

Preface

“Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ. Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children, and walk in love, as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God.” –Ephesians 4:31–5:2

God is not like us. God is far beyond us, He is far beyond our comprehension, and He is far beyond our imagination. Let’s look at how even the authors of the Bible struggled to understand Him. When Job tried to understand God’s justice, his final remark was, “I reject my words and am sorry for them; I am dust and ashes” (Job 42:6). Paul, praying for the Ephesian church, wanted them “to know Christ’s love which surpasses knowledge” (Ephesians 3:19). To know that which surpasses knowledge is a paradox, it’s a self-contradiction. But being a paradox doesn’t mean it’s untrue. As we’ll see in these 40 devotionals, God is a perfect paradox. But we’re getting ahead of ourselves. Let’s back up to consider that God, through Paul, calls us to imitate the One who is unlike anyone else, to be like the One whose being is unlike ours.

This isn’t the first time that Paul has called his audience to be imitators. Earlier, in 1 Corinthians, Paul told his readers to “Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). But in order to effectively imitate someone, we need to know a lot about them. This is why 20 of these devotionals are devoted to knowing God (definition). We’ll take a look at who God is and how He has revealed Himself in His Word. Then, once we’ve talked about who God is, we’ll ask the question, “What do we do about it?” Once we know God’s qualities, we’ve only finished the preparation for imitation. Now comes the real work: actually imitating Him! That’s why 20 of these devotionals are dedicated to how we respond to God’s attributes (application).

So as we prepare to communally fast, pray, study God, and respond to His attributes, our prayer is that you seek and see God in everything you do. When hunger pains set in, remember the Israelites in the desert and how God provided food for them. When you feel tired, remember how Paul found encouragement in God’s word. When faced with temptation, remember how Jesus said, “Not My will but Yours.” The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Sincerely,

**The Experience Community Church, One Church Calvary, North Boulevard
Church of Christ, Hope Church, Fellowship Bible Church, and City Church**

Before You Begin

BASIC HOW-TO GUIDE

For each of the 40 days of this fast, we have composed a devotion for you to read. Each one was written by a different member of our churches, and they cover a different attribute of God. Before reading the devotion daily, get out your Bible and read the Scripture reference at the top of the page. Doing so will give you the proper context for what is written in the corresponding devotion. Take time to contemplate the portion of Scripture and the devotion as you read them. Try not to rush! After you've read each devotion, take time to pray for 10 minutes. Communicate back to God what He's told you through your reading and tell Him how you feel about what you've read. Most importantly, leave room for the Holy Spirit to speak to you. Don't forget, we are doing this because the Holy Spirit has led us to fast together, just as He led Jesus into the wilderness to fast for 40 days. There is power in us collectively removing distractions and focusing on God. We want to always be growing as a community, and that doesn't just mean numerically. We want our spiritual depth to be even greater than our numerical attendance. If we devote ourselves to reading the Scripture, reading each devotion, and spending time with God in prayer, there's no limit to what God can and will do in this community!

WHAT IS FASTING?

To fast means to voluntarily abstain from certain foods, eating and/or drinking, or certain activities for an extended period of time. Biblical fasting is a discipline of voluntarily denying one's self in order to be available for prayer and communion with God. Since it's an ultimate act of self-denial, you are entering into an intense training in righteousness.

WHY FAST?

There are many reasons why people fasted in the Bible, and all of them are good. Some wanted wisdom and power, while others were repenting of their sins. However, there was one aspect of the fasting experience that each had in common: a personal

encounter with the living God. As you begin to consider reasons for your fast, there is one that will override all other reasons and that is to have a powerful, life-changing encounter with God.

WHY GIVE UP SECULAR MEDIA?

As followers of Christ, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 6:19). Just as nothing unclean was allowed to enter the temple, we should be careful with what we allow to enter our hearts through our eyes or ears. As Christians, we are called to discern what we watch, what we listen to, and what we think about (see Philippians 4:8).

WHAT WILL WE BE FASTING?

In addition to what our churches are fasting listed in the snapshot below, we also encourage those participating to ask and listen to the Holy Spirit about giving up other things for the duration of the fast personal to them; such as social media, caffeine, video games, etc.

2023 40 DAY FAST SNAPSHOT AND BASIC INFORMATION	
1/9-1/18	NO SECULAR MEDIA, MEATS, OR SWEETS
1/19-1/28	NO SECULAR MEDIA; 1 MEAL A DAY
1/29-2/7	NO SECULAR MEDIA, MEATS, OR SWEETS
2/8-2/17	NO SECULAR MEDIA; 1 MEAL A DAY

PREPARE SPIRITUALLY

Ask God to help you make a list of your sins. Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness. Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended, and forgive all who have hurt you as the Holy Spirit leads you.

PREPARE PHYSICALLY

Eat smaller meals before the fast and avoid food high in fat and sugar. If you have a chronic ailment or are on prescription medication, consult your doctor and consider modifying your fast.

Practical Tips and Guidelines

EXERCISE MODERATELY

- During the days when we're fasting a meal or only eating one meal, avoid strenuous exercise and excess physical activity.

STAY HYDRATED

- Make sure to drink plenty of water while fasting.
- Drinking fruit juice during the fast will decrease your hunger pains and give natural energy.
- The best juices are made from fresh watermelon, lemons, grapes, apples, cabbage, beets, carrots, celery, or leafy green vegetables. In cold weather, you may enjoy a warm vegetable broth.
 - Mix acidic juices (orange and tomato) with water for your stomach's sake.

REST AND PREPARE MENTALLY

- Rest as much as your schedule will permit.
- Prepare yourself for temporary mental discomforts, such as impatience, crankiness, and episodes of anxiety.
- Expect some physical discomfort, especially on the second day.

You may have hunger pains and dizziness.

- Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches.
- Physical discomforts may also include weakness, tiredness, or sleeplessness.

BREAKING THE FAST

- Begin ending the fast by eating certain foods gradually. Suddenly reintroducing your stomach to foods you haven't eaten in 40 days will likely have negative, even dangerous, consequences.
- Practice moderation and wisdom in what media you introduce back into your life after the fast is over.

Four Things to Consider

1. BE CONTENT THROUGHOUT

Avoid complaining about what foods you can't eat, movies you can't watch, etc. Don't appear gloomy for people to feel sorry for you or think how spiritual you are. On the contrary, do what Jesus says and "put oil on your head and wash your face" (Matthew 6:17)! Act normal and carry on. We have the privilege and honor of giving things up for Christ, knowing He gave everything up for us. Complaining negates the very purpose of this fast. We don't have to fast, we get to.

2. AVOID VIEWING THE FAST AS A "DIET PLAN."

Some people will see the chief benefits of these next 40 days as getting a little slimmer, getting off caffeine, or not taking desserts for granted. But if we look at Scripture, we see it as a time set aside for deep spiritual urgency, when God's people really wanted Him to show up in a big way.

3. REPLACE SACRIFICE WITH GOD

Sometimes we can get caught up in the "whats" of fasting without thinking about the "who." For these next 40 days, there are things we should want to give up in our lives so that we might replace them with God. As Jared Wilson says in his book "Gospel Deeps," "the soul has a palate and a throat, else Jesus would not bid us drink." John Piper says, "It is

not just our bodies that are built for enjoyment, but our spiritual senses, the insides of our insides." The problem, of course, is that we are bent on thinking our insides will have joy when our outsides do. But it doesn't work that way. It's actually the other way around. Food and drink will not truly satisfy our bodies until the bread and wine of Jesus' body satisfies our souls. For the next 40 days, we get to savor and enjoy Christ without any distractions. If we just give up food and don't replace it with the presence of God, it is of no benefit to us. We'll only be unnecessarily hungry people. Let's all take a moment to breathe in, slow down, and remember not just what we're about to do, but who we are doing this for.

4. FASTING SUCCESSFULLY

If you sincerely humble yourself before the Lord, repent, pray, and seek God's face, you will experience a heightened awareness of His presence (see John 14:21). A single fast, however, is not a spiritual cure-all. Just as we need fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit daily, we also need new times of fasting before God. It takes time to build your spiritual fasting endurance. If you fail to make it through your first fast, do not be discouraged. As soon as possible, undertake another fast until you do succeed. God will honor you for your faithfulness.

Fasting, Sabbath, and “Digital Babylon”

WHAT IS “DIGITAL BABYLON?”

In the book, “Faith for Exiles” by David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock, the authors describe our society’s obsession with digital media. They called the effects and culture of this new way of living “Digital Babylon.” Biblically, Babylon was a place where the Israelites were in exile from their home, Jerusalem, for 70 years. Whereas Jerusalem was known as a place of faith in the true God, Babylon was a pluralistic, fast-paced, hedonistic culture where anything went, and everything was always changing.

Sounds a lot like today, doesn’t it? That’s why Kinnaman and Matlock call today’s culture Digital Babylon. But Digital Babylon isn’t a place like the biblical Babylon. It’s an idea, a movement, a culture. And we’re all in it. Anywhere you go online, Digital Babylon is pushing its values to you. “You’re perfect the way you are.” “Buy our product, and then you’ll be happy.” “Only you can decide what’s true and what’s false.” So our goal, living in the culture of Digital Babylon, is to view ourselves as exiles, not of this world but in this world.

WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT IT?

Kinnaman and Matlock prescribe five practices for building resistance to Digital Babylon, which you can read about in their book. During this 40 day fast though, our urge to you is simple: establish routines of digital sabbath. “Digital sabbath” means intentionally removing yourself from Digital Babylon for a set amount of time. Taking digital sabbath doesn’t mean you can’t even look at a screen until the end of the fast. But it does mean intentionally determining the beneficial or detrimental uses of your devices and eliminating the detrimental uses.

Maybe for you, this means removing yourself from social media, the news cycle, and digital games for the next 40 days. Or you could set aside an hour a day where you don’t look at your phone and are exclusively and wholly present with your family. Whatever you need to do, do something. These 40 days’ whole goal is to focus our attention on God, so remove yourself from a culture doing everything it can to pull you away from Him.



SPIRITUALITY



INVISIBILITY



KNOWLEDGE



WISDOM



TRUTHFULNESS



GOODNESS



LOVE



MERCY



HOLINESS



PEACE



RIGHTEOUSNESS



JEALOUSY



WRATH



WILL



FREEDOM



POWER



PERFECTION



BLESSEDNESS



BEAUTY



GLORY

Day 1 | January 9th



SPIRITUALITY - DEFINITION

Read John 3:1–21

God is a spirit (John 4:24), but what do we mean when we say spirit? For many of us, the term *spirit* means something like “emotion” or “sincerity.” But the term is much richer in the Scriptures. There, spirit describes the immaterial, non-composite, and metaphysical dimensions of the universe—the essence of the universe, its seat of intelligence, of will, of emotion, and of life. There are all sorts of spirits, but God is the quintessential spirit, the highest spirit, and the source of all other spirits.

So, to say that God is a spirit is to claim that God is essentially different from the physical creation. It is to say that God possesses a glory that physical beings cannot attain. It is to say that God is the intelligence, the power, the life behind all things physical. The one and only difference between a dead frog on the dissecting table and a living frog at the pond is life—a non-physical and immaterial quality that, of course, makes all the difference in the world. God is the author of this. God is the spirit behind it all.

Passing through your body right now are a thousand songs, but they are riding on electromagnetic waves. You can only hear them if you turn on your radio. Physicists often speak of many more dimensions than the three special dimensions in which we live. These dimensions are already right in the middle of us, but we cannot see them because we are not attuned to them. In the same way, God the Spirit is everywhere, all around us, all the time, always working out His holy will. But you will only see Him if you tune into Him, which you do through His Holy Spirit.

Or, to use the analogy used by Jesus, you cannot actually see the wind, but you can see its effects on things around you. In the same way, you cannot see God physically, but if you open your eyes, you will see His glory already all around you.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 2 | January 10th



SPIRITUALITY - APPLICATION

Read Romans 8:1–18

God the Spirit is all around us, above us, beside us, and even within us. God is like another dimension that transects our dimensions even while remaining distinct from us. But—and this is critical—God calls us, too, to transcend our physical dimension and to join Him in Christ in this spiritual realm. This is what Paul means in Romans 8 when he encourages us no longer to live merely “physical” lives: lives characterized by lust, selfishness, pride, and the mere gratification of our sensual desires. Rather, God wants you to live with Him in the realm of the Spirit where there is no condemnation, where there is life, where there is peace and glory.

So, how do we do this? Paul is clear. We must set our minds on what the Spirit desires so that we can put to death the deeds of the body. Ultimately, living in the Spirit is a matter of the mind, for it is there that we most fully engage the spiritual realities around us. With the mind, we determine to live by truth rather than by lies. With the mind, we commit ourselves to love and faithfulness, even in a faithless age. With the mind, we determine to live in the hope of eternity, pushing through our struggles, our failures, and our sorrows. To borrow from another of Paul’s letters, we set our minds on things above, where Christ is already ruling (Colossians 3:2–3).

When we set our affections on the spiritual, God begins to transform us into His very likeness. This is what it means to have the Holy Spirit as a “deposit” of Heaven itself (2 Corinthians 1:22). It is what Peter means when he says that we can actually participate in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Accepting Christ through faith, then, not only justifies us in the middle of our guilt. It also opens the door for a whole new way of existing: alive in the Spirit. Acts 2:38–39 says that those who repent and are baptized are given the gift of the Spirit; Ephesians 6:18 teaches us to pray in the Spirit. If you’re ready for a whole new life, put your faith in Christ; repent of your sin; pray for the Spirit; and receive Christian baptism!

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 3 | January 11th



INVISIBILITY - DEFINITION

Read John 1:18; 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16

Have you ever wondered why we can't see God? The Bible tells us in multiple places of God's invisibility, but even still, we struggle to grasp this characteristic of God and what it tells us about His character and nature. So why can't we see God?

First, we can't see God with our physical eyes for the simple reason that He is a spirit, and He doesn't have a body like we do (John 4:24). Paul speaks of this reality when He speaks of Jesus being the "image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation" (Colossians 1:15). But a second reason for why we can't see God is because of our limitations as humans. By nature, we, as human beings, are both sinful and finite. God is far too great, bright, glorious, and perfect for us to see Him with our physical eyes and live (Exodus 33:20). So how does knowing this characteristic about God help us?

God's invisibility reveals to us the vastness of His glory. In our desire to make God relatable and approachable to humanity, we so often emasculate the reality of His glory. But anyone in the Bible who caught just a glimpse of the trailing afterglows of God's glory often reacted with fear, terror, and a profound sense of undoing awe (Isaiah 6:5; Genesis 28:16–17).

God's invisibility also reveals to us His "otherness." We incorrectly assume that God is just like us, only slightly better. But God is not like us. He isn't limited by the constraints of a physical body, and His invisibility is connected to His omnipresence (God is present everywhere at all times).

The vastness of God's glory and the mystery of His "otherness" should lead our hearts to a place of worship and adoration. It's amazing to consider that a God this glorious would be acquainted with the intimate, everyday details of our lives and desire to have a relationship with us. We are sinful, broken, imperfect, flawed, and limited creatures. And yet, this perfect, infinite, immeasurable, and invisible God wants to speak with us. In fact, He loved us so much, He took on flesh, dwelt among us, and even died in our place. Surely He is great, and beyond our understanding (Job 36:26).

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 4 | January 12th



INVISIBILITY - APPLICATION

Read John 1:1–18

The primary doctrine of Christianity is an invitation to dare to believe a scandalous, yet wonderful, idea. The idea that the invisible, immutable, and omniscient one true God—the maker of Heaven and earth and Lord of all creation—willingly chose to make Himself seen and knowable by wrapping Himself in the frailty and familiarity of humanity. This is a significant point of Christian theology because it separates Christianity from all other spiritual belief systems.

All other world religions teach that the invisible, unapproachable, and perfect god (or gods) dwells in some inaccessible, spiritual place: like the summit of the world's tallest mountain. Humanity's goal in religion is to scale the spiritual mountain, hopefully, to someday get to this invisible god through things like good works, religious observance, and morality. Any misstep or miscalculation will send us teetering off the edge into an abyss of judgment and destruction.

However, Christianity teaches something entirely different.

“The Word...”—the invisible, perfect, and unseen God

“...became flesh...”—clothed Himself in human flesh in the incarnation.

“...and dwelt among us...”—He came for us and lived in our world tattered by brokenness, filth, muck, and mire.

Christianity doesn't teach that we must scale the spiritual mountain to get to God. It teaches that God came down from the mountain to get to us.

Jesus said, “The one who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Through the narrative of God's Word, we see the glory of the invisible God made manifest through the person of Jesus (Colossians 1:15). If we believe upon and trust in Him for salvation, someday we will see God face-to-face through Christ. “We know that when He appears, we shall be like him because we will see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

How do we see this invisible God? By looking at Jesus and trusting in Him. If we do, His blood will cleanse and make our hearts pure. Jesus said, “Blessed are the *pure in heart*, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8, emphasis added).

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 5 | January 13th



KNOWLEDGE - DEFINITION

Read Romans 11:33–36

A.W. Tozer wrote in “The Pursuit of God,” “[God] is omniscient, which means that He knows, in one free and effortless act, all matter, all spirit, all relationships, all events.” The oft-used word to describe God’s nature, *omniscient*, derives from the Latin word *sciens* (“to know”) and the prefix *omni* (“all”). Simply put, God knows all things. And, possibly more impressive still, God knows how every bit of knowledge relates to all other bits of knowledge. He understands the implications of every thought, word, and action, spanning the past, present, and future. This type of computing power would humble even your most powerful smart device.

In Romans 11, we see how God uses His great knowledge to work salvation for people who are far from Him. God, in His infinite knowledge, knew the salvation of the Gentiles would stir up a jealousy in Israel that would, in turn, lead to salvation for many Jews. No one saw this coming, but since God’s knowledge is not limited by space and time, He was able to write salvation’s story in a way most compelling to those far and those near. In the middle of explaining this, Paul finds himself overwhelmed, and where we might insert a mind-blown emoji, Paul writes a doxology (praise song) to express how amazed he is at the depth of God’s knowledge.

God knows all things visible and invisible—in Heaven and on earth—past, present, and future. He knows the times set for kingdoms to rise and fall, the day and the hour of Christ’s return, the number of days you have left on the earth, the intent of your heart, the number of hairs on your head, the words you are about to speak (and the ones you stop yourself from speaking), the things you need (physically, emotionally, and spiritually)... He also knows the reason your friend was moody at work the other day.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 6 | January 14th



KNOWLEDGE - APPLICATION

Read Proverbs 3:5–8

God's knowledge is without limits. To contrast that with your limited knowledge, consider this brief exercise: On a blank sheet of paper, draw a large circle to represent everything that can be known. Then, fill in a part of the circle to represent how much you know. If you are an honest person, you will be staring at a lot of empty space at the end of this exercise. It's humbling to realize that within the entire story of the cosmos, you've only been around for a few years; you've only seen through two eyes; you've only heard through two ears; and you have limited faculties to understand the relationship between every point of knowledge and its infinite counterparts.

In Proverbs chapter 3:5–8, the wise king Solomon is teaching his son to live in the sobering reality of his own limitations. Solomon knows that the day his son thinks he "knows it all" will surely be the day he loses his way and meets his own destruction. Far better to trust the one who has the picture on the front of the puzzle box than to trust yourself with a few small pieces of a 5,000-piece puzzle. Solomon pleads with his son—*God knows more than you know. He sees what you cannot see. Lean into His knowledge, and don't pretend you know more than you actually know.*

To trust God more than your own understanding means learning to obey fully what you do not fully understand yet. Jesus once said to Peter, "What I'm doing you don't realize now, but afterward you will understand" (John 13:7). God will someday make clear to you why His way was superior to the way you might have gone, that just might not be today. Good parents don't let their toddlers eat all the sweets they want, whether the toddler fully understands tooth decay or not. Like a good parent, God's instructions for your life are grounded in knowledge far greater than your own. He knows the way to a full, abundant life, and He is eager to lead you there.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 7 | January 15th



WISDOM - DEFINITION

Read 1 Kings 3

To better understand God's attribute of being wise or showing wisdom, we must first realize there is a distinct difference between godly wisdom and worldly wisdom (wisdom of man). Worldly wisdom is plentiful and can be found from multiple sources, but true wisdom can only be found in God, as He alone knows where to find it (Job 28:23–25). Worldly wisdom will lead us to be puffed up and pursue selfish outcomes, where godly wisdom will humble us and put us on a path of pursuing righteousness. The pursuit of wisdom is not a bad thing, but we must be sure that our pursuit is guided by the right motives and a desire to use the wisdom we have received for the right cause.

When we read 1 Kings 3:9, we see that Solomon desired a “discerning heart” to be able to lead God's people and to “distinguish between right and wrong” (NIV). He could have sought guidance from wise men of his time, drew from past experiences, or trusted in himself to make the right decisions, but Solomon knew that true wisdom could only be found at the source. Solomon, exhibiting humility and meekness, asked God to give him wisdom above all the things the world could offer. He could have asked for anything, but Solomon knew that everything meant nothing without the knowledge of how to use those things properly.

Solomon and the psalmist were both intimately aware of this attribute of God. As said in Psalms 147:5, God is infinitely wise. This means He cannot be any wiser or any less wise. He just is! For Him to become any wiser would mean that new information would have to be presented to Him— something He hasn't thought of—and Paul, in Romans 11:33–36, points out how that is an impossibility.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 8 | January 16th



WISDOM - APPLICATION

Read James 1:2–26

The book of James is an amazing book that discusses in several passages the dichotomy between God’s wisdom and man’s wisdom. In the verses we read today, we see God’s wisdom as it applies to us facing trials and temptations. If godly wisdom can be defined as God knowing the greatest outcome in any situation and the best way to achieve that outcome, then we can trust that God sees the “big picture” and each piece of that picture in proper relationship to the rest. So whatever trial, tribulation, or temptation we face, we trust. We trust that God is working all things (the “big picture”) together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). Knowing this, we trust that God has the wisdom and the ability to take the trials we face and use them to mature and complete our faith so we are lacking nothing (James 1:4).

Verse 5 in the reading says, “if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him.” In humility, we all realize that we are lacking and should pray to God to give us wisdom, and we can trust that He will give it to those with sincere hearts.

First, trust that God loves you and that He has a plan for your life. His plan is not to harm you but to prosper you, to give you hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11). Secondly, pray to the only wise God (Romans 16:27) for His wisdom to be given to you. Stop seeking wisdom secondhand and boldly go to the source because He cares for you. Why would a God who gave everything to us (Romans 5:8) withhold His wisdom from us? He wouldn’t! Go to Him in awe of who He is and of His greatness.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 9 | January 17th



TRUTHFULNESS - DEFINITION

Read Jeremiah 10:1–10

It seems like everywhere we turn, someone has a different version of truth. “What is true for you may not be true for me,” as they say. Despite all of the different perceptions out there, a single constant remains: *Our God is truth.* It’s His very nature. Creation itself was born out of the words of His mouth; promises were fulfilled because He spoke them. The truth of His Word should be the foundation we build our lives upon.

If anything, this is what He desires for us all: to build our foundation on His foundation; to build our families on His truth and His words.

We see in Jeremiah that the struggles of the world are the same today as they were back then. There’s an old saying that the enemy is persistent, but he is not creative. He’s been using the same tactics for thousands of years—trying to pull our attention in every direction and deceive us with false narratives. It’s a common theme in Scripture, and the same is true today. Everywhere we turn, there are lies that are packaged as new truths. Even so, the word and truth of God have effortlessly prevailed. Despite the deception and distraction, all of creation is still subject to His sovereignty, to His Word, and to His nature.

As followers of Jesus, we must do our part to remind ourselves of the endless truth found in the nature of God. As the sun sets in the west and rises in the east, the truth which has stood against time will never fail. His character, His nature have been setting the standard for truth for all of history. Be encouraged by the fact that we worship a God of truth, who keeps His promises, and His promises are “yes” and “amen.” Today, ask yourself where you see the truth of God and His promises in your life.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 10 | January 18th



TRUTHFULNESS - APPLICATION

Read 1 Peter 1:13–25

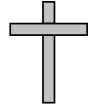
Navigating through this world can be challenging—circumstances change, worldly culture pushes and tests us, and people try to sway us toward their narrative. However, as we begin to grow in our understanding of God’s nature and His truthfulness, we can become confident that our lives will reflect His Word, and not the word of the world. For most of us, this is a non-linear process—a process that we should never give up on.

This is why Peter is writing to the church, which was under state-sponsored persecution at the time, to remind them to hold fast to the truth of the gospel. Through Jesus, we have been redeemed from our sins and adopted into His family. We were once sinners in darkness, but He called us out from that place. He set us apart and graciously allowed us to enter into His truth. At the end of this passage, Peter challenges the church to remember that when everything fades away, the truth of the gospel will still remain.

Christ alone is all grace and all truth. When the challenges inevitably come, reflect and remember this: The Word of God is as constant as it is unshakable. It is the one single thing we can confidently put our faith and hope into, and it’s because of that simple extraordinary truth we can have hope for what is to come. Today, take the challenge to apply the truth of Scripture in your life. In what ways do you need to renew your mind with the truth of His Word? In what ways are you allowing the lies of the world to define who you are? As we see the truth of who God is, we will discover the truth about ourselves, and, as Jesus says, “the truth will set you free”(John 8:32). Let us step into the freedom and truth of our Heavenly Father.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 11 | January 19th



GOODNESS - DEFINITION

Read Genesis 1:1–31

“Good” is an oft-repeated word in our culture. We flippantly say both “God is good” and “Hamburgers are good” (especially today if you are fasting meat). The toddler who shares their colorful wooden blocks? They are good. The book we can’t put down even though it is midnight? It’s also good! But when we talk about the goodness of God, it is something more than a juicy burger or the “I’ll-just-read-one-more-chapter” book.

Goodness is simply the quality of being good, and the goodness of God is the standard of good in the world. Like Mary Poppins’ tape measure, it is the degree by which all things are measured. Since goodness is something worth approving, like the hamburger and the nice toddler, God’s goodness means everything He does is worthy of approval (see 1 Timothy 4:4–5).

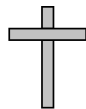
The perfection of the Garden of Eden displayed God’s goodness. The author of Genesis notes that God saw what He created was good. He saw His creations—the insect with the brightly-colored exoskeleton, the blooming flower with layers of silky petals, the coarse nutrient-filled soil scattered across the earth—and approved. God reveals Himself through creation (see Romans 1:20) and creation expresses His goodness. The veins of a white oak tree’s leaves, the uncountable stars in our universe, and the mirroring of a monarch butterfly’s wings all proclaim that God is worthy of approval.

When we think of God’s goodness, it can be easy to believe when something is hard, sad, or trying, it is not from Him. However, goodness pairs with other attributes of God, like justice, wrath, and sovereignty.

Our circumstances do not determine God’s goodness. Unlike the burger whose goodness is subject to change, based on the quality and maybe the hunger of the consumer, God’s goodness is constant and not dependent on our circumstances. He is our anchor—unchanging, reliable—and always trustworthy (see Hebrews 6:13–20; James 1:17; Numbers 23:19). As the gospel song says, “God is good, yes He is. He’s good all the time.”

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 12 | January 20th



GOODNESS - APPLICATION

Read Amos 5:4–15

After yesterday's reading, we know God is good. Yet, we may look at our lives and wonder, "Where is the evidence of His goodness?" When we experience seasons of grief, hurt, loneliness, or trauma, we may question, "Is God truly good?" When reading the chapters following Genesis 1, we find passages outlining the sin that entered the world. These difficulties were not part of God's plan; His goodness rests outside the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin.

Later in the Old Testament, we find Amos, a sheep-breeder-turned-prophet, in his namesake book. God speaks through him in the middle of Israel's struggles of injustice and neglect under their king, Jeroboam II. God tells Israel to "seek me" and "pursue good," which notes the two are synonyms. Around 40 years after Amos' prophecies to Israel, they were captured by Assyria (see 2 Kings 17). Not because God wasn't good, but because He was sovereign and had a plan for Israel, which included the consequence of being exiled. Our challenging situations are not a reflection of God's goodness. On the contrary, we can always find His goodness in our pain (though perhaps not in the midst of it).

We see this throughout the Bible:

- God was good to Rahab and spared her life, though she lost her home (see Joshua 6).
- Ruth saw God's goodness yet suffered significant losses (see Ruth 1–4).
- Hannah experienced God's goodness after years of infertility (see 1 Samuel 1–2).
- God was good to Job, even though he was stripped of worldly pleasures (see Job 1; 42).

Their situations did not demonstrate God's absence or lack of goodness. Through their challenges and trials—in God's sovereignty—He was good. Let's be intentional during this fast to discover the goodness of God in our stories—even amid hurt and grief. We must never overlook God's goodness in our lives because of our situation. God's goodness is not dependent on our circumstances. As the saying goes, "God is good all the time; all the time, God is good."

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 13 | January 21st



LOVE - DEFINITION

Read 1 John 4:7–21

As we read this passage, it is interesting to see how it describes the mere concept of love as God's entire being. It's not a trait or an aspect, but it's who He is. It's in everything He has done and will do. Even if we dislike something He's done, it's still love. We get a glimpse of this from our parents. We may not have liked the rules they had for us, but as we got older, we saw that the rules were there because of love. This kind of love can be such a foreign concept to our human brain.

Love is a word we tend to throw around almost carelessly. We talk about how we love a meal or a movie or a band. When we end up seeing love as taking pleasure in something, it cheapens the concept of love. The type of love God is, is not dependent on pleasure. It's His entire being. When we can grasp that God is love, it opens us to a love we've never experienced.

1 John 4:9 says God showed us an unfathomable love by sending His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins. Let that truly sink in for a moment. In a culture where we pride ourselves in our possessions, God gave up the thing most precious to Him, His Son. We continue to see that love on display when Jesus gives Himself up while knowing the pain and torture He would endure. I think we've almost become desensitized to the magnitude of the love required to go through with something like that.

The entire Bible is really a love story. It's God's love on display in His redemption plan for us. Our entire ability to love—truly love—comes from God. To love our enemies and forgive those close to us is the type of love that can only come from our Creator. The closer we get to Him, the greater our ability to love becomes.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 14 | January 22nd



LOVE - APPLICATION

Read Mark 12:28–34

How should we love people? Mark 12 says to love your neighbor as yourself. That's heavy. Examine your daily routine for a moment. How much of it revolves around the love of yourself? So much of our lives are wrapped up in self-absorption. "How does this make me feel?" "How does this make me look?" "My favorite foods..." "My favorite coffee shop..." They're all about loving ourselves. We can even twist our serving of others into ourselves. There's nothing like a pat on the back for a job well done to make us feel good about ourselves.

We have to shift our focus to outside ourselves to begin to love as God has commanded. It needs to be in everything we do. Try to view every person you encounter in the way God would view them. Instead of being mad with the cashier at the grocery store, look to see what they might be struggling with that day. Are you angry with your neighbor for cutting his grass at 6:00 am on a Saturday? Maybe take him a cup of coffee and learn about his life and why he cuts at 6:00 am. Maybe even offer to cut his grass if his schedule doesn't allow a better time.

The more we love God, the more natural it is to love people. So how hard should we love people? Mark 12 says to love God with all your strength—that's how He loves us. If you've ever lifted weights, you know there is a maximum amount you can lift. However, you can always lift just a tiny bit more if you really push yourself. That's your whole strength. Live your life with a crazy love. Love with all your strength.

When it gets hard, love more.

When it's easy, love more.

When it's people different from us, love more.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 15 | January 23rd



MERCY - DEFINITION

Read Exodus 25:8–22; Hebrews 9

Mercy. The word is heard frequently. We sing it in our worship songs; mantras of mercy are hand-stitched onto throw pillows; prayers for traveling mercies go up, and protection is expected to come down. For a word so common, we can take for granted its multi-faceted implications. This attribute is one that God allows us to share with Him. One facet, only He can do personally, perfectly. We'll look at that one today. Another facet, we are able to put on with the help of the Holy Spirit. This one we'll explore tomorrow.

To fully appreciate God's mercy, having a proper grasp of God's justice is foundational. In order for God to be a good and just judge, proper payment must be made for breaking His holy law. The wages of sin is death. All are sinners, so all deserve that sentence. However, the fact that you are alive today is evidence of God's unmerited mercy. He sees our helpless state apart from Him and compassionately gives us an opportunity to come to repentance, turn to Christ, and receive mercy.

In Exodus, we catch a clear glimpse of God's mercy through His plan to make payment for sin. He asked the Israelites to build a tabernacle of worship. In the middle sat the Holy of Holies, and inside laid the Ark of the Covenant. The ark was a golden box hosting the 10 Commandments, which the people were expected to keep—hefty responsibility. The lid, which sealed the law into the box, was called the Mercy Seat. Annually, sacrificial blood was sprinkled there, sparing Israel from condemnation. On this throne of mercy, God took His seat. Picture it: mercy literally covered the law which God's people could never fulfill.

The law condemned, but God generously dispensed mercy from His mercy seat. Ultimately, the law pointed to Christ, the only One who could fulfill it. In a perfect and final display of mercy, He took His place on the mercy tree, compassionately offering salvation through His shed blood on the cross. Oh, praise Him for the mercy tree!

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 16 | January 24th



MERCY - APPLICATION

Read James 2:1–12

Mercy is a display of God's goodness toward humanity. He sees our distress and suffering caused by sin, and, out of love, His heart reacts compassionately. If fallen man can receive mercy from the God of the universe, how much more do we have the opportunity and obligation to extend mercy to those around us? Not only does He offer us the privilege of imitating Him, but He urges us to do so. God is mercy, and He expresses Himself by being merciful. As image bearers of God, we reflect His character when we grow in it.

Peel back the curtain on your heart for a moment, and reflect on the following question. In what circumstances do you find it the most difficult to show mercy? Toward whom do you struggle to display compassion? Be as specific and honest as you can. Now let's dig down to the root of it and consider this question: What is the posture of your heart in those moments? I'll go first. For me, the root is generally self-righteousness. Appointing myself as judge, I take my place on the throne, but, unlike Christ, my seat isn't one of mercy.

Now that we have taken a peek behind the curtain of our hearts, we can learn how to apply God's instructions specifically. Micah 6:8 sums it up beautifully in three statements: Seek justice; love mercy; walk humbly with God. Walking in humility is the key that makes the first two phrases possible to achieve in tandem. Without humility, both acts of justice and acts of mercy flow from self-righteousness. I would argue that it's impossible for self-righteousness and compassionate mercy to coexist.

How does the Christ follower extend mercy? By forgiving as we have been forgiven. By caring for the needs of others as Christ has done for us. By giving of ourselves to aid others in distress.

As you seek to imitate Christ, remember He takes His seat on mercy. Now, let's live like this is true!

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 17 | January 25th



HOLINESS - DEFINITION

Read Revelation 4

Few biblical terms are more thought-provoking and yet more difficult to grasp than what could be considered the mother of all God's attributes. It isn't necessarily superior to the others, just more comprehensive. Because of that, God's people have understandably had to strain some to get their heads and hearts around the vastness of what we're told is His holiness.

It's no surprise that the most vivid biblical encounters with God's holiness (Isaiah 6; Revelation 4) take place in what is described as His throne room. Everything and everyone mentioned in that environment, besides God, point to this singular attribute which in turn serves to encompass all other attributes God possesses. Holiness is spectacularly true of God while also modifying every other quality bound up within the Great I Am.

To say it another way, the concept of God's holiness is somewhat of a revelatory catch-all for the pure, infinite, and unfathomable attributes perfectly possessed and displayed by the One who made all things with a word and for whom all things ultimately exist.

It's no wonder the heavenly creatures inhabiting God's throne room declare again and again, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty ..." In addition, the word "holy" is a name of God (Isaiah 57) and the descriptor of His ways (Psalm 77:13). Finally, His holy presence in space and time (i.e., the Old Testament Temple) somehow imparts holiness to His surroundings.

Understandably, this attribute of God emphasizes His otherness and the sense of distance between Him and all He has made. Nevertheless, it could be said that God's holiness is what most amplifies the overwhelming expressions of grace, mercy, and steadfast love He extends to those who are not like Him; those like us, who have been defiant toward Him.

God's holiness is an unquestionably cause for pause, reverence, sobriety, and worship. It is also the attribute of God for which we can be most grateful, for it is the foundation upon which the kind intentions of all His promises are made true.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 18 | January 26th



HOLINESS - APPLICATION

Read Isaiah 6

What comes into your mind when you think about God? A.W. Tozer wrote years ago in his book “Knowledge of the Holy” that our answer to that question is the most important thing about us. He believed our concept of God most shaped our approach to God, our worship of God, and our life before God.

Having read Isaiah’s encounter with God in Isaiah 6, how closely does your concept of God align with what he described? It’s tempting to downplay Isaiah’s alarming experience and chalk it up to a more primitive depiction of God. But doing so stunts our grasp of who God truly is and who we are in relationship to Him.

When the seraphim declared, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Armies,” they emphasized that God is not confined to our expectations. In addition, God isn’t merely the most magnificent version of our best ideas of what He is like. He is wholly other, far above and beyond anything we might conceive on our own.

Now buckle up! As God’s people, we are called to be holy in all our conduct as He is holy (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:15–16). That’s a tall order! It’s no wonder Isaiah cried out, “Woe is me for I am ruined” when he was personally confronted with God’s holiness.

As with Isaiah, God must do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He alone can remove our iniquity; atone for our sins. Our holy God is our only hope. He tells us to boldly approach His throne of grace—as unnerving as it might be—confident that we will receive mercy and find grace to help us in times of need (Hebrews 4:16).

Be assured, we will become holy in our conduct only to the degree we are willing to immerse ourselves in the overwhelming but transformative holiness of our God. As you and I allow the holy Word and Holy Spirit to repeatedly wash over us, we will find that our thoughts, words, deeds, and relationships will increasingly display the true, holy nature of God.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 19 | January 27th



PEACE - DEFINITION

Read Philippians 3:12–4:9

What comes to mind when you think of peace? A nice rock garden with gentle string music in the background? The 30 seconds of quiet you spend sitting in your car between leaving home and starting your commute? These things aren't bad in and of themselves, but they're also not an all-encompassing image of God's peace. So often, we think of peace as the absence of immediate conflict or responsibility. But God is actively engaged in spiritual conflict and always working. So what is biblical peace? It seems, from this passage and others, that God's peace is a unity and confidence of mind.

In this passage, Paul is warning the Philippian church against internal conflict and worrying about suffering. And how does he choose to characterize God as the antithesis of these things? As the God of peace who gives peace. If Euodia and Syntyche had God's peace, they wouldn't be quarreling; they would agree in the Lord! If we had the peace of God, we wouldn't worry over anything, we would rejoice and give thanks in everything! It is only through the peace of God that we can achieve these things.

Romans 16:19–20 helps clarify our view of God's peace further. This same God of peace, who helps us—and even commands us—not to worry, will soon crush Satan! How does crushing coincide with peace? Because peace cannot coexist with conflict, they are antithetical. So in order to restore peace to creation, God must execute the final conflict. This God of peace will, because of His peace, execute final judgment on death, the devil, and all evil (Revelation 20).

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 20 | January 28th



PEACE - APPLICATION

Read James 3:13–4:10

So how do we respond to God's peace? How do we seek to be people of peace like God is the God of peace? James helps us see this by contrasting the negative and by explaining the positive.

Envy and selfish ambition are antithetical to God's peace. Immediately after James equivocates peace and righteousness in 3:18, he rhetorically asks why his audience doesn't have that peace. Then he explains how the envy and selfish ambition in 3:13–16 results in not only wars "among you," but also war "within you." Not only do they lack peace in their groups, they don't even have peace within their own minds! James goes even further than conflict in and among people to say that this envy and selfish ambition results in conflict with God Himself. Certainly, this is not the unity and confidence that characterizes God's peace.

But positively, James explains how righteousness, wisdom, and peace are all interrelated. If one is present, then the others naturally follow. The wisdom that comes from God naturally results in a love for peace. And that love for peace is accompanied by good fruit, namely the fruit of righteousness. But how do we get that fruit of righteousness? By working in peace so that we can gain more peace. So wisdom, righteousness, and peace are all deeply interconnected.

So, back to our original question, "How can we be people of peace?" We must first recognize that this peace does not come to us naturally. Our natural inclination is to be bitterly envious and selfishly ambitious. Therefore we need to look outside of ourselves for God's peace. We must ask Him to make us people of peace. James makes it clear in this passage and earlier (1:5–8) that God will give us the things we ask for, but with a big "if." God will help us be more like Him if we ask truly believing that He will provide, and for the purpose of glorifying Him, not ourselves.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 21 | January 29th



RIGHTEOUSNESS - DEFINITION

Read Romans 3

The International Bureau of Weights and Measures (IBWM) is an organization sponsored by 59 nations that act together on the measurement standards for metrology. Based in France, the IBWM holds the official standards for what is used for measuring objects around the world. The IBWM established objective criteria for the meter, and all other measurements are held to what they collectively say is a meter. They also possess an object whose mass is officially one kilogram. Both the meter-long stick and the one-kilogram object are what they are because the 59 nations which form the IBWM declare that is what they are. Collectively, they agree on the standards, and every other measurement on the earth has to “measure up” to their objective standards.

In similar fashion, God’s attribute of righteousness (Psalms 89:14) is based upon who He is. He sets the standard for righteousness. He is right, and He cannot be wrong. He *is* the IBWM of proper morality and character. To say it another way, God’s righteousness is the divine attribute that God always acts within His own righteous character. If God does something, it is right because God was the One who did it. *He*—and He alone—is the standard.

Our problem is that when anyone or anything is measured up against Him, we are all found wanting. None of us is God, and therefore, not one of us is righteous (Romans 3:10). Due to sin, none of us can be righteous like He is righteous. Unless...

Unless He decides to declare us righteous. You see, the only chance we have to be righteous is if God declares it. Why? Because God is always right. He cannot be wrong. This is one reason why this attribute of God is so awesome because even if something “is not,” it becomes “is” if God declares it to be so. And what has to happen for God to declare our righteousness as so? We choose to put our faith in Christ’s righteousness and not our own. We admit our own failures, we trust in the atoning work of Christ on Calvary, and God chooses to declare us righteous. Hallelujah!

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 22 | January 30th



RIGHTEOUSNESS - APPLICATION

Read Job 40:1–14

The majority of the book of Job is a debate between Job and his friends about why he is suffering. His friends believe God is punishing Job for sins, but Job maintains his innocence and believes God is unrighteously inflicting suffering. The issue was that none of them truly understood God's righteousness. They each had a different conception of how God's world should work. But none of them were even close to how it really is. None of them were conformed to the righteousness of God.

So how do we conform to God's righteousness? First, we must recognize (like Job eventually did) that on our own understanding, we do not know true right from true wrong. This is why Hebrews says that our senses must be trained to distinguish between good and evil (see Hebrews 5:14). If such distinction came naturally to our conscience, we wouldn't need training! Second, after that recognition, we need to begin training. The best way to distinguish between the real deal and an imitation is to handle the real stuff a lot. Meaning, quite simply, we need to be reading our Bibles—a lot. We need to read stories of people who got it right and people who got it wrong and be told which is which. As time goes on and we spend more time training, eventually, we learn how to recognize in the world around us what God calls good and what He calls evil. We won't be great at this at first, but over time, God will grant increasing understanding. Hebrews 6:10 assures us of this and other things when it says, "...God is not unjust; he will not forget your work..."

So today, let's continue exercising the muscle of distinguishing between good and evil. Pray that God will help you see and understand these things and more in His Word and in His world.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 23 | January 31st



JEALOUSY - DEFINITION

Read Exodus 34:1–28

God's jealousy is not like our jealousy. When we think of human jealousy, the first things that come to mind might be wanting our friend's car, our boss' salary, or our neighbor's spouse. The central issue in each of these scenarios is that we desire something that is not ours. But God's jealousy is different. God's jealousy does not desire something He does not have. He already has everything. God's jealousy desires to protect and keep what He already has. Think of it like your significant other, if you have one. In a monogamous relationship, you don't desire to share your partner with someone else. If someone tries to take them from you, you intervene. You are, in a word, jealous for them.

So when we read in Exodus 34 that God is a jealous God, we must understand that this is a holy and righteous jealousy, not a sinful jealousy. His jealousy is for His people, like a groom for his bride. When His people leave Him for other gods, His jealousy burns deeply. But like any good relationship, in order for an expectation to be met, it must be communicated. This is why God, as He is establishing His covenant relationship with Israel, emphasizes here exactly what He expects from them. He expects their faithfulness.

We must also understand that to say God is jealous means that His jealousy runs as deep as His justice and His love. The ESV even translates 34:14, in part, "[God's] name is Jealous." God is perfect jealousy. This is why Paul can rightly describe himself in 2 Corinthians 11:2 as feeling a divine or godly jealousy. Jealousy, rightly directed toward protecting what is God's, is an aspect of bearing the image of God.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 24 | February 1st



JEALOUSY - APPLICATION

Read Ezekiel 16:1–43

Ezekiel 16 is a shocking chapter. But our focus here is on two aspects of this chapter: jealousy and infidelity. Ezekiel 16 speaks poetically and symbolically about Israel as the bride of God. The chapter opens with a very beautiful passage about how God lavished Israel with gifts when no one else wanted her. He nurtured Israel and raised her up to be a great and mighty nation that others looked up to. God was always faithful, loving, and generous toward her. But Israel didn't do the same for God. And that's when things go south.

The central issue here is that Israel left God for another lover. Other *lovers*, plural, actually. Despite all the care and affection God poured out to Israel, Israel repaid Him by abandoning Him and doing what He told her not to do. All of us can identify with this on some level. God has poured out gifts and favor and blessings to each of us, and we deserved none of them. When we commit sin, when we do the things God has told us not to do, we are being unfaithful like Israel. We are abandoning the One who loves us for the false promises and empty pleasures of another "lover."

So how does God's jealousy affect our everyday lives? It should drive us into His arms. We should know and understand that God has loved and still loves us, and burns with a divine and holy jealousy for us. So when thoughts and temptations come about, calling us into the arms of another lover, we should remember that God will share us with none other. And if we do give into sin, we should remember that He still loves us as He did before. His jealousy still burns for us. He may discipline us as we return to Him, but His love for us is greater than our sin against Him.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 25 | February 2nd



WRATH - DEFINITION

Read Ephesians 2:1–3

When we think about the wrath of God, we often visualize the fires of Hell, the Second Coming of Christ, or all evil being eternally dealt with. We may also be somewhat triggered because we've been falsely communicated the imagery of a vengeful, mean God who longs to find any small mistake to punish us brutally. These things are either grossly taken out of context or just flat-out lies about the wrath of God.

There is a wrath of God that many will experience, both in this life and for eternity. Ephesians 2:1–3 tells us that when we live in disobedience, we are under the "ruler of the power of the air," Satan. Many unknowingly follow Satan because they are "carrying out the inclinations of [their] flesh and thoughts." In other words, we don't have to worship Satan to be under his influence, we just need to worship ourselves.

When we live by our inclinations, desires, and thoughts and not the teachings and principles of God through the Scriptures, we are living as "children under wrath."

What does it mean to be under God's wrath?

- There are natural cause-and-effect consequences to living in disobedience. If we are promiscuous, we are likely to get an STD or have psychological damage. If we steal a car or kill someone, we go to jail.
- Because we walk in rebellion against God, we miss out on the blessings of God. Also, there are times God inflicts things on us because of our sin. This is often to get our attention so we will repent.
- There are eternal consequences for living in disobedience to God. Plainly put, we will all spend eternity either with Jesus or eternally separated from Him.

The wrath of God should actually bring the believer comfort because it is assurance that evil will not go unpunished. It is so difficult in our day not to get disheartened by the seemingly unchecked immorality in our world, but God not only sees, He will rightly deal with it eventually.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 26 | February 3rd



WRATH - APPLICATION

Read Ephesians 2:4–10

If disobedience leads us to experience the wrath of God, then logically, obedience is the antidote to experiencing His wrath.

Though the first three verses of Ephesians 2 are pretty bleak, the following seven are some of the most amazing passages in the Bible. If we will humble ourselves and make a choice to live in obedience to God, He saves us from wrath because He is “rich in mercy” and has “great love.” Not only are we saved, but we can have a relationship with Jesus that changes virtually everything about us for the better.

The even crazier news is that it is all free! “[We] are saved by grace through our faith,” but there is a catch of sorts. The catch is we must have faith to get the whole ball rolling. It is like someone giving us a new car, bought and paid for, and handing us the keys. Though the car is free, we must take the initiative to insert the key and turn on the engine. This is how our faith opens the door for a relationship with Jesus and salvation from eternal separation from Him.

With true faith comes obedience to God. Our natural response to His free supernatural gift of salvation that we cannot earn is living out our faith through works such as prayer, reading the Word, being in a church community, and serving the world around us (verse 10). Living in obedience to God enables us to escape both temporary and eternal wrath.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 27 | February 4th



WILL - DEFINITION

Read Genesis 1:1–31

Discussions about God’s will can often seem shrouded in mystery. In a way, that makes sense. God is bigger than us, which translates to bigger than we can fully comprehend. When approaching a subject like His will, it seems natural for there to be aspects of it we may not understand. But God has been intentional to reveal everything we need to know about His will in Scripture. His will brings about everything He intends, and He gives us guidelines for how He wants us to live as part of His creation.

In fact, we first see the will of God on display in the Creation story of Genesis 1. God wanted there to be heavens and earth, sun, moon and stars, plants, animals, and everything we see around us. His will was so powerful that all He had to do was speak it and these things came into being. Marvelously, He even wanted us to exist, and desired for us to be distinct from the rest of creation. By His good will, He made us to bear His image, which is an honor no other part of creation can claim. In this chapter, we’re even introduced to His will for how we should live. It’s His ultimate desire that we, His image-bearers, would spread through the earth to establish His reign. What an honor to be set apart for such a purpose!

Continuing through the Bible, this plan is continually reaffirmed. From the Law given to Moses all the way to the return of Christ in Revelation, everything God has said points back to God’s intention established in Genesis. While there will always be aspects of God’s will we won’t understand, what we do understand is true and clear. Even now, He wants us to be here, part of the good world He has made, and He has plans to help us and the world around us flourish.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 28 | February 5th



WILL - APPLICATION

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:11–4:12

Once we understand the core of the will of God, that it brings about what He intends and gives us direction for how He wants us to live, our next question may be, "How does that play out in my everyday life?" 1 Thessalonians is a good place to turn to for practical guidelines for living in the identity of an image-bearer of God. Most helpful, Paul, the author, gets to the heart of the matter in chapter 4. In verse 3, he writes, "For this is God's will: that you become holy..." (NET).

If we are to live how God intends, filling the earth and establishing His reign, we have to look to the source of holiness. Revelation 15:4 reminds us that only God is holy. How can we look or act more like Him if we don't know what He looks like or how He acts? One of the primary ways we get to know God is through His Word given to us in the Bible. We have to read it regularly. It must become a constant part of our life. We also get to know Him through the Holy Spirit. Those of us who follow Jesus are promised the presence of the Holy Spirit. Since we know He's here with us, we just have to pay attention to Him in prayer to develop our relationship.

That relationship, more than anything else, will help us in those times when we want to be faithful to the will of God, yet are not sure what that means for that moment. When we face tough decisions, once we know the Holy Spirit and have it settled inside of us that we are to be like Him in all things and spread His reign throughout the world, we can discern the way forward, even in the hardest of circumstances. Whatever the choices we make, as long as we know they're leading us to grow in holiness, looking more and more every day like the image of God, then we can know we're living faithfully in His will for us.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 29 | February 6th



FREEDOM - DEFINITION

Read Romans 9:1–33

Today's topic might make you uncomfortable. But let me encourage you to lean into Scripture. The freedom of God is the reality that God is not bound by any kind of external circumstance, limit, or restraint. His character and actions are not subject to peer pressure, lack of funds, limited time, or incompetence. He is perfectly free to do all He desires, and He has the perfect power, knowledge, and presence to accomplish His desires. He is the freest being in the entire universe. We see this clearly demonstrated in Romans 9. Paul points to the inequity of Jacob receiving the inheritance over Esau, and then he reminds us of when God hardens Pharaoh's heart. And he sums it all up in 9:18, "So then, he has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden" (this is a reference to Exodus 33:19).

This is just one example of God's freedom. Why did God create? Why did God judge the earth but save Noah's family during The Flood? Why did God deliver the Israelites? Why has He done everything He has accomplished in all of salvation history? Why was your neighbor healed of cancer when your wife is still going through chemotherapy? Why? Because God is free, and He is good.

Last year, I got COVID-19. I still can't smell most things. When someone makes me a delicious meal, I can't honestly say that it smells good because I can't smell it. But you know what? I know it smells incredible, even though I can't smell the aromas that used to make my mouth water. What's the problem? It isn't the food. It's my nose. When you come to a passage of Scripture that makes you uncomfortable, your first inclination shouldn't be to say that it isn't true because you don't like it. It's probably your nose, not the food. Hard things are not bad things. Some realities in the Bible are hard, but they are good. Let's dwell on applying this reality to get a taste of its goodness.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 30 | February 7th



FREEDOM - APPLICATION

Read Romans 8:1–39

When you grasp the reality of God’s freedom, it will become one of the single greatest engines of joy and comfort for you in your walk with Christ. Consider that quote from Romans 9:18, “He has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.” If you are in Christ, you are among those to whom God has shown mercy. It wasn’t because you are good—it is because God is free and in His freedom, He didn’t harden your heart. He showed you mercy. This shifts the focus, doesn’t it? The gospel is no longer founded on whether you are good or worthy. It’s grounded in God’s character and action, not yours. This is the foundation of the gospel.

What are the things that make you want to give up? Or the things in your past (or present) that make you doubt whether God can really use you? Whatever those things are, God has put those things in your story. All of the pain, shame, and faithlessness that makes you want to blush are tools God prepared for His eternal glory.

God’s freedom allows us to boast in our weaknesses. And God’s freedom means that your faults and failures won’t foil God’s plan. Because now, every promise in Romans 8 is yours. There is no condemnation for you. God’s Spirit dwells in you. God’s Spirit will intercede for you when you can’t find the words to pray. He will work desires for holiness in your heart. You have hope for the new heavens and the new earth. If God, in His freedom, is for you, who can be against you? Romans 8:28 says, “We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” Because of God’s freedom, none of these realities are yours to guarantee.

In His freedom, He called you.

In His freedom, He is holding you.

In His freedom, He will not stop holding you.

Because of His freedom, He is the guarantee of the promise.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 31 | February 8th



POWER - DEFINITION

Read Exodus 14

When we think of the word “power,” we typically refer to a variety of ideas relating to ability, capacity, authority, and strength. As we read stories of the Bible, we see God display all these characteristics repeatedly. In Exodus 14, we read about one of the more well-recognized displays of God’s power over the physical world.

Up to this moment, God had already performed astounding miracles for His people (plagues, freedom from Egypt, pillars of fire and cloud), but it was at this desperate point in the story we see the Israelites’ faith put to the test. When the Israelites hit a literal roadblock in their escape, they realized they were powerless on their own and became very afraid. In this fear, they began shouting at Moses to let them return to their former bondage (verse 12). Does this sound familiar? As professing Christians, we have already accepted that God has the power to turn our lives around and make us whole. However, just like the Israelites, sometimes when life gets too challenging, we can end up finding ourselves heading right back to these bondages of sin. Yet, in His faithfulness, God showed His miraculous power over the natural world by parting the Red Sea to save the Israelites once more. Likewise, God’s power can also save us today from our bondages of sin.

God is the same today, yesterday, and tomorrow. The God of the Israelites who parted a literal sea for them is the same God who loves and cares for us today. His power is unlike anything we can imagine. Just as Moses instructed the Israelites, “Don’t be afraid. Stand firm and see the Lord’s salvation that he will accomplish for you today...The Lord will fight for you, and you must be quiet” (Exodus 14:13–14). If we can learn to trust in God, even when it seems like there is no way, we can see His mighty power on display in our own lives.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 32 | February 9th



POWER - APPLICATION

Read Ephesians 1

In Ephesians 1, Paul says, through Jesus, we can have every spiritual blessing (see verse 3). This is important to understand because God's gift of power through His Holy Spirit is only available to us through His son, Jesus Christ. This is key, we must believe in and have a relationship with Jesus to access the power of God. God's immeasurable greatness of His power is toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of His strength (see verse 19).

We have read examples of God's power at work in the natural world. We have also read how God's power through the Holy Spirit is freely given to those who believe in Jesus Christ and accept Him as Lord. Now what? How do we apply this power to our everyday lives? This is done through faith and obedience. It wasn't by Moses' power that the Red Sea parted. Instead, it was his faith in God and his obedience when God told him to stretch out his hand that he was able to see this mighty work unfold.

When we apply God's power through the Holy Spirit to our sinful behaviors, we find freedom. This means that no matter what kind of sin we may have a propensity for (sexual addiction, chemical addiction, codependency, selfishness, or jealousy), it's the power of God in us through the Holy Spirit that we are able to overcome whatever we struggle with. We won't always be perfect, but Paul writes that "in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding" (Ephesians 1:7). This means God grants us the power to live holy and righteous lives if we trust in Him and obey His Word.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 33 | February 10th



PERFECTION - DEFINITION

Read Psalm 18

At times, the struggle to be perfect and for our plans to go perfectly on our terms may frustrate us when things do not go our way. Yet, it is in our imperfection we realize the only perfection that matters—God’s perfection. God is complete and perfect in every way. His perfection completely possesses all excellent qualities, and He lacks nothing. He is flawless, and His perfection perfectly summarizes every attribute. His love, truth, power, knowledge, goodness, etc., is perfect. Because God is perfect, His ways are perfect, and every decision He makes for us is perfect. God’s perfection should remind us that His way is the path we want to follow.

In Psalm 18, King David expresses his gratitude to God for delivering him from the grasp of his enemies. King David acknowledges how he cried out to the Lord to intervene, and the Lord heard him. Through King David’s obedience and trust in God, we see how God is the only solution to his problems, and this is why David highlights God’s character of perfection. Verse 30 reminds us of God’s perfect ways; in return, we can trust Him to be our shield and defender. In trusting in His way, the Lord will equip and strengthen us in our cry for help.

As we live out His perfect plan for us in obedience, Hebrews 5:8–10 reminds us of how Jesus was made the perfect savior through His obedience in the midst of suffering. Hebrews 5:9 reads, “After he was perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.” In Jesus’ obedience to God’s perfect plan, He becomes the savior for all who obey Him. We are saved! How? Just like Jesus and King David, we can be delivered by crying out to God and obeying Him.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 34 | February 11th



PERFECTION - APPLICATION

Read Matthew 5:43–48; Philippians 3:12–21

In Matthew 5:48, Jesus ends this section about loving your enemies by saying, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” In this verse, Jesus was not telling us not to be what we consider perfect: with no flaws or shortcomings. The word “perfect,” in fact, also means to be complete. Jesus implies that to be perfect (or complete) is to love others and seek their best interest just like God does, which reflects His perfect character. Children often look and act like their parents, so should we look like and resemble our Heavenly Father.

As we grow, we should always strive to resemble God in His perfection and look forward to where God is calling us. For Paul, he talks of looking forward in Philippians 3:12–21. His goal is to fully know Christ’s resurrection power and dwell with Him in the coming age. Paul is made aware of his imperfections and knows more growth still needs to occur in him. Paul is not perfect, and he makes it a point to make every effort to imitate Christ as a child imitates their father.

In our hearts, we should constantly have the desire to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect by genuinely loving others as we trust in His perfect plan that He has laid out for us. Are we always going to love perfectly, like our Heavenly Father, on our own? Not likely, as perfect love is impossible for us to complete by human standards, but with the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we can truly love our neighbors. As for our human standards, it is not always easy to surrender what we believe to be the perfect plan or way to do things, which is why we need to remember to recognize His ways as completely, and truly perfect.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 35 | February 12th



BLESSEDNESS - DEFINITION

Read Genesis 1:1–2:3

When we think of the word “blessed,” we usually think of it as being blessed by God with good gifts, like a new car or a new house. However, when we talk about God’s blessedness, we are talking about Him having joy in Himself, delighting in what He does within creation, and all that reflects His character.

When we read Genesis chapter 1, we see much more than just the world’s creation and all that is in it; we also see God delighting in what He has done each day. He creates something new every day and sees that it is good. Yahweh enjoys what He sees so much, He invites each creature to partake in His creation by blessing them to create more of what God has started.

God even creates creatures, man and woman, in His image and is so delighted, He says they are “very good.” But what is very good about humanity? We reflect God to the world. We are the visible gateway to the invisible Creator, even more so when we submit to and obey Christ! We are His agents in this world to bring about His will and demonstrate His authority in all creation.

There are ups and downs in the story of humanity as we work toward this goal, but, ultimately, we cannot complete it. However, God sent Jesus, who is both man and God equally, to be the perfect human. It is through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus we can recapture our place as God’s agents in this world. We can now more fully join God and reflect Him.

This is incredible. God says, “Partake in My blessing; do what I am doing and find joy in it!” So, how do we partake in this blessedness? We will discuss that tomorrow!

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 36 | February 13th



BLESSEDNESS - APPLICATION

Read Matthew 5:1–12

We can partake in the blessedness of God when we take the time and effort to become more like Him. The Bible is clear that when we submit ourselves to God and do as He does, we can participate in the fullness of Him.

Outside of His resurrection, one of the most incredible things Christ provided for us was the Sermon on the Mount, specifically, the Beatitudes. In the Beatitudes, we see the heart of God spoken by Jesus. We see with total clarity precisely what God desires from Himself and us! God fully embodies each of these blessings in The Beatitudes.

We should understand that without God, we cannot even begin to become holy, and this should drive us to mourn the state of our souls and ask for forgiveness. Then, we should be gentle with others because God was first gentle with us when He forgave us of our sins and humbled us. This begins the process of developing a hunger for righteousness in us, which means we live in accordance with what God has laid out in the Bible as right living.

Righteousness leads us to be merciful toward others because God was first merciful with us. Mercy leads us to have a pure heart that is undivided from the Kingdom of God. This leads us to be peacemakers, which means we love people so much that we will lovingly tell them when they have left the path of righteousness and we are willing to walk with them for a period toward righteousness.

All these things will lead us to be persecuted in the name of Jesus. Jesus wished to elevate this final Beatitude by expanding on it in a way He didn't do with the other seven. Persecution by Jesus' enemies was one of the most significant marks on a believer and it will continue to be a theme throughout Matthew's Gospel. Jesus also went beyond the formula of "Blessed are..." to say, "Be glad and rejoice." He gave special hope and encouragement to those whose righteousness is of such tenacity and brilliance that the enemies of God are moved to eliminate it from this world.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 37 | February 14th



BEAUTY - DEFINITION

Read Psalm 27

Beauty is certainly a concept that has been twisted by humans. Our culture tends to define beauty as a combination of outward appearances that are pleasing to the eye. But a truer definition of beauty is to contain the sum of all desirable qualities. The only person who could ever achieve perfect beauty is the one perfect God. His beauty is part of His perfection because He does not lack anything desirable. God created all humans to have good and righteous desires that are ultimately only fulfilled in Him. We long for the beautiful perfection of God that we can experience in this life, as well as the beautiful perfection we will one day experience in Heaven.

King David's words in Psalm 27 show a human expressing the desire to have a close, intimate relationship with a perfect God. The "one thing" he asked of God was to be in His presence.

This shows that David's greatest desire was to see "the beauty of the Lord" and to "seek his face." Experiencing the beauty of the Lord by spending time with Him leads David to experience a supernatural peace and confidence in the midst of trials.

Just as David sought the face of God, Revelation 22:4 promises that one day we will "see his face" if we live lives surrendered to Jesus. On that day, as God creates a new Heaven and new earth, all of our human desires will be satisfied and fulfilled in the beautiful perfection of God, which will then be ours to live out as newly perfected creations. Until that day, God has given us His creation (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20) to give us a glimpse of His beauty and remind us that our human longings cannot be fulfilled in the mortal and temporary, but only in the eternal perfection of the Lord.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 38 | February 15th



BEAUTY - APPLICATION

Read Ephesians 5

It seems like everywhere we look, there is some new person trying to tell us (men and women) how we can become more beautiful. It's easy to fall into a vicious cycle of continually trying to improve our outward appearance because what is currently considered beautiful or desirable is constantly changing. That's why God wants us to focus on a type of beauty that never fades or goes out of style.

Perhaps you have read Ephesians 5 before, but have you ever thought of it as a "beauty tutorial"? These instructions for how to live as followers of Jesus teach us how to reflect the beauty of God. We display God's beauty when we live lives that please and glorify Him.

God is beautiful because He contains the perfect sum of all desirable qualities, and we are called to be imitators of Him. We will never be perfect in this life, but as we grow closer to God, we will look more and more like Him in the way we live. Unlike striving toward outward physical beauty, this inner beauty has an eternal purpose. Not only does reflecting God's beauty point others to Him, but it is also part of the process of Jesus sanctifying His people. Ephesians 5 closes with a beautiful picture and promise that Jesus will one day get to present the Church as a beautiful and perfect bride. Because Jesus loved us enough to die for us, if we live for Him, we will get to stand before Him in Heaven one day as new creations who perfectly reflect the beauty of God.

Which types of beauty are we chasing after most? Are we more focused on the definitions and instructions for beauty from culture or from God? As we read Scriptures like Ephesians 5, which teach us how to live beautiful lives reflecting God's character, are there areas in us we need to invite Jesus to change and sanctify? As you seek to reflect God's beauty in your life, be encouraged that "humans see what is visible, but the Lord sees the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 39 | February 16th



GLORY - DEFINITION

Read Revelation 4

The definition of “glory” is high renown or honor won by notable achievements and magnificence or great beauty. The Old Testament definition is “heaviness” or “weight” and was intended to describe a person’s worth in a material sense. But the word “glory,” when related to God, has an endless number of definitions. God’s glory is more than reverence or respect; it’s His infinite wisdom, love, and a magnanimous display of His power. God’s glory is our strong tower, and just like Revelation 4:2, we rest knowing God is always on the throne. When we pray during suffering or peace—no matter the state we are in—the glory of God is with us, always.

When we read Revelation 4, John gives us a description of what God looks like as He is seated on the throne of Heaven. The creatures that fly around the Almighty God have been with Him since the beginning of creation, and every second, they see a new aspect of Him. John helps us by painting a picture of who God is and the beauty of everything around Him. Seeing God on the throne and the creatures and elders who give Him glory for eternity show us that while God is the embodiment of glory, we should also give Him praise and glory for who He is and what He has done for us.

The glory of God is displayed throughout Scripture in thousands of variations. Being reminded of God’s glory should be very sobering to us. Psalm 97:1–6 continues to give us a glimpse of the power and magnitude of God, and while we shouldn’t live in a constant state of irrational fear of God, we should embrace the love and mercy He has given us despite everything we have done.

Pray for 10 minutes

Day 40 | February 17th



GLORY - APPLICATION

Read Colossians 1

Paul is imprisoned as he writes this letter to the faithful people of Colossae. Their persecution continued to worsen, but their faith did not waiver. Paul sent this letter to give them hope and remind them of God's glory, but there is a lot we can take from this passage as well. Christ's glory was shown throughout His life and, ultimately, at the crucifixion. Through Christ Jesus, we have hope for eternity. Just as John painted us a picture of God in Revelation 4, Paul has done the same with Christ. Colossians 1:15–20 is the very reminder we need when we are, like the Colossians, persecuted for our faith.

Christ's glory is His perfect nature, and when we pray and uplift the glory of God, we are actively wanting the Lord to reveal more of Himself so that He may be glorified. It is in God's perfect nature to want a connection with those who love and surrender all to Him, and His glory equips us with everything we need to spread truth and help others.

The glory of God is for all people, and when we listen to God's calling in our lives and allow ourselves to be servants of Christ, God's glory is seen through us. Colossians 1:27 says, in part, "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Christ is the living hope of His glory, and we are all called as followers of a Jesus Christ to the Great Commission, which we can only answer if we are with Him, always.

God has never promised our lives on Earth would be easy, but that same God is coming back someday soon in full glory to fulfill His ultimate promise, which is to be in perfect unity with His children. Until then, we are always to embrace the glory of our Father and let His name be known to all creation until the day He returns.

Pray for 10 minutes

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Sincerely,

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