It's living your life based off what you believe. It's going beyond what you say in church and acting upon it everywhere you go. It's so easy to say things and to make commitments at the height of a prayer meeting or after a great sermon. But once we get out into the world, we're quick to take on the faith of our culture.

In [Matthew 14](#) we read about Peter walking in faith. He is clearly hesitant about trusting Jesus, but Peter loves and knows his Lord and he puts that into action by taking that step. What if I fall in? What if I look like a fool? And I'm sure a handful of other doubts were running through his mind, just like the thoughts that run through ours. Just like for Peter, though, Jesus is right here with us and if we start to sink He's ready to lovingly take our hand and help us back up.

All throughout the Bible we see people acting on their faith, walking out their faith and truly putting into action what they believe and incredible things happen! I'm sure doubts ran through their heads as well, but these great men and women didn't act on doubts, they acted on the Word of our wonderful God.

Imagine if the average Christian did that. If our default action was not to act on our doubts but God's Word and His callings on our lives, things would be very different. There would be a lot more miracles like Peter's and all the others that give glory to God, purely because there would be people regularly stepping into the opportunities for God to work a miracle. Show God you trust him and that you acknowledge Jesus being with you by going beyond saying something in church and instead genuinely acting upon it and living by it.

Our challenge today is to do something bold, acting on our faith, doing something that says, "I believe in and live a life of praise for my Savior Jesus Christ." Maybe that bold action is just reading or praying in public, maybe it's talking to someone or even standing up for what you believe in, or maybe it's something as simple as asking someone to church. Ask God right now to reveal doubts you have about Him that you can work on. Ask Him to give you an opportunity to walk out your faith in a bold way today. Lastly, pray these things for everyone else doing this today.

DAY 7: DEFEATING UNBELIEF

1 Peter 5:8-9

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

Sometimes we unintentionally give the wrong impression about spiritual warfare. We know that our enemy is the devil and that we must fight daily to win, but that's not everything. If the Christian life were nothing but battles, it would be discouraging to fight every hour of every day.

The Christian life is one of joy and peace. God gives us a great sense of fulfillment, and we're at rest because we know we honor Him by the way we live.

In today's scripture, Peter wrote to Christians about their enemy--warning them and urging them to be vigilant, which is where we often put the emphasis. Just before he wrote those words, however, he said, "Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully" (v.7). We must remind ourselves of God's love for us.

Satan tries to destroy our faith with lies like: "If God really cared about you, why would He make you go through this trial?" "If God truly loved you, would He treat you this way?" If he can make you think you're not loved or that God doesn't have your best interest at heart, he can plant tiny seeds of unbelief.

When struggles, trials, and hardships come your way--and they always do--you have a choice. You can heed Peter's words and give God your cares, worries, and concerns. No matter how dark the night or how evil the situation, you must remind yourself that God is not only present with you in those situations, but He also loves you and will provide for you.

Pray this prayer: Dear heavenly Father, the enemy often tries to fill me with unbelief and make me deny Your powerful love for me. But like Abraham, I stand firm on Your promises. Thank You for the comfort I find in Your assurance that You're always with me. Amen.

DAY 8: WORSHIPPING GOD BECAUSE HE IS GOD

Begin this devotion by spending a few minutes writing down why you worship God. Come back after you have at least a few things written down.

Looking at that list, how many of those reasons have to do with the character of God and not His promises? We need to ask ourselves an important yet sobering question: Would we worship God even if heaven was not promised? Even if the blessings we receive were not guaranteed?

Job had the humbling experience of discovering his answer to those questions. After losing wealth, family, honor and his health, his faith had nothing to lean on to other than God. He had to choose whether God was still worthy of being worshipped despite his horrible circumstances.

Our hope is to come to our own conclusion about this question without reaching the devastating situations that Job endured. Use this fast as one factor in deciding your current stage of faith. How would you react to God calling you to give up these things regularly? What if He wanted you to give up some things you enjoy but don't need, or the aspirations you have apart from Him? What if they were taken from you? We cannot know what reaction we may have to these calls unless they happen, but we can do our best to measure why we worship God.

Ultimately, worshipping God because of who He is and not what He gives, frees us from relying on His blessings and pushes us towards a deeper understanding of His character. Our actions will become reactions to His love and grace, and our present surroundings or status will not influence those decisions to obey God.

Look up the reactions that Job had to his ordeal: [Job 1:20-22](#), [Job 2:7-10](#) and [Job 42:5](#)

Here is a challenge for you. Look back at your list and make sure you have listed some character traits that you worship God for. Those are the things that will last, in spite of your circumstances, as reasons to worship God.

DAY 9: AMAZING GRACE

“Grace is the empowering presence of God enabling you to be who He created you to be, and to do what he has called you to do. This means that whoever God has created you to be, and whatever God has purposed for you to do – He has already supplied you with the full measure of grace you will need to successfully prevail in His purpose for your life! You cannot fail – as long as you stay humble.” – James Ryle

Let’s break down the beginning of James Ryle’s quote:

1. Grace is the empowering presence of God:

If you are not a Christian, then you have yet to experience the full depth of God’s amazing grace. A common acronym defines grace as God’s Riches at Christ’s Expense. This gift is not something you work for, or must go through training to receive, but the Bible says in [Romans 10:9](#), “If you **DECLARE** with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and **BELIEVE** in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Right now if you are not a Christian or if you want to recommit your life to Christ, call your home fellowship pastor or the church, and tell someone that you believe and you want Jesus Christ in your life. He is waiting with your gift; will you take it?

2. Grace enables you to be who He created:

Look up [Ephesians 2:8-10](#). Look how Paul defines grace in these verses.

Understanding grace is paramount to carrying out a life that glorifies God. Furthermore, neglecting to acknowledge the grace that God has for our lives can only lead to destruction. Before you end devotions today, pray that God would show you any ways that you might be taking His grace for granted.

3. Grace enables us to do what God called us to do:

When I see the personal grace I have experienced each day in my life, I hunger to serve Him, I desire to love, I have a passion to give, I long to praise Him. When you are able to grasp the depth of how blessed we are to wake up each day, your priorities change from being focused on “me” to Him and God’s plan for your life can then be fulfilled.

Look up [1 Peter 4:10](#) and [Romans 12:6](#) to see the response we should have to grace.

Take a moment and dwell on the grace in your life—a new day, having food, a job, school, clothes, transportation, etc. Write as many of these down as you can and then thank God out loud for each of these things. If this doesn’t take a few minutes then start over!

DAY 18: SHEDDING SHAME

Psalm 103:12

As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our sins from us.

When you think of how God sees you, what do you imagine? Do you see Him looking at you and cringing at all the wrong things you have ever done? Do you see Him shaking His head and asking Himself why He ever adopted you as His child? If these are the images that come to mind, then you have a spirit of shame and have not fully embraced what Christ has done for you.

Here is a brief rundown. All of us are sinners who have fallen eternally short of the glory of God. Jesus, in His love and mercy, lived a perfect life, perfectly fulfilled the law which we never could, died a sinner's death, and then rose on the third day. In accomplishing all of this, Jesus provided a way of salvation for all who have placed their faith in Him. As [Romans 5:1](#) says, "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Although this is the case, so many Christians continue to live with a seemingly incurable sense of shame and unworthiness. This was something that pretty much defined me for years, even after becoming a Christian. I had given my life to the Lord my junior year of high school and was on fire for him. Shortly after, however, I got into a very sinful relationship and lived in sexual sin for about three years straight. Everything was going great (at least in my eyes) until I was caught by my then home fellowship pastor and asked to step down from ministry and leadership. For the years to follow, I constantly saw myself as a loser and unworthy of being called a child of God. It wasn't until I fully grasped what Jesus had done for me, that I was able to shed my shame. God revealed to me that Jesus had taken all of my sins upon Himself and that I had been robed in the righteousness of Christ--completely forgiven of my past.

It is not until you truly realize what Jesus has done for you and your right standing before Him that you will be able to move on in your walk with Him. I want to say, before I move on, that the grace of God is NOT a pass to sin and if you are currently practicing a sin, you need to confess it and take the proper steps to remove it from your life. As a child of God, regardless of your past, you have been washed with the pure and holy blood of Christ, your sins have been forgiven, and when God sees you, He sees you robed in the very righteousness of Christ.

Find 3 verses that speak of justification (forgiveness of sins) and write them down. Throughout the day, read and reflect upon these promises and really take in the truth that we are not defined by our past, but by what Christ has done for us. By the end of the day, try to have these 3 verses memorized. Also, if you are one who is practicing some secret sin, confess it first and foremost to God, but also confess it to a trusted brother or sister in Christ so that they can keep you accountable.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness.

DAY 11: EDURANCE

Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

The reason that Jesus was able to endure through the shame, hostility and the pain that He went through on the cross and our sins, was because He didn't live His life based on His circumstances and how He felt. His eyes were constantly on the Father. Jesus knew that if He didn't keep His eyes on His Father that He would lose sight of Him and become focused on the circumstances around Him and eventually fall. The same thing applies to us and our walk with God. The reason we aren't able to endure through hard circumstances is because we lose sight of Jesus. We turn our focus to the left or to the right instead of straight ahead at Him. So we fall. When we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus He is able to take away our encumbrances and the sin that so easily entangles us, and He gives us the power to endure.

As we are in this time of prayer and fasting for the Common Ground Retreat there are going to be times when we'll want to give up and turn to the left and to the right, but let's keep our eyes on Jesus and remember the end goal is to see His kingdom move at the retreat. He will give us the endurance we need to finish the race.

Some other verses on endurance:

James 1:2-4

DAY 12: HUMILITY AND SUBMISSION

Are you humble enough to accept correction? How would you respond if someone were to come up to you and offer you advice, ideas or a correction that may threaten your preferences, your specific way of doing something, or a decision you made that may have not been the best? Would you respond with humility? Would you hear them out, or would you blow them off?

The Bible has a lot to say on the subject.

Proverbs 19:20

Listen to counsel and accept discipline,
That you may be wise the rest of your days.

Proverbs 13:10

Through insolence comes nothing but strife,
But wisdom is with those who receive counsel.

The fact of the matter is that being approachable is something that all of us struggle with in some way. We all have that bit of pride in us that hates to admit when we're wrong. We all have that stubbornness that doesn't want to hear someone telling us to do things differently.

One of the sure-tell ways to see the character of a person is to see how they receive correction. People's true colors show when they are being given criticism. But the truth is that when we hear a better way to do things, we're being blessed. When someone tell us where our error is, we can gain wisdom.

As we are preparing for the Common Ground retreat and as we are pursuing a closer relationship to our King, it is a great time to reflect on how approachable you are. Can people ever tell you you're wrong? Are you humble enough to let someone tell you how to do things better?

DAY 13: HOLINESS

God is different.

“Then He said, ‘Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground’” (Exodus 3:5).

Before Jesus came to the earth, there were certain sacrifices and ceremonial washings that would have to take place in order for us to be in God’s presence. In fact, not everyone was allowed in God’s presence, it was only the high priest after he went through all of said ceremonial preparations. (You can read about this ceremonial stuff in [Exodus 26](#).)

We no longer have need of any sort of special ceremony and we no longer need to remove our shoes to enter God’s presence. The need of any type of special purity ceremony was taken away because Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice and His blood is sufficient. The point in bringing this up is to help us understand that God is different from us. We must know that God is the same yesterday, today and forever and He is Holy. The law has changed but the Law Writer has not. And He must be revered.

What is Holy is set apart, sanctified and completely pure.

Before we can truly worship God we must know that He is holy. We must know that He is the only one truly set apart and pure. Without God’s holiness, He is just like us, and has no reason to be worshiped.

We are all sinful ([Romans 3:23](#)). We get frustrated when the barista gets our order wrong at our favorite coffee shop. We get impatient and can’t handle waiting at stop lights. We harbor bitterness because someone gave us a wrong look. We get frustrated by a brother or sister and go to others and gossip to relieve frustration...

But God is different...

He is everything good on an infinite level. God is infinitely patient and kind. He is infinitely truthful and infinitely righteous. Think of the most loving, kind, wise person you know of, maybe Mother Teresa or Billy Graham. God is that but infinitely greater. God’s holiness is something that cannot be and never will be grasped by the human mind.

In Genesis it talks about how God breathed the infinite universe into existence and in Exodus how even Moses, one of the greatest prophets of all time could barely get a glimpse of our Lord. The only way we can understand God’s holiness is that it is well... un-understandable. (Go figure.) The depths of His holiness are so great that our minds would explode if He told us all at once. He must reveal it.

We live in a time when God’s holiness is taken for granted. We go too often without recognizing it in our everyday lives. Take a moment and repent for not recognizing it, ask Him to reveal to you something new today about His holiness, wait for Him to answer, and when He speaks to you, praise Him for it.

DAY 14: PRAYER

Dave Hoffman has said, "Prayer is the single most important activity of the Christian life." Prayer moves God's hand. Prayer makes the hidden possibilities a reality. Prayer changes things.

All of these statements seem so obviously true, but why then is it so difficult for us to pray? Why do we struggle to find time to pray in our day? Why are our prayer meetings so poorly attended? If you are like me, this has been a struggle for you. We find time for so many things in our day. We spend hours watching movies and TV, on social media, hanging out with friends, but it seems so difficult to find time to pray. If we really believe in the power of prayer, and really desire revival, then prayer should be the number one priority in our lives.

Here are a few questions to ask ourselves today to help us sort through this important issue.

What is most real to me?

We live in a culture of secular humanism and materialism. This means that the physical world is the ultimate reality. The only thing that is real is that which you can touch and taste and feel. It is a philosophy that puts man at the center, and puts the fulfillment of our urges and desires as the highest goal. If you went to public school, from the ages 5 to 18, you spent 6-7 hours a day, 5 days a week, being taught secular humanism out of government-approved curriculum. That is 30-35 hours a week for 13 years. Outside of school you were saturated in it by the culture through the movies, TV, magazines, music, radio, advertisements, and much more.

What does all this mean? You were trained to believe that the only thing that is real is the physical and to doubt God. The truth is that much of this carries with us into our Christian lives. We must recognize it in ourselves and work hard to change our worldview, to believe what the Bible says, that the ultimate reality is the spiritual and the everything we see came out of the spiritual. We must believe that it is the spiritual reality that rules the physical world. As we begin to change our worldview and beliefs, the things of God will become more real to us and we will begin to value prayer. We will begin to realize that the only way to understand the world around us and who we are is by seeking God. Prayer meetings will no longer seem to be a burden but the most exciting and fulfilling time of our week. Our daily time with the Lord will come alive as we connect with the reality of Heaven.

What am I putting my trust in? What am I relying on?

As we begin to deal with the secular humanist inside of us we will begin to realize that we are putting our trust in things that cannot deliver. We have put our trust in physical things. We put our trust in people, money, possessions, or even our own hard work. These are what we rely on to protect us, provide for us, give us identity, and get us through in life. The Bible says that all flesh is but grass, and warns us not to put our trust in physical things, which rust and rot and are temporary.

Read Matthew 6:25-34.

God tells us to put our trust in Him and He will provide for us. What are you putting your trust in to provide for you? We rush out the door without praying because we need to get to work. We miss prayer meetings because we feel that we need more

DAY 14: PRAYER- CONT.

time to study or that we have too many responsibilities. When you put one thing aside in order to spend time doing another thing you show where your priorities lie. God honors the man who lets himself be inconvenienced in order to seek Him. If we are truly putting our trust in Him, let us make time to pray. Let's make it the most important activity in our lives.

DAY 15: BEING GENEROUS

1 Timothy 6:17-18

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.

I think that every Christian desires to be that super-giving, selfless person that would give the shirt off their own back or lay down their life for a random person. But what stops so many of us from doing that isn't the fact that we have nothing to give. Rather it's that we're too attached to the things we do have. Whether it's time, money or that In-n-Out Burger you're going to buy today, whatever you have, God can use it and you to do mighty things. Even if all you have is 3 loaves and 2 fish or just some extra time, all He really needs is a heart that is willing.

The part that brings me hope is that no one was born with a willingness to be generous. As babies we all loved the word "mine." We had to be taught by our parents the importance of sharing. And as adults we need to be taught the importance of giving.

Give unto your heavenly Father and follow Him as He has been pursuing you and trying to lead you into the paths of generosity. Go out of your way to be generous to someone today. That might range from buying food or Starbucks for the person behind you in line or mowing your neighbor's lawn (if that won't get you killed). I'll leave it up to you, but I encourage you to practice the discipline of generosity and reap the benefits.

Further reading:

[Mark 12:41-44](#)

[Proverbs 11:25](#)

[Proverbs 22:9](#)

DAY 16: FEAR NOT!

Read [Mark 4:35-41](#)

Imagine you're a disciple of Jesus and a seasoned fisherman. You've been fishing the same sea for over a decade and you recently gave it all up to start following this guy Jesus, who has done some incredible miracles and claims to be the Christ, but you're not totally convinced.

It's now evening and after a long day of teaching Jesus tells you and your fellow disciples, "We're going to the other side (of the sea of Galilee)." You all get in the boat and begin sailing south. Jesus takes a nap. The boat is cruising right along but within minutes the wind is thrashing and the waters start raging. Jesus is still sleeping (impressive) but you and the disciples panic, so you all decide, "We are going to die. Wake up Jesus! He'll save us from our imminent peril." You and the rest of the disciples fight through the fierce elements to get to the side of the boat where Jesus is sleeping. All of you are yelling, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" Immediately, Jesus wakes up, rebukes the wind and says to the sea, "Hush, be still." The sea flat lines, and the wind goes silent. Jesus turns and faces you and the rest of the drenched mess of Galilee's finest fishermen. He then questions you all, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have faith?" Yes, you are afraid, and no, you don't have enough faith, not yet at least.

Just like the disciples in Mark 4, we face our own storms in life. But also like the disciples, we have a choice to either panic and assume Jesus doesn't care OR resist the fear and put your whole trust and faith in Him. It wasn't until Pentecost that the disciples were no longer driven by fear but instead by conviction and the leading of the Holy Spirit. As we prepare ourselves, ask yourself, what fears in life are crippling me? Then choose to resist these fears, confess your need for God and trust Him.

More reading on fear:

[Psalm 27](#)

[2 Timothy 1:6-7](#)

DAY 17: DYING TO YOURSELF

Read [Matthew 16:24-27](#)

The world tries to sell us life. Watch TV for 30 minutes and you'll see commercials telling you you'll be happier with a better car, you'll be happy if you eat this hamburger, and if you order our product you'll look how the world wants you to look...and you'll be happy.

Jesus says those who want to save their life will lose it. Those of us who invest in ourselves aren't going to find life. We're going to lose it! We hear this all the time, people getting everything and still committing suicide, people who are living the American dream but feel like they have nothing to live for. We are only going to find that life that everyone is looking for in Jesus Christ.

Once we've accepted Jesus Christ into our hearts, we have life inside of us, and every time we die to ourselves by picking Jesus over the natural desires of our heart and the world around us we're going to be a tool of life to the world around us. We're presenting life, purpose, and freedom to a world that is so desperate for it. If we aren't dying to ourselves and our natural selfishness we're losing life.

But what does dying to yourself really mean? Well, it means going above and beyond how you feel. Maybe you don't feel like being nice to someone because they annoy you. Being rude to them is only putting more death in this world. The compassion and love that we find in the Bible is what's going to bring healing to the lives we come into contact with daily. It's through Jesus Christ that we will find eternal life, so do you want to be just another part of the deteriorating worldly ways? Or do you want to be someone who is bringing Life through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ?

Ask God to convict you of areas of your life that you aren't bringing His life into, and ask Him to show you the places that you can be doing more. Once you've prayed about it, start bringing Jesus, His ways and life to situations you go into today. Maybe that means not telling some jokes you'd usually feel, or reaching out to someone you normally wouldn't. Look for an opportunity to go above and beyond how you feel today.

DAY 18: FREEDOM IN CHRIST

If someone were to ask you what freedom is, what would come to mind? Would personal liberty come to mind? Not being confined? Would you see freedom as an excuse to get away with doing immoral things? The concept of freedom is something that means different things to different people. If you were to ask a marine who served in Iraq what they thought freedom was, their answer would be a lot different than if you asked someone who just finished their 7 years of schooling to be a lawyer. When standing in the middle of this storm of many different views and opinions, it can be difficult to fully understand what freedom is. Even though there are so many different views being thrust at you, it is still very important to decide what your own view is.

Freedom is one of the most important underlying themes of Christianity. Freedom is what Christ died to make available to us. Freedom is what is only possible in Christ. Freedom in and through Christ is something that without Christ is impossible to understand. The amount of weight that is lifted off of you in Christ can't be understood apart from Christ. The joy and peace that comes from freedom in Christ will never be experienced outside of the church.

We wrongly tend to see freedom as the casting off all restraints and becoming masters of our own lives. We mistakenly see freedom as no one being able to tell us what to do. This full control that we tend to see freedom as is merely a myth. Being the master of your own life is an illusion. Never having to bow down to anyone or anything is a lie that we too often believe.

The truth is that we all worship something and whatever it is that we worship is our master. There is never a point in our lives where we aren't bowing down to something. Whatever it is in your life that has your heart's attention, that is the thing that rules you, whether it is your job, your significant other, or your sexuality; the thing that you essentially bow down to is the thing that is your master.

And this is where the topic of freedom comes in. If we are always bowing down to something then is freedom even possible? The answer is a resounding YES! But only under one condition. The only one way to be free is by having Christ be your master. Any master other than Christ will leave you feeling enslaved, tired, and unhappy, and you won't know why. But when Christ is your master, you can and will experience freedom! Paul words this perfectly in [Romans 6:22](#) when he says that we have been freed from sin and are now enslaved to God. By having God as your master, you will experience true freedom.

If you have never experienced the freedom that comes in Christ, ask Him to reveal to you what you worship above Him. If you've experienced the freedom that comes from Christ, rejoice and praise Him for the life that is possible in Him.

DAY 19: OVERCOMING FAITH

1 John 5:4

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.

In our lives, sometimes we have obstacles that seem too daunting to overcome. Whether these are addictions, fears, insecurities, etc., or any combination of challenges, these are barriers to living the free, joyous life that God has for you.

Is there anything that you need to overcome? Take a second a pray about it, and write down what comes to mind.

In my life, I try to remember just a few simple facts whenever I am struggling to overcome something.

The first is whom I serve.

The second is what He has called me to be and accomplish.

Finally, I remember His promises.

When we compare what we are facing to the power of our God and to His love for us, the issue at hand immediately shrinks. Going further to remember what God has done in history and in our personal lives causes our challenges to become weak. Our God is not distant. He sent Jesus in order that we may have a personal and intimate relationship with Him.

Furthermore, God has not called us to sit around and bask in His glory like we are on vacation. God has a specific plan for you to accomplish. There is nothing that God will call you to do without equipping you. Look back at those fears or insecurities you are facing. Think about any sins you may be falling into and remember God has given you the authority to overcome them.

Ultimately, turn to God's promises. [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) tells us that there is no sin that we cannot overcome. [Luke 10:19](#) promises that we have authority over all the power of the enemy!

I want to end by encouraging you to not sit back and ask God to take care of your problems, but to trust God to work in you through whatever you face. He is faithful.

DAY 28: POWER OF THE TONGUE

“Think before you speak.”

Quote by: Every Mom Everywhere

You’ve probably heard this all-too-familiar saying before...most likely from either your mom or a teacher growing up, and most of the time, I bet it was followed by your rolling eyes. Though it’s something we’ve all been told and we all know we should do, but we don’t always take this idea of thinking before we speak very seriously. But according to the Bible, this whole concept isn’t just a polite nicety—it’s a big deal. [Proverbs 18:21](#) explains how, **“Death and life are in the power of the tongue...”** which means our words must carry much more weight than we oftentimes assign to them. With one word we have the power to raise someone up or tear someone down.

A 2007 research study conducted by the University of Arizona over an 8-year period indicated that the average college student (both male and female) speaks around 16,000 words a day. That’s 16,000 opportunities every day that we are given to either lead someone closer to life, to Jesus, or farther away from Him, toward death. Kind of overwhelming, right? So maybe we really should think a little more before we speak.

[Proverbs 17:28](#) says, **“Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.”** I love this verse because, in a way, it takes the pressure off. Sometimes saying nothing is better than slipping up and saying something hurtful instead. If we can’t come up with something nice to say, it really is better if we just don’t say anything. But on the other hand, as Christians, we are called to speak up and speak life into people.

As Christians, one of our main goals should be to effectively convey Jesus’s love to others. The best way we can do this is through both our words and actions. However, if we are stuck in a habit of being pessimistic, complaining, sarcastic, gossiping, etc., we are serving Jesus an injustice with our words. We need to be extra careful that we are speaking love instead of hopelessness, hate, or dissension. We need to make sure that the fruit of our words is life as they reflect our hope, joy, peace, and confidence in Christ.

So I challenge you today to think before you speak. Take a close look at what you say throughout your day. Are your words bringing life or death? Are your words reflecting Christ or the world? Catch yourself if you’re speaking negatively, constantly complaining, or gossiping. As [2 Corinthians 10:5](#) discusses, take every thought captive and make sure it lines up with Christ. If it doesn’t, rebuke that thought, ask for forgiveness and for Jesus to show you how to reshape your thinking and reform your words to glorify His name instead.

Let’s be purposeful with our words and use them to edify each other and even ourselves. As [Proverbs 16:24](#) says, **“Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the mind and healing to the body.”** We have an opportunity to bring healing, to bring hope and life with our tongue. Let’s take that seriously.

DAY 21: VISION

Matthew 16:18

And now I'm going to tell you who you are, really are. You are Peter, a rock. This is the rock on which I will put together my church, a church so expansive with energy that not even the gates of hell will be able to keep it out.

The world is full of naysayers. Some people would say that there are people with vision and people without vision. I would take it a step further and say there are people who have vision and people who fight vision. God has a vision and plan for your life and it is so spectacular that no one would believe it, not even you. In fact, God only gives us small portions of His vision for our lives at a time. If He were to give us the whole thing at one time we wouldn't believe where He wanted to take us and the things He wanted to do with our lives.

Most of us at some point in our lives have been fired up about a vision that God has showed us for our lives. Maybe it was a new ministry, or you got really excited about going to Bible College. You knew for a fact that you were going to be the best youth worker ever, the list goes on and on. But for some reason or another that vision has slowly faded away because of discouragement, other things have come up, or maybe one thing led to another and now you are far away from that thing that you were once so passionate about.

The amount of joy and fulfillment you have in your life will directly relate to how aligned you are with God's vision for your life. I encourage you today to take a moment and reflect on some of the visions that God has given you about your life in the past. Ask yourself how aligned with those visions you are. Then take a few moments to ask God to rekindle that fire that once burnt inside of you.



**JOIN YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN PREPARING
TO MEET WITH GOD AT THE COMMON GROUND RETREAT.
TOGETHER, LET'S CALL OUT TO THE LORD IN DESPERATION.
USE THIS GUIDE TO COMMIT THE NEXT 21 DAYS TO
PURPOSEFUL PURSUIT OF BEING "CONFORMED TO HIS IMAGE."**

