

Trinity United Methodist Church, Houston, TX

Ed C. Jones, III, Senior Pastor

Season of Prayer and Fasting

Refreshed Soul
Resilient Heart

A PRAYER and FASTING GUIDE
RESOURCE FOR

***Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century
Congregations, Annual Conferences, Partners and Friends***

Hello SBC21 Partners,

I am elated to offer a resource produced by Rev. Ed. C. Jones, III, Senior Pastor of the Trinity United Methodist Church in Houston, Texas. As we kickoff a new year, I want to reiterate the commitment of SBC21 to work to bring forth resources, guides and material that will help congregations strengthen their leadership and congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Most of 2020 for so many did not go as planned, I know for me it did not. So much death, disappointments and shutdowns caused disruption and disappointments. Well, the good news is that we made it to 2021 and we have an opportunity to RESET.

I invite you on this Refresh Soul, Resilient Heart Journey with me to start the new year off. Some of us have started, but I was granted permission from Rev. Jones to open this awesome 21 days of prayer and fasting resource and guide to the SBC21 network.

As Rev. Jones says, “God is all about comebacks. God is in the business of giving fresh starts to people. God gives hope to the hopeless. Direction to the directionless. Help to those who need help. God is always good, all the time, and His plans will always prevail, even when our plans don’t. God already knows what the solutions are.”

Your congregation can adapt your own 21 days, your fast your way – we just wanted to offer the resource. Let us celebrate the joy of new beginnings. As we reconcile our actions and thoughts, may we also begin a new healthy life. As with any great beginning or event, we invite you to kick start with resilience a time of drawing closer to God that He may refresh and restore the joy of our salvation.

ABOUT THIS PRAYER AND FASTING GUIDE:

- This guide is complete with instructions on how to activate the journal and other disciplines your church may consider. The timeline is specific to the Trinity United Methodist Church, but can be adapted to however your church sees fit.
- Just as the Pastor and Leaders of Trinity, I am encouraging each of you to contemplate on what God is attempting to give birth through you; what God is liberating you from; and/or changing your heart toward by considering the following commitments:

1. Commit to pray daily
2. Commit to allow the Holy Spirit to guide you
3. Commit to give
4. Commit to serve

As always, If you have any known medical conditions or suspect such conditions, consult your doctor before beginning the fast.

We have great expectations that this will be a blessing to Body of Christ, you, and your family. We look forward to hearing and celebrating God with you.

Blessings,

Rev. Ed Jones, III
Senior Pastor

Rev. Hilda M. Gradnigo
Associate Pastor

Dr. Mike Bowie
National Director SBC21

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HOW TO USE YOUR JOURNAL

This journal was created with you in mind. From the size of the font to the **Table of Contents**. It is my prayer that you entrust this time to God and allow Him to do something remarkable in your life. Here are a few details that should make things simpler to follow.

Prayer and Fasting

*“And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.”
Mark 9:29 KJV.*

As National Director of SBC21, I felt a need to join in for this time of consecration, so my wife and I will officially begin our time of prayer and fasting on Sunday, January 10th. For us, the fast will end at 6:00 am on Saturday, January 30th. I encourage you to join us on January 10, or you can pick your own 21 days, again we just wanted to offer this resource.

The goal of prayer and fasting is not so we can **disconnect** from the world, it is that we **connect** with God. We are asking everyone to commit to praying together as a church every day.

Devotionals have been provided for every day. You can find the devotion for the day in the Table of Contents by date with page number. Record any reflections, revelations or inspirations you receive through the Holy Spirit.

Acts of Kindness Calendars

⁶ “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?⁷ Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”

Isaiah 58:6-7 KJV

It is customary that during a time of prayer and fasting, persons also offer a service or kind gesture to others. Please adhere the **Calendar** for gestures for each day.

WHY FAST?

I. What Is A Fast?

Fasting means abstaining from **food**, turning away from the things the body craves in order for the inner man to concentrate on God in worship, prayer, service, and praise. Fasting has been a part of Christianity through the ages. Fasting is a form of **spiritual** and **scriptural** sacrifice. The Hebrew word for *fasting* means “to cover the mouth.” The Greek word for *fasting* means “not to eat.” In other words, you are fasting if you are not eating food. Fasting does not change or impress God. Fasting changes us. Through fasting, Christians are empowered to discipline their daily relationship with the Lord.

II. Why Should Christians Fast?

Matthew 6:16 states: *“Moreover, when you fast...” not “if you fast.”*

Fasting is a spiritual discipline. It forces the Christian to become aware of who they really are (remember we are spirit beings living a fleshly body). Many Christians don't fast because it forces them to deny themselves. Therefore, there is a constant battle between the flesh and the Spirit of God. The Bible states that Christians must worship God in spirit and in truth. Fasting forces the Christian to see the truth about themselves, their decisions, their thoughts, and their lifestyles.

1. Consistent fasting soon clears up the misconception that our bodies need food three or more times a day. Deuteronomy 8:23
2. Food is used as an emotional crutch to give pleasure, satisfaction, escape, and to active drowsiness (to withdraw). Matthew 6:25-34
3. Abstaining from food brings Christians face to face with other painful issues in our lives. God begins to reveal the need for us to forgive others, to repent of our wicked ways, to stop running from Him and start trusting Him. This is referred to spiritual and soulish detoxification. Isaiah 58:4-12
4. The ability to totally depend on God our Supplier even when you are weak. Psalm 109:24-31, Philippians 4:13.

III. Benefits of Fasting

1. Helps us to become more sensitive to the Holy Spirit.
2. Intensifies our prayer life.
3. Sharpens our spiritual intellect, skill, discernment, and understanding.
4. Demonstrates an act of obedience.

WHAT IS THE DANIEL FAST?

The Daniel Fast is a method of fasting. It's a *partial fast*, meaning that some foods are eaten, and others are restricted. The Daniel Fast is based on the fasting experiences of the Old Testament Prophet Daniel when he and his companions were captured in Israel by the Babylonians under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar. These young and very intelligent men were to be groomed to take some of the administrative positions of the growing Babylonian empire. So while they were captives, they were still treated very well.

Daniel was a man of deep faith and devoted to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When served the food and wine of the king, Daniel didn't want to defile his body and so requested a different meal:

"Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink." Daniel 1:12 KJV

Pulse is food grown from seed, so the Daniel Fast is a plant-based way of eating and consists of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, health oils, herbs and spices. You will also see from the verse that the only beverage on the Daniel Fast is water.

Many years later, Daniel was mourning over Israel and its long captivity. From this experience we gain another set of guidelines for the Daniel Fast:

"I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." Daniel 10:3 KJV

From this passage, and using various translations, **the standards of sweeteners (including artificial varieties), leavening agents, deep fried foods, solid fats and sweet desserts are not allowed on the Daniel Fast.**

Meal Planning for the Daniel Fast

Food manufacturers are now providing more prepared foods that are free of sugar, processed ingredients and man-made chemicals. However, you will find you need to prepare most of your meals at home if you want a reasonable variety of meal choices.

Invest a little time one day a week and plan your menus and your shopping list during this time.

THE DANIEL FAST FOOD LIST

Please make sure to **READ THE LABEL** when purchasing packaged, canned or bottled foods. They should be **sugar-free** and **chemical-free**. Keep this in mind as you review this list of acceptable foods.

Foods TO INCLUDE in your diet during the Daniel Fast

All fruits. These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned. Fruits include but are not limited to apples, apricots, bananas, blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, cantaloupe, cherries, cranberries, figs, grapefruit, grapes, guava, honeydew melon, kiwi, lemons, limes, mangoes, nectarines, oranges, papayas, peaches, pears, pineapples, plums, prunes, raisins, raspberries, strawberries, tangelos, tangerines, watermelon

All vegetables. These can be fresh, frozen, dried, juiced or canned. Vegetables include but are not limited to artichokes, asparagus, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, chili peppers, collard greens, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, ginger root, kale, leeks, lettuce, mushrooms, mustard greens, okra, onions, parsley, potatoes, radishes, rutabagas, scallions, spinach, sprouts, squashes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, turnips, watercress, yams, zucchini, veggie burgers are an option if you are not allergic to soy.

All whole grains, including but not limited to whole wheat, brown rice, millet, quinoa, oats, barley, grits, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat tortillas, rice cakes and popcorn.

All nuts and seeds, including but not limited to sunflower seeds, cashews, peanuts, sesame. Also nut butters including peanut butter.

All legumes. These can be canned or dried. Legumes include but are not limited to dried beans, pinto beans, split peas, lentils, black eyed peas, kidney beans, black beans, cannellini beans, white beans.

All quality oils including but not limited to olive, canola, grape seed, peanut, and sesame.

Beverages: spring water, distilled water or other pure waters.

Other: tofu, soy products, vinegar, seasonings, salt, herbs and spices.

Foods TO AVOID on the Daniel Fast

All meat and animal products including but not limited to beef, lamb, pork, poultry, and fish.

All dairy products including but not limited to milk, cheese, cream, butter, and eggs.

All sweeteners including but not limited to sugar, raw sugar, honey, syrups, molasses, and cane juice.

All leavened bread including Ezekiel Bread (it contains yeast and honey) and baked goods.

All refined and processed food products including but not limited to artificial flavorings, food additives, chemicals, white rice, white flour, and foods that contain artificial preservatives.

All deep fried foods including but not limited to potato chips, French fries, corn chips.

All solid fats including shortening, margarine, lard and foods high in fat.

Beverages including but not limited to coffee, tea, herbal teas, carbonated beverages, energy drinks, and alcohol.

FAQ's

Q. What if I fall off during this time of prayer and fasting?

A. If you fall off during this time of prayer and fasting, get right back on it. Do NOT allow the enemy to tell you that you failed.

Q. What if I am under a doctor's care or I regularly take medications?

A. PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE consult your physician before fasting or altering any medications. It is wise to consult your doctor regarding the effect of fasting combined with your medication.

Q. Should I share with others that I am fasting?

A. There is usually no reason for telling strangers or casual acquaintances that you are fasting. If you do, they may subject you to a lot of questions that you may not want to answer. But in any case, use your best judgment and the Lord's leading in telling people about your fast.

Q. Will this make me more spiritual?

A. Prayer is a discipline for the believer. It is through prayer that we communicate with God about His plans in the earth. Fasting is not just denying yourself food. It is exchanging the needs of the physical body for those of the spiritual. Long times of prayer and reading God's Word will be very essential. The more time you spend with God in fellowship, worship, and adoration of Him, and the more you read and meditate upon His Word, the greater your effectiveness will be in prayer and the more meaningful the fast will be.

A CALL TO FAITH IN ACTION

God has called us to walk by faith not by sight. He has also “called” us to action – to do, to go, to give, to help, to pray, to serve. Every week we are asking you to answer the call by committing to one or more of the following “faith in action” commitments as commissioned in the book of James.

“Dear friends, do you think you’ll get anywhere in this if you learn all the right words but never do anything? Does merely talking about faith indicate that a person really has it? For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say, “Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!” and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup—where does that get you? Isn’t it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense?” James 2:14-17 MSG

Faith in Action Commitments: Please choose TWO for each week.

- 1) Sacrificing in my giving
- 2) Inviting and bringing others to worship
- 3) Releasing my gifts to be used in service, word, and action in ministry, outreach and community
- 4) Reading, studying and meditating on the Word of God to renew my mind concerning to the vision and mission at (Your Congregation)
- 5) Allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and lead me in creative evangelism
- 6) Building the bridge of diversity through personal witness and invitation

ACTS OF KINDNESS CALENDAR

January 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4 Give to a Charity	5 Visit/call someone who is sick	6 Pray for children	7 Pray for our military	8 Give someone a hug	9 Thank someone who makes a difference
10 Call a Senior Citizen	11 Do something good for someone else	12 Donate a canned good to the food bank	13 Pray for Peace	14 Pray for a loved one	15 Offer someone help	16 Call a long distance relative
17 Bring a meal to a friend	18 Donate items you are not using	19 Give someone a compliment	20 Smile at a stranger	21 Pray for a friend in need	22 Call a distant friend	23 Send a "thank you" card or note
24 Send a note to a loved one	25	26	27	28	29	30

SUNDAY, JANUARY 10TH – REFRESH FOR RESILIENCE

Read Psalm 51:10-15

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Psalm 51:12 KJV

We all meet trials in life, problems to work out or solve or endure, tests of faith or patience or stamina. Several years ago, both my husband of 45 years and my life-long twin sister (she was 5 minutes older than me) died in the same year. After brain surgery, vascular surgery, exacerbation of COPD and many doctor visits and more, I had become Frank's 24/7 caregiver, medical devices manager, chauffeur, chief cook and bottle washer, and much more. After three years of declining health, he died in January of 2016. About a year after beating cancer, my sister Francys' immune system could not fend off a new problem, fungal meningitis; she died in November of 2016 in our birthday week.

After these life-changing events in the same year, I was physically and emotionally worn out. Thanks be to God for sustaining my spirit with the peace and comfort that only he could give; family and friends held me up in encouragement, prayers and love.

The next year, Hurricane Harvey came to the street on which I live. I left my home in a boat and returned in a friend's car at the end of the week to see piles of wet debris on the lawns both beside my house and many others nearby. My house had been completely spared. Both metaphorically and in reality, I have new insight into Isaiah 43:1-4 and the song "Be Not Afraid" by Craig Courtney.

Be not afraid for I have redeemed you. Be not afraid, I have called you by name. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. When you pass through the floods, they will not sweep o'er you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be consumed. You are mine, you are precious in my sight. By Craig Courtney, 1992.

Thought of the Day

The Lord restores my soul.

Reflection

Prayer: Holy God, will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you, amen.

Prayer Focus: Trials and Tribulations

by: Nancy Denison

Monday, January 11th – Deeper Walk with God
Read Luke 9:21-26

**And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself,
and take up his cross daily, and follow me.**
Luke 9:23 KJV

When we take an assessment of our life, we must do so by counting the cost. From every decision and sacrifice we made or did not make. The costs do add up. However, the total sum of the costs will never compare to the cost of the cross. Daily Jesus invites us to “take up our cross and follow Him”. By denying ourselves we give up anything that does not please the Lord by daily submitting our will to Him. The world has defined success in many ways. A definition many have tried to live out and failed. Jesus defines success as one who lives a life in Christ by following the example of the cross. Deny yourself, submit your will to God and follow Me. As we take time to reflect during our time of prayer and fasting, think about the following question, “Have I counted the cost?”

Thought for the Day

How will I give thanks for the cost of the cross?

Reflection

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, You paid the cost of the cross for me. Help me to count the cost of Your sacrifice daily in my decisions and doings. Remind me that all that I do is a response to what You did, in Jesus name, amen.

Prayer Focus: Help me to follow You in all that I do.
by: Rev. Hilda Gradnigo

Read Psalm 46: 1-6; 10

“Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth”.

Psalm 46:10 KJV

The most valuable time is the time we spend in the morning with God. This is the quiet time where we can prepare for our day with study, prayer and meditation. Often during this time, our mind will wander, and we have to re-center on Christ. We can get very frustrated when this happens, wondering why we can’t just “be still and know that He is God”. As we continue to learn scripture, deepen our prayer life, and grow closer to God, we may always struggle with a mind that wanders but those two little words – *Be Still* – can bring us back to God – our loving creator.

Thought of the Day:

I can find peace and stillness in my communication with God.

Reflection

Prayer: Dear Creator God, You know all things, You know that I want to concentrate on You only. Please forgive a wandering mind and help me to build discipline in my prayer life.

Prayer Focus: Calm in the chaos
by: Mary J. Newton

Read Psalm 91

I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

Psalm 91:2 KJV

Psalm 91 is a magical remedy for world issues that troubles us. The psalmist invites us to a personal profession of trust, with divine promises of deliverance. Believers are reassured that God will deliver. God will protect. God will answer, and He will save us and show us salvation through His Son Jesus Christ.

Thought of the Day

Trust the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding!

Reflection

Prayer: Dear God, sometimes our fears overwhelm us, and we feel as though we are drowning in a sea of darkness. Help us Lord to trust You and to give all worries and troubles up to You in this day. Lord, we thank You for always taking care of our every need and we thank You for courage to face whatever comes our way, with the full confidence that You are always with us. Lord, give us a strong heart full of hope, make us fearless as we trust You and pray in Jesus name, amen.

Prayer Focus: Trust God and fear not
by: Cathleen Haughton

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14TH – GOD IS & IS EVER-PRESENT

Read John 3:14-18

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:16 KJV

Often when I wake up in the morning, I pause, as a great awareness strikes me that I'm privileged. I'm conscious of my existence in this very moment of life; that God has Blessed me with a new day. I'm aware of my surroundings. My window is already allowing His natural gift of Light to come shining through – a reminder of His presence, our Light of the World. Our God is willing to be known through His Son Jesus Christ is enough for me to know He is ever present when I am awake -by His Saving Grace.

Thought for the Day

Our God is faithful, so let us Fellowship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ.

Reflection

Prayer: Dear God, new every morning is Your Love; through sleep and darkness you bring us safely again to light and power and thoughts of you. May we never take your presence for granted but recognize that it is by your saving grace we are offered a new opportunity to serve you better, in the Name of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, amen.

Prayer Focus: God is near; reach out to Him.

by: Yucca James

FRIDAY, JANUARY 15TH - LOVE OF CHRIST

Read Romans 8:35-39

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”.

Romans 8:38-39 KJV

Thank you for Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. You love us and freed us from our sins by Your blood. We have been crucified with Christ and we no longer live, but Christ lives in us. The life we now live in the body, we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. Therefore, we pray to walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Thought of the Day

Nothing is greater than Christ’s love, and nothing can separate me from it.

Reflection

Prayer: Dear God, help us receive the fullness of Christ’s love, amen.

Prayer Focus: Christ’s Love

by: Peggy Moree

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16TH – SAY MY NAME

Read John 20:1-17

“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master”.

John 20:15-16a NKJ

Mary Magdalene’s devotion demonstrated her deep love for Jesus. He had done much for her soul and she continually demonstrated her gratitude towards him. At the tomb where Jesus had been buried, Mary Magdalene’s devotion is again deep and apparent. She was deeply distressed, crying and searching for her lost Savior. The disciples had gone home, but Mary stayed, still searching. Then Jesus appeared. He spoke to her, but not until he called her name “Mary”. Did she recognize him? Her great joy probably caused her to buckle to the ground. By calling her name, He acknowledged and rewarded her love for Him. He had made her whole once again.

Thought of the Day

At the end of my life I want to hear Jesus call my name in a good way.

Reflection

Prayer: Dear Lord, please let me be devoted to you so deeply that others come to know, love and honor you, and we are all made complete in you.

Prayer Focus: Worthy of Jesus

by: Kathy Aaron

SUNDAY, JANUARY 17TH – ALIGNMENT WITH THE WILL OF GOD

Read Luke 10:38-42

**But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part,
which shall not be taken away from her.**

Luke 10:42 KJV

Have you ever volunteered to help with a project thinking that this was where God was leading you, and then get immersed in the “details” so you lose the original focus? Martha showed great hospitality by inviting Jesus and his followers for dinner, but she got caught up with the form of being a good hostess. Whereas, Mary chose to sit at Jesus’ feet, listening to His Word. Jesus tells us our highest priority in life should be to “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...” Matthew 6:33.

Thought of the Day

At the end of my life I want to hear Jesus call my name

Reflection

Prayer: Most Gracious Lord, help me to spend ample time with you, particularly pushing back the demands of the day. Help me to remember that You are omnipotent and able to bend time and events in my favor, and I will be able to accomplish *more* in less time because of rich communion with You.

Prayer Focus: What is your will for my life?

Anonymous

MONDAY, JANUARY 18TH – FASTING

Read Matthew 6:16-21

**But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.
Matthew 6:17-18**

In his poem “The Song of Wandering Aengus”, W.B. Yeats explores what happens when we feel a calling, get a glimpse of a vision and set out to follow it. The poem shows the importance of staying on course with tenacity and clarity. It speaks to all of us as Christians when we seek clarity through fasting. It is what we should pray for as we seek to understand our relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Thought of the Day

Understanding the power of sacrifice is understanding the gift of Christ

Reflection

Prayer: Lord, grant me the patience to wait for the clarity that can only come through prayer and fasting.

Prayer Focus: The gift of sacrifice
Anonymous

TUESDAY, JANUARY 19TH – RELEASING OUR GIFTEDNESS TO GLORIFY GOD

Read Romans 10:13-17

**“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”.
Romans 10:17 KJV**

What is faith? Faith is trusting God, believing in something you cannot see, but you know in your heart is true anyway. Faith is the key that will open the door to all of God’s blessings He has for you. As you take the time to get to know God personally through prayer and study, faith will come alive in your heart. As you begin to have a more intimate relationship with God it becomes easier to have faith in Him and His willingness to be a major part of your life. Faith is trusting God to do what you cannot do.

Thought of the Day

Faith is essential to receiving anything from God.

Reflection

Prayer: Dear God, I know that my relationship with You grows as my relationship with You grows each and every day.

Prayer Focus: Where is your faith?

by: Linda Hooker

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20TH – PRAYER

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

The Psalms are not just words strung together. They are beautiful lyrical poems of praise and thanksgiving to God. They bring light and come to our souls and remind us of the beauty, depth and boundless measure of God's love for us. The Psalms are prayers just as the hymns we sing are prayers. They take us away from the world for a while and give us the opportunity to commune with God. Prayer is so important for the disciple. It is prayer that gives us the wherewithal to be steadfast in the quest of walking in the steps of Christ. It is prayer that gives us clarity to move from one step to another, while also allowing us to understand why we do what we do. It is prayer that brings us closer to Christ and makes us one with Him on the inside. It is prayer that allows us to shine our light for others to see and share.

Thought of the Day

The more we pray, the more we know Christ

Reflection

Prayer: Lord, thank You for the boundless opportunities to commune with You in prayer.

Prayer Focus: Prayer is the answer

by: Linda Best

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21ST – GOD’S WILL

Read Proverbs 3:1-10

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”.
Proverbs 3:5-6

In life, we are often faced with road-blocks – what do we do or what is the best choice? A favorite scripture among Christ-seeking brothers and sisters is taken from *Psalms 119:105*, which reads: *“Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”* So, He is leading us into a revelation of His will. And so, we need to steer in the direction of His Word...the Holy Bible. We should pray without ceasing, knowing that in staying close to Him, always, He will make the path we should follow known through Jesus Christ His Son. When we make prayer a part of our lives, we benefit from the Holy Spirit which becomes our guide toward God’s will for us. As disciples of Christ, we should be more diligent in our faith-walk with Him through bible study, meditation, prayer, fasting, and daily study His Word.

Thought for the Day

Am I seeking God’s plans for my daily life?

Reflection

Prayer: Father God, your Word is a Lamp unto our feet, and a Light unto our path. May we quickly recognize and do the things which edify your kingdom.

Prayer Focus: Being guided in life by the Almighty God.
by: Yucca James

FRIDAY, JANUARY 22ND - STILLNESS

Read Psalm 46:5-13

**“Be still, and know that I am God...”
Psalm 46:10a**

Have you ever wondered why God does not answer? Think about a time when you expected and answer to a prayer. Days go by maybe even months. What interfered with the answer – distractions (phone, tv, computer, work, meetings)? Did you put God on your to do list or make time to spend in silence?

When we communicate with others there is usually a talk and listen in each conversation. I talk you listen, you talk I listen. So, it is with God, we have to do our part and listen.

Take a few minutes today and be still and just listen to God. Take a few minutes more tomorrow and the next day and soon you will have made a habit of sitting in silence with our Lord and Savior.

Thought of the Day

Release the distractions and embrace the stillness with God.

Reflection

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father please help me to be still and know that You are my God. Show me how to listen when you are speaking. I ask that you help me set a time aside today to hear you. Thank you for this day, amen.

Prayer Focus: Listening for the voice of God
Anonymous

SATURDAY, JANUARY 23RD - CLEAN SLATE

Read Matthew 6:13-16

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”.

Matthew 6:14-15 KJV

We are challenged every day to pay attention to the Lord’s commandments to live in love with our brothers and sisters. The Lord’s love always forgives and set us free from all bondage of unforgiveness. During this time, let us search our memory for offenses we have taken when someone has wronged us and determine in our hearts to forgive as the Lord has forgiven us. We will also search our memory for those times when we may have caused offenses to others, in our families, close friends and church community. We desire a clean and fresh start with a clear and pure heart. God renew a right spirit within us. Cast us not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me (Psalm 51:10). Remember that the Lord loves you.

Thought of the Day

God has forgiven me therefore I can forgive others.

Reflection

Prayer: Lord, forgive me for not being obedient to your commandments. Examine my heart as I forgive others as I have been forgiven.

Prayer Focus: Unforgiveness
by: Rev. Dr. Carolyn McCall Livingston

SUNDAY, JANUARY 24TH – WORRY

Read Deuteronomy 29:25-29

The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Deuteronomy 29:29 KJV

Our loving Savior is leading us step by step through our lives. So, why do most of us worry about the future? The future belongs to God. Have you ever considered worry as a form of rebellion? The solution to worry is to pray and focus on the Savior and His promises to care for us. Relax, hold his hand, and enjoy the journey. For He who has promised is faithful.

Thought of the Day

God is always present to help us through every worry.

Reflection

Prayer: Loving Savior, forgive us when we leave your side and allow worry to take over. Take our hand and help us to focus on your faithful promises.

Prayer Focus: Worry

by: Ruth Stovall

MONDAY, JANUARY 25TH – COMMITTED TO CHRIST

Read Romans 12:5-18

**Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality
Romans 12:11-13 KJV**

Looking to Jesus as an example, we seek to live as Christ with the love and witness of committed, caring, and compassionate followers. It is our desire to serve the Kingdom of God willingly and joyfully by encouraging and helping others. With God's help and opening the scriptures on a regular basis we can share the love of Christ to all those around us. Help us reach beyond that which is comfortable while taking courage that God is with us.

Thought for the Day

How can I share the love of Christ today?

Reflection

Prayer: Lord, Jesus, thank you for committed Christians who share Your love and grace **everyday** with all those around them. Help me to be counted among them, amen.

Prayer Focus: Commitment to Christ

Anonymous

TUESDAY, JANUARY 26TH – RESILIENT SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Read John 14:4-20

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

John 14:12-13 KJV

Everyday should be celebrated as a day of resurrection, giving us a glimpse of heaven and the joy, it brings. So, in the spirit of Christ's resurrection we rejoice knowing that Sunday is coming! Monday through Saturday we follow Jesus on the road to Jerusalem by remembering the people He met, the miracles He performed, the conversations He had and even the numerous conflicts He conquered. We speak His name boldly and strongly and make ourselves bold and strong for what is to come through the work he has called us to in the mission field of discipleship through community so that on Sunday we can rejoice in doing not only what He did, but even greater works.

Thought of the Day

Every day is day to do what Jesus did.

Reflection

Prayer: Lord, we believe we shall do not only the works that you did, but even greater works to glory of God the Father.

Prayer Focus: Faith and works

by: Linda Best

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27TH – FEED MY SHEEP

Read Mark 6:35-44

**He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat.
Mark 6:37 KJV**

Wesley and the early Methodists placed primary emphasis on Christian living, on putting faith and love into action. For Wesley, there was no religion but social religion, no holiness but social holiness. In other words, faith always includes a social dimension or what we deem now as healthy interaction with one another. Wesley believed there were no solitary or private Christians. As members of the body of Christ we must grow in faith through our participation in the church community, where we are nourished and equipped for mission and service to the world.

Thought of the Day

Who shall He send? If not me, then who?

Reflection

Prayer: Lord, we take our rightful places as witnesses who desire to liberate and empower others with the love of God, the one who first loved us through the power of the Holy Spirit that works in us.

Prayer Focus: I am an ambassador for Christ
Anonymous

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28TH – SHARING GOD’S LOVE

Read Mark 12: 28-33

**And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.
Mark 12:30-31 KJV**

Who is my neighbor? Your neighbor is not just the person who lives next door to you. They are the persons you meet as you go about your daily life. To love your neighbor means to seek what is good for them. It means you must be kind and patient with people that you live with and work with. It means to be generous to strangers. Jesus said, “There is no other commandment greater than these”. We get to see to what extent God’s love really lives in us by how much it shows in our character as we relate with the people around us. A powerful form of love that is unconditional and pure is referred to as agape love. One great example of agape love is how Jesus sacrificed Himself for the sins of the world.

Thought of the Day

You must first love yourself then share that same love with your neighbors.

Reflection

Prayer: God we Thank you that you are loving & gracious. Thank you that your love is perfect, it never fails, and that nothing can separate us from your love. Help us to love others as you love us, amen.

Prayer Focus: Moving beyond saying I love you.
by: Marylyn Green

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29TH – DO UNTO OTHERS

Read Mathew: 25:31-46

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me”.

Mathew 25:40 KJV

As we mature in our faith journey, we realize that Jesus can be found in every human encounter. He is present when we encounter a homeless person on the street, a friend in need, a grocery store clerk, a neighbor walking a dog, a person with a disability, a mother with an unruly child, or a company CEO. We discover that we must focus on making our encounter with people meaningful that we need to value people enough to remember their names, their uniqueness, and their individuality.

Thought for the Day

Jesus is found in every encounter; with the sick, poor, and nameless.

Reflection

Prayer: God, open my eyes to the presence of Jesus in the lives of those who names I know and those whose names I must still learn.

Prayer Focus: Take time to really know people.

by: Katherine Odum

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30TH – WHY PRAYER IS REAL AND POWERFUL

Read Matthew 6:5-15

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:10 KJV

In his book “Christianity Rediscovered” Vincent J. Donovan, a missionary dedicated to bringing the gospel message to the Maasai tribes of Tanzania, wanted to leave the people with something that would insure their continued Christian maturation. He decided to teach them to pray. He wrote on several aspects regarding prayer, but one element was new and empowering to me. Father Donovan writes:

“We Christians profess to believe . . . that God is continuing to create. . . that if God ceased to create, took away his creative presence, all things, and we ourselves, would cease to exist on the instant. This creative power is acting now and here. The purpose of prayer is to open us up fully to that power.”

This wasn’t the only mind-blowing idea. Centering around the story of the annunciation, Father Donovan further writes that when Mary responded to the angel “Let it be done” and when Jesus taught us to pray “Your will be done”, and again Christ in the garden before his suffering, “Your will be done” that: “This is a single prayerful statement with a twofold meaning: “I will be open to your presence continuing to create in me, and I am willing to be involved in the answer to this prayer.” Okay, now my mind is exploded by the blessing of who God says I can be in him. What a loving creator!

Thought of the Day

I want God’s will to be my prayer.

Reflection

Prayer: Father in heaven, I love your kingdom. Show me what to do for it and thank You for all the other things You have provided for me.

Prayer Focus: God Created, is creating through our Participation in Prayer
by: Karen Aaron

MONDAY, JANUARY 31ST – CLOSING PRAYER

Blessed are You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord is the greatness, the power and the glory the victory and the majesty. For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours. Yours is the Kingdom O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might. In Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name. Father, we will sing to You. We shout joyfully for You are the Rock of our salvation. We come before Your presence with thanksgiving. You are the great God, the great King and You are reign over all gods. Thank You for blessing us to remain faithful and focused during our time of prayer and fasting. Thank You for hearing our prayers during the fast.

Father, we have prayed believing that we have received what we have prayed for. We declare that our families and community will possess and prosper in the land that You have given us because of our sacrifice.

Lord, there is none like You. You are great and Your name is great in might. You are the true and living God and the everlasting King. Yours is the kingdom now and forever, in Jesus' name, amen.

Scripture References:

Psalm 95:1-3, I John 5:14-15, Jeremiah 10:6, 10