

Forward in Prayer



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Forward in Prayer

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The Heart Behind the “Forward in Prayer” Guide...

We are delighted that you are making the conscious choice to make prayer a priority! By holding this guide and beginning to read through its content, you are displaying the initiative to make prayer important in your life. That is something to celebrate!

Our heart for this Prayer booklet, is that it would aid and supplement the time you spend with the Lord in and through prayer, specifically through our church wide time of prayer and fasting. Although not exhaustive, we expect that it will empower you with practical tools to give structure to your time in prayer. Just as bricks and mortar are the structure of a building, held in the following pages are some simple bricks and mortar to help structure your time with Jesus.

*With Love,
Life Church Leadership*

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Types of Prayer

Unceasing Relational Prayer

Unceasing prayer is something we see foreshadowed by the priestly duties of Aaron, when he was commanded to keep the tabernacles lamps burning at all time, through all the children of Israel bringing pure oil to keep them fueled (Exodus 27:20-21, Leviticus 24:2-4). Jesus modeled this for us by *continually* withdrawing into the wilderness to pray (Luke 5:16). Paul describes in detail that continual, unceasing prayer is the will of God for our life (1 Thess 5:17). Unceasing *does not* mean talking to God without stopping. Unceasing prayer *does* entail keeping a heart posture of love toward the Lord at all times... "*Rejoice always..in everything give thanks..*"

(1 Thess 5:16,18)

Intercessory Prayer

We observe this type of prayer in the life of Moses, we he stood in the gap between the Lord and Israel, praying/ interceding on their behalf (Exodus 32:11-13). We see the heart of intercession when the Apostle Paul is gripped by the desire of God to see his Jewish brothers and sisters come to Christ in repentance (Romans 9:1-5). To simply define intercession, it is to essentially “make a petition on

the behalf of another¹”. When we come to the Lord, in prayer, and *make a request* for someone else, we are interceding. Jesus, Himself, makes intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). Many times, the Holy Spirit will share God’s heart/burden for a specific person, family, nation, leader, etc. so we can intercede for them. This is why the Holy Spirit is the *Spirit of Intercession* (Romans 8:26-27).

Worship

When we typically think of *worship*, many modern praise and worship bands come to mind, as we attribute *worship* to a *genre* of Christian music. This is a superficial, western view of what the Hebrew language labels as “*prostrating oneself, bowing down*²” to the ground. We see this illustrated in Exodus 34:8, when Moses “*bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped*” (ESV). Also, as we think about worship, we typically do not equate it to a type of prayer. But worship, although sometimes does not contain words, is the unspoken prayers that come before God as incense (Psalm 141:2). While King of all Israel, David employed 4,000 musicians (1 Chron 23:5) and 288 Singers (1 Chron 25:7) to worship the Lord day and night. This shows that worship and prayer are not separate, but indeed the same.

¹ W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr. *Vine’s complete expository dictionary* (Thomas Nelson, 1996), 330.

² W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr. *Vine’s complete expository dictionary* (Thomas Nelson, 1996), 295.

1

TWO Reasons You Should Pray.

Diet specialist will often write articles such as “20 Reasons You Should Go On a Diet” or “30 Reasons to Loose 30 Pounds”, to try and emphasize their thesis that a diet is extremely beneficial to one’s health.

Prayer doesn’t need a 30 minute presentation or a book’s length of reasons of why it is *overwhelmingly* needed in the believer’s life. The following are simply just *two reasons why you should pray*.



Reason 1...Jesus commissioned us to with His words and lifestyle.

In his gospel, Luke give us a beautiful glimpse into a pivotal moment that Jesus shared with His disciples. Chapter 11 opens with the disciples, mesmerized by what they had just heard, asking Jesus to teach them how to pray.

According to the physician's perspective, Jesus had just finished praying and one of the disciples, caught up in how Jesus had just interacted with the Father, says "*Master, teach us to pray like you do...*"

What follows, we know as 'The Lord's Prayer'. But before Christ expounds upon those famous words, He says these words: "**WHEN** you pray..."

Notice that Jesus does not say "*IF* you pray", but He says "*WHEN* you pray." Do you know the implications of this?! Our Messiah is stating that it is an EXPECTATION that we should pray as His followers! He modeled this for us when He continually withdrew into the wilderness to be alone in prayer with the Father (Luke 5:16). So not only does He expect this, but He leads by example, that our life should overflow with prayer.

Reason 2....Our prayer life is the gauge of our Spiritual condition.

Leonard Ravenhill once famously said, "No man (or woman) is greater than his prayer life."

What if the only indicator of our spiritual health meter was our prayer life? What would they say about us? Would it affirm our health or point to its anorexic state?

E.M. Bounds speaks toward this issue when he says, "Not to be consumingly interested in the things of heaven are to not be interested in them at all."

If we desire to grow in our walk with the Lord, we must become a people that pray. Period. As Jesus described it, without prayer, we are like "*...white washed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of... bones*" (Matthew 23:27)

2

Longing: Bringing Context to the Need of Fasting

During a long work day, it's easy to begin daydreaming of the next *vacation* that lies beyond the horizon of the daily grind. You haven't seen your family, or at least spent any meaningful time with them in, what seems like, weeks. During this daydream, you begin *longing* for that time when just you and your family can get away from the hustle and bustle of life and take a *vacation* together.

This is what fasting is to the soul who is *longing* for more of God, in an ungodly age. Fasting is the *vacation* of the heart, from the things of this world and to the place where God can more clearly reveal Himself. This is essentially what fasting is... emptying yourself of yourself, so that there is more room for the Lord. It is for the soul that finds themselves *longing* for more of God and less of themselves.

Jesus describes this when He answers the disciples of John the baptist (this does not mean John was a southern baptist, this speaks of his assignment...) saying,

“Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the

*bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and **then** they will fast.” (Matthew 9:15 NKJV)*

Jesus refers to Himself as the bridegroom, referring to His disciples and followers as the ‘friends of the bridegroom’. Meaning, He foretells His death, resurrection, and ascension to the disciples of John. Christ says to them, “As long as I am here, there is no need to fast. But the days are coming when I will no longer be on earth for a length of time, and *that* is when there will be a need to fast...”

Thus, Jesus is proclaiming the motivation and context in which we should fast....because we *long* for Him. The motive behind our fasting should be to empty ourselves of the spirit of this age and to make space for Him, with Him. Broken down to its simplest form, fasting is a *vacation from the world and with God*. That being said, fasting is not a dieting fad, but making space to spend more intentional time with the Lord. Emptying myself so He can fill me up with Himself.

Types of Fasts

- *Full Fast* - Exclusively liquids only.
- *Daniel Fast* - Vegetables and fruits only, no meat or bread. Water and juice only to drink. (Daniel 1:8-12)
- *Corporate Fast* - A set apart time for fasting as the body of Christ to seek the face of the Lord (Joel 2:15-19).
- *Miscellaneous Fast* - Abstaining from anything that you value on a daily basis (tv, social media, types of food, etc)

3

Practical Tips to Grow in Prayer

Recent Barna group data shows that “*nearly three in five U.S. adults (58%) report that they pray at least one time a week...*”³ But for the majority of people, prayer can be an intimidating, vastly unknown territory.

This is a tactic of the enemy; to complicate what was designed to be so simple, a child could do it. Once the simplicity of prayer is uncovered, the joys of prayer will be discovered. Prayer is practical, because of the fact that we were created to converse with our creator. It is the because of the residue of the edenic fall that we experience negativity in the arena of prayer. So, repeat it after me... Prayer. Is. Practical.

The following are eight practical tips to grow in the place of prayer...

³ Barna group, <https://www.barna.com/research/cpw-greig/> (Barna Group 2022)

- 1.** Set the Lord always before you, as the psalmist so elegantly put it (Psalm 16:8). Set aside a short moment, every 1-3 hours, to set your senses and affections on Jesus. Monasteries throughout history have practiced this, calling it *the daily office*.
- 2.** Designate a solitary place for prayer. This can be a closet, a unused room, bedroom, etc. Jesus commanded us to do this when He said, “*when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*” (Matthew 6:6 ESV)
- 3.** Do not wait until the opportunity waves at you, make the initiative to schedule it into your day.
- 4.** Prayer is a dialogue, not a monologue. Create space and time to listen. Instrumental music creates a great atmosphere for this (William Augusto, Bethel Music’s ‘Without Words’, UPPERROOM’s ‘Arbor’, etc).
- 5.** Consistency is key. Showing up is a win! Count it as one, regardless of how long. Think of it this way: it is the heart and content of prayer that matters, not the length.
- 6.** Measurable prayers give measurable answers. Pray specific prayers. Creating a prayer list will help in this manner.
- 7.** Eliminate distractions. Place your phone on ‘do not disturb’ mode.
- 8.** Do not compare your prayer life to another’s. Comparison kills zeal and passion in prayer.

4

God's Word, Your Weapon: Using Scripture in Prayer

In his first letter to his spiritual son, Paul exhorts Timothy to “...wage the good warfare” by using “the prophecies previously made about you...” (1 Timothy 1:18 ESV). Today, we are given the same invitation by using God’s word in and through prayer. The power of praying scripture is the fact that when we do this, we are coming into agreement with what the Lord has already spoken; speaking back to the Lord what He has already said about us and/or our situation.

Do you long to see God’s will done in you and your family’s life? This is how we begin to see it come into fruition: praying and speaking forth God’s Word.

The following are a few selected verses of scripture to pray...

“The whole earth will acknowledge the LORD and return to Him. All the families (my family) of the nations will bow down before Him.” (Psalm 22:27 NLT)

“Our children will also serve Him. Future generations (my family to come) will hear about the wonders of the Lord. His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born. They will hear about everything He has done.” (Psalm 22:30-31 NLT)

“Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence, and don’t take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.” (Psalm 51:10-12 NLT)

“May God be merciful and bless us. May His face smile with favor on (my family) us. Make your ways be known (to Life Church) throughout the earth, your saving power among people everywhere, May the nations (Israel, the Jewish people, unreached people group, etc) praise you, O God. Yes, may all the nations praise you.” (Psalm 67:1-3 NLT)

“Let us, your servants, see you work again; let our children see your glory. And may the Lord our God show us His approval and make our efforts successful...” (Psalm 90:16-17 NLT)

“...give (to me) the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of (Jesus). The eyes of (my) understanding being enlightened.” (Ephesians 1:17b-18a NKJV)

Pray this passage to bring biblical perspective on the sovereignty and Lordship of Jesus over every issue of life....

“...Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.” (Revelation 1:5 NKJV)

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 1

Strike the Ground

“And he said, ‘Open the east window’; and he opened it. Then Elisha said, ‘Shoot’; and he shot. And he said, ‘The arrow of the Lord’s deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for you must strike the Syrians at Aphek till you have destroyed them.’ Then he said, ‘Take the arrows’; so he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, ‘Strike the ground’; so he struck three times, and stopped. And the man of God was angry with him, and said, ‘You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you will strike Syria only three times.’” (2 Kings 13:17-19 NKJV)

When I was a child, Prayer was just “one of those things” we did because, well, because it was one of those things we did. We Prayed at dinner, we Prayed at bed time and we Prayed at church. It wasn’t till I was much older that I began to understand both the power that I possessed through Prayer and also the weakness I experienced through the lack of Prayer. I was a teen (I’m ashamed to say) when I first determined to *Pray Through* an issue. A dear friend of mine was lost and spiraling headfirst out of control. I had decided that I was going to Pray him through his darkness into the light of Christ! Yay me! I remember Praying each night as I drifted off to sleep, sometimes remembering my friend at the last minute, sometimes not, but doing my best to be faithful to my decision.

I remember the day- several months later that I had that hard conversation with God on why He hadn't answered my Prayer. Was I Praying wrong? Was I not Praying enough? Maybe I should Pray in King James english as some of the adults in our church did? I was perplexed and a bit put out, I must say. Then one day as I was considering my friend, I realized that I'd recently spent more time on and worked harder for a guitar I wanted than I'd spent Praying for my friend's salvation. At that moment, it was as if God spoke to me, showing me that Prayer was more than a laundry list of my wants. That Prayer was not me trying to change God's heart but the opportunity for God to change MY heart. I also learned that there is no Prayer too big or too small for us to Pray, but for me- the size of my Prayers showed the size of my God in my life.

It was in this pivotal moment in my Spiritual life that the magnitude, the greatness, vastness of our God began to be revealed to me. I began to Pray Prayers not just asking God to do something- but asking God to show me how to be a part of what He was doing. I began to Pray for the impossible, for the unimaginable- I mean, is He God or is He not? So I began "striking the ground" as many times as I could when I Prayed, not in a challenge to God, but as a means to enlarge my faith in who He is, and my demonstration of trust in what He and only He can do.

I've learned that He's not only capable, but He's faithful. My challenge to you during these 21 Days of Prayer- Pray BIG. Pray BOLD. Strike the ground many times. Pray God sized Prayers.

Oh, and yes, my friend surrendered his life to Christ and is a powerhouse for the Kingdom!

- Pastor Chris Shumake, Executive Associate Pastor

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 2

Promiser > Promise

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought the field.” (Matthew 13:44 NIV)

What is it about men like Moses, that separated them from everyone else? Was it His staff he carried with him? Was it his long beard that made him *more spiritual*? Moses had a definitive moment that changed him forever. It was at the burning bush that this Jewish man caught a glimpse of God's glory that began to birth an unquenchable hunger within him. The fire that Moses beheld consuming the bush, became the fire that took up residence in his heart. In many ways, he never got past the burning bush. We too must never get over our burning bush moment.

For Abraham, the promise of the stars and sand stood no where in comparison to the words that the Promiser spoke to him saying, *“I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward”* (Genesis 15:1 NKJV).

Both of these men overcame insane obstacles, moved in faith and power, led the masses of Israel, worked miracles before hundreds of thousands of eyes and still came back to the same conclusion... the promiser is so much better than the promise.

One whisper from God far surpasses the thousands of praises of man. The favor of His face shining upon us is much more valuable than the masses of men applauding the work of our hands. If we are to ever come to the same conclusion as these mighty men of God, a life of prayer must be the way. Prayer is how we access the Promiser.

And if we are to access the promiser in prayer, it must be a lifestyle, a way of life. This is how prayer become sustainable, by living a life of prayer. It is much easier to invite someone into a lifestyle than to preach unpracticed principles.

- Pastor Jay Terry, Campus Pastor Life Church - Cullman

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 3

The Highest Cabin on the Tallest Mountain

*“Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them (our enemies) we set a watch against them day and night...Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands... So the wall was finished..in fifty-two days.”
(Nehemiah 4:9; 5:9b, 15 NKJV)*

My wife and I took our first wedding anniversary to the mountains of Bryant, Alabama. Overlooking the rope like Tennessee River, our two bed, one bath cabin sat perched up on the ledge of *the* grandfather mountain. It almost felt like we could see for hundreds of miles. From our vantage point, three bridges with ant like cars could be scouted without any help of magnification. The view was absolutely breathtaking, especially during the hours after sunset, where the headlights of vehicles could be easily mistaken for fireflies.

As Nehemiah takes on the leadership of seeing the walls of Jerusalem rebuilt, he encounters roadblock after roadblock. Discouragement (4:3), confusion (4:8), division (5:1), and fear as a result of enemy threats were all tangible roadblocks to the rebuilding effort.

What separated Nehemiah from previous efforts to rebuild the ruined walls of Jerusalem, was his prayer life. Before even starting the project, he prayed for four consecutive months. Each time opposition came, Nehemiah’s response was prayer. This is how the wall was rebuilt in only fifty-two days...

Nehemiah found a place in God, through prayer, that was above the swirl of man's discouragement, confusion, division, and fear. Prayer supplies a place for us, in God, that is above the swirl of life, above the hustle and bustle. Prayer is the highest cabin on the tallest mountain, that is above the traffic of life. It gives us fresh perspective when the Mondays of life do not.

- Pastor Jay Terry, Campus Pastor Life Church - Cullman

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 4

Leaning Thoughts

*“You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all those whose thoughts are fixed on you!”
(Isaiah 26:3 NLT)*

If there is was one thing that this world is undoubtedly bankrupt on, it would be peace. Culture looks to substances and such to bring about this rare commodity, but end up only chasing the wind. When the prophet Isaiah speaks forth that perfect peace does not come from things, or even through people, but through the mind that is fixed on the Lord. The Hebrew word “*sâmak*” that is used, literally means to *lean upon, to support or sustain*. So, in other words, the mind whose thoughts are leaning upon the Lord is kept in *perfect peace*.

This is similar to the command that the writer of Proverbs gives us in the third chapter... *“Lean NOT upon your own understanding, but in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your path.”* Peace isn’t found in understanding, but in the submission of our thought life unto the Lord.

Pray this with me, dear friend... *Father, who is in heaven, You are perfectly sovereign. Help me to set my thoughts upon you. I acknowledge that perfect peace comes from You, and not any other. Thank you, Jesus, for grace to walk out the calling on my life, with that perfect peace that comes from the mind that is leaning upon You. Holy Spirit, thank you for your companionship and recalibrating my mind upon Jesus. And it’s in that perfect name I ask these things, amen.* - Life Church Cullman

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 5

Home Sweet Home

“Jesus... said to him, ‘If anyone loves me, he will keep my Word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.’”

(John 14:23 NKJV)

It is very easy to skip over verses like the one above and label it as simply another thing Jesus said. But this passage *demand*s more than that. We *do not* fully grasp what Christ is inviting us into right here, otherwise we would be *gripped* to the core with the implications of what is being revealed.... Jesus, God in the flesh, is saying that if we love Him and keep His word, then the Father will look upon us with so much love that He decides to take up residence within us, in the person of the Holy Spirit! *Wow...* This isn't just another Sunday school story, beloved, but an invitation to *the creator God* making His home with us and among us! This changes how we pray, how we do life, how we conduct church.. this changes everything!

What seems so distant some days, is accessible today through the richness of prayer. Be encouraged, today, that this invitation is for those who *love Jesus and obey His words*.

Join with me in this prayer, today... *Perfect Father, thank you for your precious Spirit that lives within us. Open my eyes to see what you are calling me into, deeper intimacy and communion with you. Empower me to walk according to your word, so that I can fully embrace the invitation you have set before me. During this time of prayer and fasting, I re-surrender my life to you. It's in the might name of Jesus that I pray, amen!* - Life Church Cullman

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 6

“I Have Prayed For You...”

“Simon, Simon, behold, satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail...” (Luke 22:31-32b ESV)

By day six of prayer and fasting, it can be the road of least resistance to rethink what you started just days ago. Thoughts of doubt and discouragement can easily plague the weary mind. In times of fasting and prayer, it can seem like we are being sifted like grains of wheat. But the same revelation that Jesus opened up to the heart of Peter, is what He is speaking toward us in comfort. *“Beloved, I have and am praying for you.”* This is a beautiful reality that the Apostle Paul echoes to the church in Rome when he says, *“(Jesus) is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”* (Romans 8:34 ESV)

In the times of distress and difficulty, when it seems as if every demon has been personally assigned to you, remember that Christ sits at the right of the Father praying on your behalf. We may be weak but His Spirit is strong with us! There is not better tool than fasting that reveals this truth to us.

Let's go before the Father, today... *Father in heaven, we are humbled by the reality that Jesus sits with you, praying and interceding on our behalf. What an amazing privilege this is! Holy Spirit, open my heart further to this understanding, so that I may be strengthened in the Lord and in the power of His might. Help me to guard my heart during this time of prayer and fasting. In Jesus name, amen!*
- Pastor Jay Terry, Campus Pastor Life Church - Cullman

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 7

The Davidic Fast

*“Surely I will not go into the chamber of my house, or go up the comfort of my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Might One of Jacob.”
(Psalm 132:3-5 NKJV)*

In our western culture, New Year resolutions carry little weight. From gym memberships, to becoming more organized, these typically lose their edge two months into the new year.

In the Seventh Chapter of 2 Samuel, we find the heart of David provoked by the fact of the Ark of the Covenant (The Presence of God) dwelling in a temporary space. David tapped into the Heart of God, seeing that He longed for a permanent dwelling place. He caught a glimpse of God’s desire for habitation, not just visitation. It’s in this context that we find David’s vow to the Lord in Psalm 132. He declares a fast in which he does not indulge in the comforts of his own home, until the Ark had a permanent home to dwell in.

When is the last time we invited God into our homes? When is the last time we invited the Lord into our church, communities, companies, etc?? This is what fasting is... It is inviting God to dwell in every area of our life by emptying it. If we desire to see, not just a visitation, but a habitation of God’s manifest presence, then we must create space for Him. This is what fasting and prayer does for us! - *Life Church Cullman*

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 8

One Man a Majority

*“...Abraham was only one man when I called him. But when I blessed him, he became a great nation.”
(Isaiah 51:2b NLT)*

It's easy to be passionate for Jesus when you are surrounded by others who share that same flame of zeal. It's much more difficult to steward that same passion for Christ when you are the only one. Obviously, this is the beauty of the body of Christ; the church affords a community of like minded followers of Christ, that carry the same degree of fervor. But that is not always the case for our places of employment. In fact, it would be accurate to say that most believers work and/or maybe even live in an environment that does not exactly scream, "Passion for Jesus!" This poses difficult days for the one who has "*set their face like a stone, determined to do (God's) will*" (Isaiah 50:7 NLT). But think of the patriarch Abraham... The man carrying so many promises from the Lord, and faced circumstances that shouted different realities. But as the writer of Hebrews informs us that Abraham, "*dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country...for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*" (Heb. 11:9a-10 NKJV) Abraham stood out in faith, knowing that one person in God is a majority. One person that burns for the Lord and His promises is an army.

Be encouraged, for in the dwelling of what may seem like a foreign country, is multiplication and growth for those who wait on the Lord. - *Life Church Cullman*

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 9

You Have Nothing to Prove

*“We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love.”
(2 Corinthians 6:6 NLT)*

What are you trying to prove? In the world we live in our lives consist of trying to prove ourselves on a daily basis. From a young age to the moment we take our last breath, many times the only way we progress and promote our lives is through “proving ourselves.” I think back to back to my freshman year of baseball. On day one of practice I knew that there was an upperclassman that played the same position, and to be honest down deep I knew I was better. For the next few weeks of practice before the season started I had one goal, to prove that I was better. This was not out of pride or arrogance, but I simply wanted the best for myself, to play varsity. Is this not how life is sometimes? Constantly trying to prove yourself to a coach, a boss, and sometimes a spouse just to have the best in life. I love what Paul says to the church regarding this issue of proving yourself. He says, “We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love.” Notice that Paul does not give a list of things for you to do, but a list of fruits of your life. Many times in life our actions are all centered around proving something. Do not make a mistake, Paul is not saying to do anything. However, instead of public actions, I believe this is a charge for a shift of focus onto the private secret place. When we focus on our secret place and relationship with Jesus through prayer, reading our Bible, fasting, etc. our public fruits begin to show. In this new year, I encourage you, you do not have to prove a thing! Instead, seek God, seek purity, seek understanding, and seek the things of 2 Corinthians 6:6 in your secret place. Let these fruits of your public life be the things that prove your validity and authenticity. You have nothing to prove! - *Pastor Curtis Wall, Youth Pastor*

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 10

Who Are You Fighting For?

“Then as I looked over the situation, I called together the nobles and the rest of the people and said to them, “Don’t be afraid of the enemy! Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes!”
(Nehemiah 4:14 NLT)

WHACK!! Well, my nose is broken... As a youth pastor I love sharing stories to my students about my childhood, and this story happens to be my favorite. Around the age of seven, one of my favorite activities was picking on my older sister. One day this did not go my way, as I began to pick on her on the wrong day, wrong time, and the wrong way. Might I admit... I deserve what was coming as I pushed her over her limit, I was met with a nose full of fists. Gushing blood, nose crooked, light-headed, and much more, I had a taste of my own medicine. Believe me... I deserved it! Do not worry, my sister and I are best friends! As I reflect on this story, I begin to realize that this is the state of our world today. The people we are supposed to be fighting for are oftentimes who we are fighting against. Nehemiah found himself in a very similar situation.

Jerusalem’s walls were torn down, they were vulnerable, desperate, acceptable to the enemy, and needed someone to fight for them. Nehemiah stands up in the face of adversity of the situation and delivers a speech. “Don’t be afraid of the enemy! Remember the Lord, who is great and glorious, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes!” I believe in 2023 we need a group of Nehemiahs to rise up! Our world is in a very similar situation to Jerusalem. Our walls of morality, love, forgiveness, and so much more are torn down. We have a generation that is wide open for the attack of the enemy, and they are not able to fight for themselves.

I want to ask you two questions, who is going to fight for them, or are you fighting against them? In 2023 I want to challenge you to be a Nehemiah. It is time as Nehemiah said to “fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.”

How do you fight? There are countless ways to fight, but might I encourage you to start here today? Develop a list of people that are on your heart, and pray for them, reach out to them, put an arm around them, and be family. Be present in their lives. Many people are not looking for someone to say the right things, but instead just to be there. Lastly, join with the body of Christ in agreement over the next generation and the family of God. Fight for family! Who are you fighting for?

- Pastor Curtis Wall, Youth Pastor

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 11

I Can't Sleep

“So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks. Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off!”
(Acts 16:24-26 NLT)

You are tossing and turning, trying to get comfortable, you are cold, then hot, you have an early morning and you can't go to sleep. Frustrated, you look at the clock. What time is it? The clock reads 12:00 midnight. We have all been here! So many things are on your mind, and worry and anxiety start to creep in. The next thing you know the stresses of yesterday and the next day begin to creep in. You are a slave to your life, and you are at the darkest point of your life. In the story in Acts 16, we find Paul and Silas in a very similar situation. Chained, slaves, and in the darkest point of their life. To add to all of that, they are there because they were following the Lord. “Around midnight.” I love this! This statement reveals so much about this story for two reasons. One, there were no clocks in the dungeon. Two, it would be too dark to see the clock and know what time it was. So how do they did know it was midnight? I would argue that it had very little to do with the time, but all to do with their life situation. They were beaten, bruised, chained, at the darkest point of their lives, and this was their “midnight.”

In 2023, there will be moments of midnight in your life. There will be moments when you will relate to the situation and circumstances of Paul and Silas. The one thing you look forward to is being asleep that night, but you find yourself tossing and turning. I want to encourage you today, to make up your mind to respond the way Paul in Silas did.

“Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God.” There is something so powerful about in the darkest point in your life lifting your hands and begging to pray and worship! The chains fell off and the prison doors flung open. Let the testimony of Paul and Silas be a building block of faith in your life of what happens when you begin to respond in the same way.

It is midnight and I can't sleep... but it is okay because I know who my God is!

- Pastor Curtis Wall, Youth Pastor

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 12

Compelling Love

*“..though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor; and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing... And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”
(1 Corinthians 13:3,13 NKJV)*

Procrastination is a killer. When a tsunami-size project is placed upon our proverbial desk, if we do not see the importance ourselves, procrastination ensues. And we all know that procrastination is deadly. It is harmful to our productivity, yet if we do not see the importance of the task at hand, we will continue down the same dangerous road. Trust me, I have a PhD in procrastination.

Unfortunately, this is mostly how we treat prayer. We mistake prayer as something very spiritual people do, neglecting the vitality of it in our spiritual health and walk with the Lord. We make up excuses and run around in circles, keeping ourselves busy with first world problems. And let's be honest, if we don't intentionally make time for prayer, it just won't happen. But Paul introduces a kingdom principle within the thirteenth chapter of his first letter to the church in Corinth. *Love will drive us into our prayer closet when nothing else will.* When we have legitimate reasons of why we don't have time to pray today, *passionate love for Jesus will drive you into prayer regardless of what the day holds.* Mike Bickle says it this way, “Lovers will always accomplish more than workers.” Let love be the reason you take intentional time to be with Jesus, through prayer, today.

- Pastor Jay Terry, Campus Pastor Life Church - Cullman

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 13

Eternal Life

*“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”
(John 17:3 NKJV)*

When we began to contemplate eternity, our Bible belt trained minds drift toward streets of gold, crystal seas, mansions, and such. And while most of that may be biblically sound, Jesus gives us insight to the present reality of eternity. When we make the decision to follow Jesus, and become “in Christ”, from what is expounded upon in the passage above, we actually begin our eternal journey!

How is this so?? Because, *in Christ*, is the life that was lost in the garden of eden. The oasis of the wellsprings of life that Adam and Eve forfeited in the garden are discovered afresh in the person of Jesus Christ. That is why the psalmist so confidently declared, “...*all my springs are in you*” (Psalm 87:7b ESV). This means that when we come to the Lord, we have the utmost privilege, by the precious blood of the Lamb, to begin experiencing eternal life! We experience this spring of life when we commune with God through prayer. This is the refreshing power of prayer that so often is overlooked and neglected; it is your *lifeline* to spiritual health and wholeness.

Join me in this short, simple prayer... *Dear God, thank you for the Way You have created to Yourself, through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Open my eyes to the power of prayer, I ask. Unveil my heart to experience the blessing of daily communion with You. In Jesus name, amen! - Life Church Cullman*

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 14

Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation

“...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened...”
(Ephesians 1:17-18a NKJV)

Each of us have had an “AHA!” moment at certain unforeseen times in our life. That split second when the idea you’ve been waiting to come up with, or the solution to a contentious issue makes itself known to you. It’s a moment of great resolve and relief that floods your heart with joy; we can all relate to this. This is what the Lord longs to release to His church, in these last days. What the apostle Paul called *the spirit of wisdom and revelation*. The person of the Holy Spirit yearns to release wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus to those who are willing and make the space for Him. He desires to give “AHA!” moments to you, that open up the eyes of your understanding, that helps you see Jesus the Christ more clearly. It is not the will of God that we walk in confusion and cloudiness when it comes to the Son of God. It IS the will of God, however, that we would walk in clarity of who Jesus is to us as the bride of Christ. *What bride would walk down the aisle to a bridegroom that she doesn’t know or understand?* Beloved, as the bride and body of Christ, we must ask ourselves these questions... Pray this with me today... *Holy Spirit, open the eyes of my understanding to who Jesus really is. Release wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus into my life, I pray. Reveal Him to me a new and fresh way as I seek you. In Christ name, amen! - Life Church Cullman*

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 15

Fellowship with the Lord

*“...if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have **fellowship with one another**, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”
(1 John 1:7 NKJV)*

Think of a perfect and unhindered connection to God, without any pretense. This was Eden. In the beginning, man had seamless communication with the Lord that they both enjoyed together. It was by man’s misjudgment and doubt that broke what was perfect, tainting the relational walk that was once so pure. Christ came to restore that reality between His chosen people Israel, first (Romans 1:16), then to all those who would believe in Him. The cross and resurrection make a way for us to be reconciled back into fellowship with God. Unfortunately, it has been a historical fact that man has loved darkness more than light. And it is impossible for us to still have unhindered fellowship with the Lord and walk in darkness. This is why John makes the claim that, *“This is the message which we heard from (Jesus) and declare to you, that God is light and in Him us no darkness at all”* (1:5). Light and Darkness do not mix, so if we say we long to know God and walk in fellowship with Him, then we ought to walk in the light, *as He is in the light*.

How do we consciously walk in the light on a consistent, daily basis?? Prayer answers this holistically. Prayer keeps our senses and consciousness fixed upon the Lord. That is why prayer does not consist of words, opposing popular thought. Prayer consists of a heart posture pointed in affection to God.
- Pastor Jay Terry, Campus Pastor Life Church - Cullman

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 16

Prayer that Builds a Legacy

*“Whoever fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge.”
(Proverbs 14:26 NIV)*

Imagine that you are in the beginning stages of building your forever home. You envision that it will be strong and built well enough that it will last your family for generations to live under the security of its roof. As you go to the nearest contracting business, you schedule a meeting with the main contractor, only to find that before you can begin conveying your legacy home, that he does not lay a foundation before building the house. He states that it takes up too much unnecessary time and money. Before he is able to finish his reasoning behind this ludicrous strategy, you inform him that you will be seeking help elsewhere. Why? *Because no one with the intent of building something of substance and legacy skips laying the foundation.* If we desire to lay a strong foundation that will carry the weight of a legacy, we must be a people of prayer. Prayer is the excavator, concrete, and rebar that builds a legitimate foundation that is sustainable enough to house a generational legacy. If we desire for our sons and daughters, and the generations after us to serve and fear the Lord, then they must see us pray. There must be a culture of prayer that is intertwined in the family life. We pass on to our children what we practice. This is the beauty of fasting. It recalibrates our lives to the necessity of prayer and accelerates us toward the breakthrough that it produces. - *Life Church Cullman*

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 17

Love that Motivates the Life of Pursuit

*“So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you.”
(James 4:7-8a NLT)*

There is always a motivation behind every action. Conscious or not, underneath the feet that walk, the mouth that talks, and the hands that move there is a motive that is the driving force. Many times within church circles we will loosely throw around the Biblical truth, “draw near to God and He will draw near to you”, forgetting that we actually must draw near in deed, not just in word. It is so easy to say we desire to draw closer to God, but until that becomes visible manifestation in our day to day lives we have no evidence of that desire being a true motivation. Jesus verbalized this reality when He echoed the prophet Isaiah to the Pharisees in saying, “*These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me*” (Matt 15:8 NLT). This is why love must be the motivating factor behind drawing closer to the Lord. Any other motivating force will not sustain a life of pursuit. May it be said of us that we are the young bride of Christ, with burning motivation within our hearts to draw closer to our bridegroom. Love *must* be what drives us into fasting, otherwise it will not be a fast but a fancy diet.

Friend, join with me in prayer today... *Father, we thank you for the biblical truth that You draw close to us. Holy Spirit, empower me with love, so that I will be able to live a life that draws close to you. In Jesus name, amen!* - Life Church Cullman

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 18

Love that Motivates the Life of Pursuit

*“I pant with expectation, longing for your commands.”
(Psalm 119:131 NLT)*

In the church that I grew up in, every year we had an annual missions conference, where missionaries would come for a weekend from around the world to display what God was doing in their nation. One missionary who I thoroughly enjoyed talking to sat across from me and we began engaging in conversation. Two of the other missionaries that I also loved dearly sat beside and also across from me. Shortly after this, an issue begins to arise from among two conversations that were simultaneously occurring. I was still engaged with the original convo that had begun before the other two missionaries had sat down, but now there was a separate dialogue unfolding and it was distracting me to say the least. I began a third conversation within myself, because my focus was breaking from trying to hear the precious brother who had originally been speaking with me from the beginning. *“Lord, in the midst of the peripheral voices in my ears, how do I focus on what the missionary in front of me is saying?”* I began to say within myself. It was at this point that I began to feel the fathering hand of God pull the chair of my heart close to His saying, *“Lean in to this moment, son. I want to teach you something.”* It was at this point that I heard the Spirit of God answer the question that I had been asking in my heart. *“You hear his voice in the midst of other voices by anticipating every word that comes forth from his mouth.”* Beloved, this is how we hear the voice of God in the midst of the chaos of this age... *anticipate every word that comes from the mouth of God.*

- Pastor Jay Terry, Campus Pastor Life Church - Cullman

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 19

Unseen Weapons

“A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world...”

(Ephesians 6:10-12a NLT)

For those who have children, you will understand. My oldest boy who is now seven years old, is typically the bravest little soldier I know. But this particular night, he was not favorable of the idea of sleeping by himself in the dark. Why was this night different than any other night? It didn’t seem to be the case for me, but for him it was. And that was all that mattered in that moment. So I offered to lay down with him until he fell asleep; he overwhelmingly accepted. I then began to unpack with him, as we had done in times before in similar circumstances, the four weapons that we have in our spiritual arsenal... *the name of Jesus, the blood of Jesus, the Word of God, and praise*. But after going through each of these, my boy asks a question that forced me to do a mental U-turn. *“Why are these four things weapons if it isn’t like a sword that I can hold in my hand and use?”* For five seconds, I was silently asking the Holy Spirit for a helpful response to such a valid question. It was then that He generously supplied me with what would help solidify this biblical truth, not only in my little boy’s mind, but also in my own. *“A sword that I can pull out and hold in my hand won’t help me with bad thoughts that I may have in my head”*, I said. *“You see, son, we need weapons we can’t see to battle against things we can’t see.”*

Beloved, let this be an encouragement to you today. To fight against the unseen works of the enemy, you don’t need an arsenal full of gun ammunition. What you need has already been supplied to you by the cross and resurrection. Use unseen weapons against the unseen enemy. - *Life Church Cullman*

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 20

Obedience and Provision

*“Some time later, God tested Abraham’s faith. ‘Abraham!’ God called. ‘Yes,’ he replied. **Here I am.**”
(Genesis 22:1 NLT)*

This is one of those chapters we would rather skip over in our devotional time. It doesn’t necessarily scream *morning moments with the Shepherd*. This is the painful scene where God asks Abraham to take his only son, Isaac, “...whom you love so much...” (V.2) and sacrifice him on top of a mountain that He will show him. Of course, this narrative ends in God providing an escape for Abraham, but what is amazing is Abraham’s willingness in the face of costly obedience. Before the Lord asks Abraham, his response is “*Here I am*”. Because of Abraham’s obedience, he and his whole family line was blessed.

Here we find a kingdom principle. God always honors obedience. He honors obedience with provision. He did it for Abraham and He will do the same for you, friend! Your obedience attracts the favor of God on, not only you but your family and the generations after you. Obedience opens the heavens for supernatural blessing to flood you and your whole family. Obedience unlocks revelation and doors of opportunity that you thought not possible. Be encouraged, in that by you being obedient through prayer and fasting, you are releasing blessing and favor upon you and your family!

- Pastor Jay Terry, Campus Pastor Life Church Cullman

Forward in Prayer Devotional

Day 21

God's 'Yes' is in your 'No'

*"It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings."
(Proverbs 25:2 NIV)*

Imagine the following: Your best friend invites you on a trip that is the opportunity of a lifetime. But you work a full-time job. Luckily, your friend has brought you into the conversation a year in advance of the actual trip. This enables you to take off for that week needed for that vacation. Why? *You said 'no' to work, so that you could say 'yes' to the vacation. Your 'no' empowers your 'yes'.*

For the past 21 days, as a church body, we have been saying 'no' to certain foods. Why?? It's not like we need another diet plan, right? *We have been saying no to these things, so that we are more empowered to give a fuller 'yes' to God and the things of God.* This is the point of fasting... that our 'no' to certain things would empower our 'yes' to God, in order to draw closer to Him and give Him a more authentic 'YES!' And as this season of corporate prayer and fasting comes to a close, be encourage to make this practice a lifestyle. Because as we fast and give those certain things, whatever they may be, our resounding 'no', God is going to begin to give us His resounding 'YES'. This is the *power* of fasting... that when we say 'no' in the time of fasting, a target is painted on our back, and God begins to give us His 'yes'. Because we have given up things that are desirable to us, we become desirable in the eyes of the Lord. Let's end the fast today with prayer... *Father, thank you for this time that I have had the opportunity to draw closer to you. Help me to carry this practice into a lifestyle of fasting and prayer. May I give the things of this age my 'no', so that my 'yes' to you can be empowered. In Jesus name I pray these things, amen!*
- Pastor Jay Terry, Campus Pastor Life Church - Cullman

Our hope and Prayer is that you have moved *Forward in Prayer* with us, during these 21 days of seeking the Lord. Be blessed as you carry this practice into a lifestyle!

- *Life Church Staff*

Recommended Resources

Prayer Music

- Spotify Playlist: *Prayer Room* by Life Church - Hartselle
- *Live in the Prayer Room* by Jeremy Riddle
- *Love Note* by UPPERROOM
- *Faith of My Father* by Steffany Gretzinger
- *Arbor* by UPPERROOM (Instrumental)
- *Without Words: Synesthesia* by Bethel Music (Instrumental)
- Instrumental Albums by William Augusto
- *Reflections* by Highlands Worship (Instrumental)

Other Helpful Prayer Resources

Pray First

- *Prayer First* app developed by Church of the Highlands. This incredibly useful resource contains information about prayer and fasting, guided prayer tours, devotionals, and more.