

Seeking God

40 Days Fasting Devotional Guide

July 12 - August 20



geyersspringsfbc

A little over 2 years ago, we began to sense God calling us to a new season of ministry. It was time for us to raise the bar on our ministry to the lost and unchurched in Central Arkansas. After much time in prayer and study with various groups in our body and after consulting with leaders in other ministries, we have felt a clear calling to plant several Gospel-centered small groups in communities all around us; we believe many of these will launch into churches that will allow us to have a network of churches in Arkansas that share our vision for bringing the lost to Christ and discipling them through sound biblical instruction.

While we believe we have a clear vision, we want to submit that back to the Lord to be sure it is the vision He has for us. In essence, we want to lay our vision back at His feet and ask, "Is this from You, Lord?"

With that in mind, we are calling our body to 40 days of fasting and prayer from Tuesday, July 12 through Saturday, August 20.

Biblical fasts were common in the Old and New Testaments – there are at least 70 mentions of fasting in the Bible. In the pages that follow, you will see many biblical reasons believers are called to fast. You are going to benefit personally in your spiritual life during this time.

I am calling us to a corporate time of fasting and prayer for two reasons:

- 1) Guidance from the Lord – we want to hear clearly, corporately from Him regarding our next steps.
- 2) Revival and renewal – we want a unified body that is cleansed as we pursue the heart of God and the plans of God together.

Your fast may look different than someone else's. That is o.k. The main purpose in our fast is to draw near to the Lord, to express our dependence on Him, and to show our humility and submission to Him. As you read through the pages that follow and ask the Lord for direction, He will make known how He wants you to approach this time of fasting and prayer.

Please join me and our leadership teams as we seek the Lord together for our personal growth and for the advancement of the Gospel through our church body.

Pastor Dave

OVERVIEW OF BIBLICAL FASTING

Fasting may be the most clearly demonstrated and expected, yet least practiced, spiritual discipline of all. In Matthew 6, Jesus said, "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites...but when you fast..." (Matt. 6:16-18). These verses follow similar wording on the topics of giving and praying.

Notice that Jesus does not say, "If you fast," or "Should you think it is a good idea to fast," or "If you want to be a super-spiritual green beret type Christian who opts to fast." He said, "when you fast." He just assumed his disciples would make fasting a regular part of their walk with Christ. He expected it would be as normative as praying and giving.

The Bible is filled with examples of God's people fasting and praying – seldom is fasting mentioned without praying. We see Moses, David, Elijah, Esther, Daniel, Ezra (and Israel), Jesus, Paul, and all Israelites (as part of festivals and observances) fast for varying lengths and purposes in the Bible. Yet in modern times very few Christians fast for any length of time or purpose at all.

So what is fasting? A non-spiritual definition is that fasting is doing without something for a purpose. You may have fasted from food before bloodwork or to kick start a diet. Some people fast from sugar, soda, sweets, video games, television, social media, and so on. BIBLICAL fasting is not just giving up something; it is giving up something that takes time to give you MORE time to pursue God for a specific purpose or reason. Fasts in the Bible are always coupled with prayer and include giving up food.

In short, biblical fasting is giving up something that takes time in your life, for a specified length of time, so you can seek God more fully and passionately for a purpose. This definition is broad enough to include "things that take up time" to include those who have health conditions that would prohibit abstaining from food. But if you are physically able, the suggestion is to fast from food to follow the biblical pattern and teaching most fully. Fasting for our purposes will be applied to food fasts, but if you are physically prohibited from food fasts, simply adapt it to other things you are giving up to seek God.

Why fast?

1. It is thoroughly biblical. As stated above, Jesus commanded/expected it of His followers.
2. It increases our humility and dependence upon the Lord. Hunger pangs remind you of how weak you are in the flesh and dependent you are on God for all things – even food. We are reminded that God should be more important to us than ANY personal comfort. You will be amazed at how easily food can distract and control your daily activities and thoughts.
3. It gives you more time to pray and seek God. Use time spent for meals (including prep and clean up) to pursue God more deeply. If you do not use your extra time to pursue God, you are not biblically fasting.
4. It is a good exercise in self-discipline. Learning that we can will ourselves to avoid food and seek God strengthens us in other areas of our lives. When we are tempted to sin, we can be reminded that through the Holy Spirit we can avoid sin and pursue God instead (Heb. 5:8, 1 Pet. 4:1-2).
5. It heightens your spiritual and mental alertness to God's presence. God speaks to His people and reveals Himself to them when they earnestly seek Him.
6. It expresses earnestness in our prayers and pursuit of God. Jesus said God's Word is more important than food (Matt. 4:4). If we fasted indefinitely, we would die. A fast symbolically says to God, "You are more important to me than food," and demonstrates that we are willing to lay down our lives for Him.

Biblical Fasting Resources

Fasting is not complex – simply give up food (or something that is a regular, consistent, and enjoyable part of your life) and spend the time you would normally engage in that activity pursuing God instead. But remember, just because something is not complex does not mean it is easy! Golf is easy to understand – knock a small white ball into a small hole 150 yards away. If you say golf is “easy,” then I know one thing about you – you have never played golf!

Fasting can be accomplished in a very simple manner – skip meals and use the time you would have spent preparing, eating, and cleaning up after the meal with God in some way. You could read and study your Bible. You could pray. You might prayerwalk. You could memorize Scripture, journal, meditate, listen to worship music, and a whole list of other things in that time. The key is to pursue God in some way with your extra time.

Fasting is like any other spiritual discipline – there is a lot of freedom and flexibility in how to put it into practice. Yet, there are a few core principles or practices that can help you get started with this spiritual discipline. Some thoughts and ideas are listed below and some additional – more exhaustive resources – can be found on our website if you want to dig deeper into fasting.

Why are you going to fast?

- Is it simply to seek God more fully in your walk with Him? Perhaps it is simply to practice a command/expectation He laid out in Scripture – simple obedience.
- Are you fasting and praying for someone specifically – a family member, lost friend, person in crisis?
- Are you fasting and praying for a specific decision – job change, move, family/ personal situation?
- **We are asking the church body to fast together for personal renewal and to ask God for guidance for our next steps as a church.**

How long will you fast?

- Fasts can be varying lengths. In Scripture, fasts were anywhere from 1 to 40 days.
- **We are asking the Geyer Springs family to fast for 40 days - July 12 - August 20.**

How will you fast?

- In Scripture, a fast involved abstaining from food.
- While a fast should involve sacrifice (we give up something in order to have more time and focus on the Lord), it is not going to look the same for everyone.
- If you have never fasted before, you could start with one meal every few days and perhaps build up to a full day or two each week.
- If you are not able to fast from food, perhaps there are particular food items or some activities that you could give up for the entire 40 days.
- **We are asking everyone to give up something daily for the 40 days and for those who are able to try to fast from food at different times throughout the 40 days.**

What do you need to plan for your fast?

- When does it best fit your schedule so you do not draw attention or get questions as to what you are doing?
- Who will you need to tell – spouse, children, others? (Maybe help your wife fix a meal, talk to your children about fasting, and ask how you can pray for them before excusing yourself to pray.)
- How are you going to pursue God as you fast? Do an extra quiet time during your extra time? Meditate on Scripture? Pray only – do you need points, an outline, or guide of some kind? Journal? Listen to worship music? Study the Bible in depth? Read a book (suggest only doing this part of the time and only after time in the Word and in prayer)?
- How will you respond if someone asks you why you are not eating?
- **We are asking our church body to read through the following devotionals as we fast and pray together.**

Additional Resources

- You can find articles ("A Brief Word about Fasting", "Personal Guide to Fasting", and "7 Steps to Fasting") at www.gsfbc.org/dgrouptoolbox.

Day 1: Philippians 3:13-14

"Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"

Forward. Danish Theologian Sorén Kierkegaard once wrote, "Life can only be understood backward, but it must be lived forward." Even when we cannot go back and straighten out the path that got us to where we are today, we can move forward. The Apostle Paul put it this way, "...one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Paul was not perfect; he had room to grow and a humble desire to draw nearer to Christ. He knew it would require intentional effort because the path forward is upstream – the world is moving in an opposing direction. Nevertheless, there is the upward call of God in Christ Jesus offering us more than the world ever dared dream.

The Lord stands before you today with an open hand, inviting you to move forward with Him. Let's forget what lies behind us, and move forward with Christ. Are you ready?

Lord, help me to move forward in faith. Give me the power to push the devil aside when I am tempted to look back over my shoulder at past regrets and missteps. Help me to have a single-minded focus on You. Speak to me through these 40 days of prayer as I commit to drawing nearer to You. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 2: Ephesians 6:10

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might."

Life is different when you are living in a war-torn country. Most of us are unfamiliar with walking to avoid minefields, checking underneath our cars for bombs, or growing accustomed to the sound of noisy air raid sirens. Thankfully, we enjoy a level of peace and safety that gives us a sense of security, but if you have ever lived in a war zone or talked with someone who has, you quickly learn that they live with a different sense of alertness and preparedness. While we are not living in an active combat zone, we are engaged in a spiritual war that is equally real.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (Eph. 6:12)

So now that you have been kindly reminded that you are living in a spiritual war zone, here is what you need to know: God wants to empower and equip you to win this fight!

In Ephesians 6:10, Paul commands us "to be strong in the Lord." This is not a locker room speech inspiring you to dig deeper or try harder on your own. It is the exact opposite of that idea. The charge to "be strong in the Lord" could also be translated, "be strengthened by the Lord." It is written in a passive sense, which means, this is not something that you do for yourself but something God will do for you - when you come to Him and ask. Did you catch that? You must go to God so that you can receive strength from God.

One of the enemy's strategies is to convince you that you do not need God. The devil would love for you to adopt a "I got this" mindset because you will eventually run out of power. Combine that with an attitude of "Not me, I am stronger than that," and you are twice as vulnerable. God's power is infinite, and His strength is greater than that of our adversary. Do you see why the enemy wants to keep you from God? The challenge today is to begin strengthening yourself in God daily.

God, thank You that You never intended for me to fight spiritual battles on my own. You want me to win the fight and You are willing to give me the strength and power I need to overcome the devil. Today, I am coming to You, asking that You would strengthen me so that I can walk in the Spirit and glorify Your name. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 3: Ephesians 6:11

"Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil."

If you knew that you were going into battle against a very dangerous and capable enemy, would you leave your equipment behind?

God has issued you battle gear sufficient for the conflict, but it is your responsibility to put it on. As a child, the idea of putting on the armor of God was difficult to understand. The local Christian bookstore sold a set of golden, plastic, toy armor with the names of each attribute painted on the respective pieces, but that does not seem to be what Paul was talking about. If the battle is spiritual, then how do you put on these invisible attributes found in Ephesians 6?

To put on the full armor of God means to put on Christ. The word in the original language means to clothe oneself. This sounds a lot like what Paul wrote earlier in Ephesians 4:22-24. The idea here is to get spiritually dressed for a spiritual battle by putting on the attributes of Jesus. Truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, strong trust in God (faith), salvation, and the Word of God are all individual pieces that make up the full armor of God. And just like physical body armor and equipment, the pieces work together to protect the person wearing them.

You put on the armor of God when you tell the truth, live a life of integrity, and do the right thing. You wear the shoes of the gospel of peace when you are ready to share Christ as you are going throughout the day. Putting on the armor means walking by faith and not by sight and trusting in God even when your circumstances do not make sense. It is remembering that Christ has already won the victory for us on the cross and nothing can separate us from the love of God. And it means spending a lot of time getting to know your offensive weapon, "the sword of the spirit - which is the Word of God."

Father, You love me immensely and You have provided for my greatest need, the forgiveness of sins, and a restored relationship through Jesus Christ the Righteous. As I come to You today, help me to wear Your armor well. Thank You for giving us all that we need for life and godliness. To You alone be all glory and praise! In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 4: Ephesians 6:11-12

"Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens."

Look at the last part of Ephesians 6:11, "so that you can stand against the schemes of the devil." Our enemy, the devil, is a calculated and cold-blooded opponent. One of Satan's strategies is getting you to fight the wrong enemy. Essentially, the devil will work to destroy relationships through a lack of communication or poor communication by using misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and speculations, so that two people who are not enemies begin treating each other like enemies. If you are going to win the fight that the devil throws at you, then you must fight the right enemy!

This method can be effective in almost any relationship (husbands and wives, parents and children, coworkers, neighbors, and between friends). Knowing this helps, but you must stay alert in your relationships. When you are tired, sick, frustrated, or just having a busy day, controlling the tongue is crucial. But it goes even deeper than that. This scheme of Satan is most effective in an unguarded mind or heart. What thoughts of others are you letting linger in your mind? Are you speculating what someone might be thinking about you without going to them one on one? Have you slowed down and prayed about your own heart in the matter? By fighting for those around us and not against those around us, we can disarm this particular weapon of the enemy.

Lord, help me to be mindful that my fight is not against flesh and blood but a spiritual enemy. I pray that the Holy Spirit would keep me from fighting the wrong enemy. Help me, Lord, to be alert in my relationships and to keep control of my tongue; guard my mind and heart against speculations that creep in to provoke a battle. Help me to fight for those around me and not against them. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 5: Ephesians 6:13-14

"For this reason, take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything to take your stand. Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest,"

Paul uses six different parts of the Roman soldier's armor to help us understand the full armor of God. Today we will look at the first two pieces: truth and righteousness. The belt was both decorative and functional. Soldiers took great pride in attaching different metals and designs on their belts, and it was viewed as an honor to wear one. More importantly, the belt provided a place to keep their main offensive weapon, the short sword. They wore this belt most of the time, probably because of its value and it allowed them to keep their sword close.

We, too, should wear the truth at all times and never lay it down. Truth protects us from the deception of the enemy. How do we do this? Wearing the belt of truth looks a lot like speaking the truth and living a life of truthfulness. It means being trustworthy and reliable. Truth is also essential for healthy relationships because truth-telling builds trust.

Righteousness is not a word we use too often today. To live a righteous life means to do what is right regardless of the circumstances. It does not matter who is or is not watching. A person who is wearing righteousness like body armor does not let down his or her guard. Knowing that you are in a war zone, you stay alert and walk in integrity. With this understanding, it becomes obvious how living a righteous life would protect you from the enemy's attacks and temptation.

*Jesus, You are faithful and true. Your truth will protect me from the lies of the enemy and help me be a trustworthy person. You are also Jesus Christ the Righteous, tempted in every way, yet without sin. Thank You for being the perfect example and for giving me the power to live a righteous life.
In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.*

Day 6: Ephesians 6:15-16

"...and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. In every situation take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."

The Romans realized the importance of sure footing on every surface from mountainous terrain to muddy bogs. To better equip themselves, they added hobnails to their shoes to create a cleated sandal. In the same way, you need to stand firm on the slippery slopes of an ever-changing culture. This is what the gospel of peace provides. Regardless of the person you encounter or the people group to which you are called, the gospel is the power of God for salvation, to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). And even if you are already a Christ-follower, the gospel should still be the foundation of your life. It will not change. You were saved by grace through faith, and it is on the gospel you stand, declared righteous before the Lord today (Eph. 2:8-9).

The Roman infantry shield was a 4 ft. x 2½ ft. wooden shield that would have been painted with symbols of the gods they trusted for victory. It was useful in many ways. With its size, a soldier could crouch behind it to escape an onslaught of enemy arrows. When enemies of the empire discovered the shields were made of wood, they began dipping their arrow tips in tar or pitch and lighting them on fire just before shooting. To counter this, the Romans began soaking their shields in water to extinguish the arrows, hence Paul's knowledge of the shield's ability to extinguish all the fiery darts. Likewise, our faith will protect us like a shield from Satan's fiery darts. When the enemy's arrows begin flying toward you, crouch behind your faith in God and let your trust in God ward off the attack. Stand firm, hold high your faith, and advance the gospel.

*God, thank You for the gospel of Jesus Christ which gives me stability for any spiritual terrain, no matter where I may travel to advance Your Kingdom. Thank You that the only way I can be saved is by faith and not by works so that I could never boast in myself. And, Lord, thank You that I can trust in You to be my refuge and strength. You are a fortress for the weak. Your name is a strong tower where I can run and be safe.
In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.*

Day 7: Ephesians 6:17

"Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit – which is the word of God."

The fifth piece of our gear is the helmet of salvation. The helmet protected the Roman soldier's head from arrows, sword strikes, and other instruments of war that could injure or end his life. The helmet of salvation, or as some have called it the helmet of victory, reminds us we are fighting from Christ's victory over sin and death. It is only by His power, strength, and wisdom that we are alive spiritually. As we trust in Him, we will remain victorious no matter how intense the battle may be around us.

The sixth piece of our gear is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. More than likely, Paul was thinking of the Roman short sword in this context. It was a smaller sword intended for hand-to-hand combat and carried on the belt when not in use. The Word of God is our lone offensive weapon in this list, but it is all sufficient! Jesus Himself relied on the Word to counter the devil's temptations each time He was tempted in the wilderness (see Matthew 4; Luke 4). There is no better example of skillfully handling the Word in the battle against our enemy than of Christ while facing temptation in the wilderness.

*God, thank You for securing victory for me. Help me to remember that each day I wake up I walk in spiritual victory. My ultimate victory over sin and death has been secured. In Christ, I am victorious no matter how intense the battles may be around me. Holy Spirit, speak to me through the Scriptures each day. Help me to hide the Word in my heart so that I, too, can stand firm in the battle against the lies and schemes of my enemy.
In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.*

DAY 8: RECAP AND MEDITATION

The reality for followers of Jesus is that we have an enemy. An enemy who is constantly looking for our demise, who Jesus calls the father of lies. This enemy will stop at nothing to leave our lives in ruin, our families broken, and our communities in shackles to sin.

Fortunately, King Jesus knows this and has not left us to battle the enemy alone. This week, we have honed in on the armor of God that Paul discusses in Ephesians 6. While the attacks of the enemy can be overwhelming and even our lives can seem in peril, by putting on Christ and the attributes of Christ we can fight against the schemes of the evil one.

By putting on the full armor of God - the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the sandals of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit- we can equip ourselves for the fight. We learned that these are not just a plastic toy set in Christian bookstores yet instead how we live our lives. By putting on Christ, we can find victory from sin in our lives and protect ourselves and our families from the devil.

Through Christ, our battle has already been won. Through Christ, we have the means to protect ourselves. God wants to empower us and equip us to win this fight, and through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that all followers of Jesus are gifted we can do just that.

*King Jesus, thank You for giving us the tools and ability to defend ourselves from the schemes of the evil one. Help us, not only throughout these 40 days, but throughout our entire lives to put on the armor of God, to put the attributes of Christ on us. Help us to follow You more faithfully, love You more fully, and yield to Your Spirit daily.
In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.*

Day 9: 1 Peter 5:8-9

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

What has been going through your mind lately? Are you regularly thinking about all the unresolved issues or tasks? Are you thinking about work? Have you thought about your schedule for today? Who is picking up the kids after school this week? What is for dinner tonight?

There are so many things in this world that compete for our attention and influence our mental well-being. It is easy to become "staggered" by the thoughts of this world. We are inundated with so much information and worry it is no wonder we cannot find the time to spend even an hour of our day with our mind fully set on the things of God.

Peter, the author of this epistle, would have understood this very well. He was there in the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus just before Jesus was taken away to be put on trial. Jesus asked Peter and his fellow disciples to remain watchful and to pray while He was praying to His Father; but Peter, James, and John were unable to stay awake and focus on the task at hand. Jesus asks Peter in Mark 14:37-38, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

One of the easiest ways for the enemy to get us to fall into temptation is to distract us from what is essential. The enemy does not need to fill our minds with bad thoughts; he can distract us just as well with things that are "good." Today's point is simple, take the time today to turn off all the distractions in your life and spend some focused time with the Lord. This is the key to staying sober-minded.

*Lord, I give this time to You. Help me not to be distracted in my daily time with You and not to be led into temptation today. Let the words of my mouth and meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.
In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.*

Day 10: 1 Peter 5:8-9

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

The year is 1939. After the devastating fires across the western states, President Roosevelt and a network of forest preservation advocates constructed 5000 lookout towers to prevent a disaster of that scale from ever happening again. You wake up in your lookout tower, cold from the fall night, roll out of your bed, and prepare your coffee. As you look over the familiar rolling hills you have been entrusted to keep watch over, you see the landmarks you have marked in your mind. The winding river, the grove of Aspen trees in the northern quadrant, and the family of black bears that do their morning commute through it. However, when you look west, you see an unwelcome sight; smoke is billowing over the evergreen hills. It is time for action.

Like the morning watchman, you need to survey your life constantly. We all need to take time to assess how we are doing when it comes to living a prioritized life and, even more importantly, how we are doing in our walk with Christ. When life gets rolling, it is incredibly easy to slip into auto-pilot. However, as followers of the Way of Jesus, it is important that we intentionally and purposely look at how we are doing. Things can look normal, just as the watchman saw normalcy in the land he was tasked to keep watch over. But when we see smoke, we need to be aware of the dangers that could lurk behind the gray haze. As partakers in the Kingdom and image-bearers of God, there is nothing more the devil would like than to start a destructive fire.

Therefore, we must keep watch over our lives. Just as the prophet Habakkuk waited in his tower to hear from the Lord, we must wait upon the faithfulness of Yahweh to combat the lies of the enemy. The compassion, grace, peace, and life of Jesus must be our pattern of life, and we must be diligent in our lives to watch for the workings of the enemy.

*Father, Son, and Spirit - I confess that without You and Your guidance I would have no power to see the attacks of the enemy. I pray that You give me spiritual eyes to see the areas of weakness in my own life so that I may follow You more fervently. Change me from the inside out, and help me keep watch against the attacks of the enemy.
In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.*

Day 11: 1 Peter 5:8-9

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

"Knowing is half the battle." If you were a child of the '80s, then you will recognize this familiar phrase from the cartoon series G.I. Joe. I remember watching these 30 second PSA clips that were often directed toward safety for kids. The idea, of course, was knowing what the problem was, which is half the battle. The other half is knowing what to do because there is a problem. As we are praying through defeating the attacks of Satan this week, one of the key things that can help us in defeating the enemy is knowing our enemy.

1 Peter 5:8 tells us that our adversary prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Picture this for a moment, a lion in his natural habitat, prowling around. Why is the lion roaring? I can imagine he is roaring so that he can scare up his prey. When the prey hears the intimidating sound of the lion's roar, the prey is frightened and begins to run, not realizing that by doing so they have exposed themselves to the lion; and now the lion has them right where he wants them, out in the open, alone, and afraid.

This is the enemy we face. Satan is cunning and knows exactly how to get to us, often by putting us in places of fear and isolation. 2 Timothy 1:7 reminds us that God has not given us the spirit of fear, but He has given us the power to overcome this enemy. We are not alone in this fight; we have a God who is for us and will never leave us. He is fighting with us. Let's lean into God today and rely upon His strength as we defeat the attacks of our enemy.

Lord, we know our enemy and we are not ignorant of his designs. While the enemy comes to steal, kill, and destroy, we know that You have come that we may have life and have it abundantly. I put my trust in You and Your power and not my own today. Let me not live in fear but in trust of You, my Lord and my Savior. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 12: 1 Peter 5:8-9

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

When we resolve to live our lives more in light of the calling we have received, the temptations from our enemy will only grow stronger. In the pursuit of a life more reflective of Jesus, it becomes easier and easier to fall into the patterns of our flesh, living the lies that we so easily are fed daily. Just like how easy it is to raid that cookie jar, if we are not on guard against the devil we can find ourselves wavering in the fight to live lives devoted to God.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, you can resist the lies of the enemy. Through the Holy Spirit, you can walk worthy of the calling you have received (Ephesians 4:1). Through the Holy Spirit, you can truly find freedom, hope, love, joy, and peace. You do not have to live with white knuckle resolve in order to live differently – you can turn away from your sin because through the work of Jesus on Calvary you can finally be free from the sin that once entangled you.

We can resist the devil and find freedom in the life that Jesus has to offer when we consistently check to see if we are being formed by the Spirit of Jesus and the Scriptures rather than the patterns of this world. May we become more like Jesus by yielding to His Spirit and resisting the lies of the enemy.

Father, Son, and Spirit, I confess to You that without Your power I would not be able to resist the evil one. Through your Spirit, God, lead me to be a person of grace and peace, loving my community well, and empowering me to share the Good News of Jesus. Through Your power, Lord, give me the strength to resist the devil and live worthy of the calling I have received. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 13: 1 Peter 5:8-9

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

It came out of nowhere. Like a sudden gust – a crosswind unexpected. Everything seemed to be going according to plan. And then suddenly, as if all at once and without warning, everything came to a sudden halt. It was all going as expected until it was not. Your confidence was at an all-time high until the whisper crept in - subtle like Mona Lisa's smile. And suddenly your certainty evaporated. Doubt and lies slipped into the driver's seat of your mind.

We have all had moments like this when we suddenly came to realize we are not as firm in our faith as we thought. We are more fragile than we imagined, susceptible to the strategic attacks of our adversary. Mike Tyson once said, "Everyone has a plan until they are punched in the face." (Not every attack is subtle like Mona Lisa's smile.)

In 1 Peter 5, we are called to be firm in our faith as a means for resisting the attacks of our adversary. So, what if we allowed our vulnerabilities to fuel our daily dependence on Christ? Wouldn't your faith be firmer if you woke up each day very much aware of your vulnerabilities but equally aware of the power available to you in Christ? To be firm in your faith means that you are assured, confident, and unwavering – because of Christ – not a result of your willpower. These adjectives can become spiritual realities in your life when you allow your vulnerabilities to point you toward Christ for daily strength to stand firm against the attacks of your adversary, the devil.

The key to standing firm in your faith is coming to grips with your vulnerabilities – whatever they might be – and clinging to Christ every time the devil whispers weakness into your ear.

Lord, help me to be aware of my vulnerabilities each day and my subsequent need for Your strength in my life to withstand my adversary. As I live each day with greater awareness of my weaknesses, help me cling to You for power to stand firm. Fill me with the Holy Spirit today – greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 14: 1 Peter 5:8-9

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

Suffering is a complex thing.

For some, it may be losing a loved one or watching a loved one walk through something incredibly difficult. For others, it may be living with a chronic illness or facing a financial situation that seems insurmountable. Whether a loved one's or your own suffering has been financial, medical, or emotional, one thing is for certain. Suffering is suffering.

One of the beautiful things about how Jesus has built His church is how we can share our burdens. Whether we have lost a loved one or lost our home to a flood, we as followers of Jesus can stand together in solidarity and practice the love of Jesus by extending His compassion through acts of kindness.

The question of why bad things happen to good people has puzzled generations from the beginning. While there are many thoughts about why suffering occurs and how the nature of God relates to it, one thing is for certain - Jesus is with us in our deepest suffering. The lyrics of John Mark McMillan ring beautiful and true here: "Well, I've got no answers for heartbreaks or cancers, but a Savior who suffers them with me." Not only do we have our fellow followers of Jesus to stand with in life's deepest hardships, but we also have the very One who molded Creation with His hands suffering along with us. If we feel sorrow, how much more does our compassionate, triune God feel sorrow for us?

When suffering comes our way, may we first run to Abba, and may we find comfort in the shared suffering with our community and with our most compassionate Jesus. May we allow life's greatest sorrows to lead to the deepest joys of intimacy with the Lord.

Dearest Jesus, thank You for placing Yourself in our shoes. Thank You for experiencing suffering in the deepest possible ways on our behalf and thank You for letting us relate to You. As we experience sufferings in our own lives, may we rely on You. When the evil one attacks, may we find comfort in the Man of Sorrows and depend fully on You, most compassionate Jesus. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

DAY 15: RECAP AND MEDITATION

This past week, we have been walking through 1 Peter 5:8-9, where Peter describes our enemy and exhorts followers of Jesus to resist him. He also reminds us that we can find comfort and confidence in knowing we share our sufferings together as the Church. In this passage, Peter gives us some insights for defeating the attacks of Satan.

If you have the applause of Heaven, expect the assault of Hell.

This is particularly true when we follow Jesus with everything we have. As Peter describes, the devil is like a prowling lion, seeking to devour. There is nothing the enemy would love more than to steal away God's glory and tear down the Kingdom, brick by brick, family by family.

Peter equips us with these keys to victory - to fight the good fight. Through the blood of Jesus, we are adopted as sons and daughters and will one day co-rule with God across creation. In this moment, with life full of trials and attacks from Satan as it may be, we can do what Peter exhorts us to do. Resist the devil and give our affections more fully to King Jesus. While we may suffer in this moment, we have a Suffering Savior who is here with us, day by day, moment by moment.

Try as he may, Satan has no power over us. Because of Jesus, we can resist the lies of the enemy and walk in the truth and reality of the Kingdom of God.

*Lord Jesus, without You we would be powerless against the attacks of the enemy. Thank You for looking at us with compassion in Your eyes and being moved to heal us. May we rely on Your strength when the attacks of the enemy come our way, and may we become a people of grace and peace as we follow You day by day. We love you, King Jesus.
In Jesus' name, I pray Amen.*

DAY 16: 1 John 3:1

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so, we are."

As the world moves more digital, the present generation is unfamiliar with how the American population used to listen to music. Record players were a prized item to have in your home. Teens would spend hours listening to music and wearing out their favorite albums. Records were a fragile possession though. As you may well know, the smallest scratch could mess things up. When the needle found the misplaced groove, the album would get stuck repeating the same 2-3 words over and over again. And more than likely, out of frustration, the broken record would eventually get tossed.

We are reflecting this week on the biblical truth that Satan is a liar. His lies come at us like a broken record playing inside our heads. He is clever to play continuously words and wounds of the past... something said to you as a child, teenager, or even an adult that you keep going back to over and over again. And maybe it is not even things that were said or done to you but things you say to yourself. Paralyzing words can get stuck on repeat in your brain, and the task of making them stop can seem insurmountable.

Our thoughts are powerful. They shape who we are. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. As God's beloved children, we have an amazing opportunity to step into a life full of hope and abundance by simply tossing out the old record and renewing our minds to conform to our God-given identity in Jesus. "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 John 1:3). If you are in Jesus, you are the son or daughter of the Most High. He deeply cares about your current state and wants you to find freedom in knowing He takes care of His children...and so you are. He has got you. Choose to rest in the love and goodness of your Heavenly Father today.

Father, I have been struggling with thoughts I know are not in line with Your truth. I choose to believe today as Your child I am deeply loved and cared for. You are attentive to my every need and every detail of my life, and I need You to help me rest in Your amazing love. Thank You for the price You paid to bring me into Your family. In Jesus Name, Amen.

Day 17: Genesis 3:1, 4

"Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden? ... No! You will not die,' the serpent said to the woman."

"Did God really say...?" This is perhaps the greatest lie Satan can tell, the lie that what God says really is not true. There is hardly a greater threat to our faith than discrediting the authority and credibility of the Bible - God's Word. This is the source that reveals God's love towards us as well as the life He wants for us. What better lie is there for Satan to tell than the one that pulls us away from the source.

The best way to defeat a lie is to combat it with the truth. Here are some facts and good news about God's Word:

- The Bible is 66 books composed by 40 different people over the course of 1500 years; yet, it does not contradict itself.
- The Bible passes intense, scholarly tests that approve of its credibility.
- Paul, an apostle of Jesus, saw the words of Jesus so worthwhile to listen to and live by that he "consider[ed] everything as loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:8
- "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- "The instruction of the Lord is perfect, renewing one's life; the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy, making wise the simple." Psalm 19:7

So, do not let that question cause anymore doubt about what God's Word says. There is too much goodness to miss out on by not living out His Word. We can trust His Word, and it would do us good to surround our lives with it. Lean in deeper to the sermon on Sunday with the expectation of living it out. Read the Word daily, and if that is new, start with some baby steps. Read the Gospels a chapter a day to get familiar with Jesus. Commit Scripture to memory to have wherever, whenever (verses in Proverbs are a good starting point). Listen to a Christian podcast that talks about the Word during your morning commute.

What God says is for your benefit and His glory. Listen to it, love it, and live it out.

Lord, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for the wisdom, promises, and hope found in it. Help me to hide Your Word in my heart each day in the days ahead. Reveal Yourself and Your will to me as I read it and seek to live it out daily. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

DAY 18: Romans 3:23

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Not enough. A familiar thought that many have about themselves at some point. It is just two words, but when put together they are powerfully debilitating. It is like tires spinning out in the snow or mud, trying hard to move forward but going nowhere. Being stuck in that thought can lead to other thoughts of why even try or I do not deserve this or that or anything. The enemy would love nothing more than to keep a person believing this because he has zero interest in your benefit or welfare. However, a person does not have to be stuck there, and it is all because of Jesus.

There is a difference between how Satan wants us to understand Romans 3:23 and how God does. God wants us to know that we are not enough so that we can fully grasp the depth and magnitude of His grace, mercy, and love. He wants us to know that He forgives us and frees us from sin through Jesus, who was good enough when we were not.

"God made the one (Jesus) who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." – 2 Corinthians 5:21

Not only was Jesus good enough for us, but in trusting Jesus we are now considered good enough by Him. God sees those that follow Jesus exactly as He sees Jesus Himself. In fact, we are even called "God's children" in Romans 8:15. That is how God sees us because there is no longer any condemnation towards us because of Jesus (Romans 8:1).

So, let's live today empowered by the truth that Jesus was good enough for us. Let's see ourselves in the mirror as God sees us from heaven – as His children through Jesus. Let's dwell in God's sufficient grace, mercy, and love that we do not deserve in our inadequacy but accept with eternal gratitude. Take the "not enough" arrow out of Satan's quiver with 2 Corinthians 5:21. Do not live today listening to a lie but instead live out God's truth.

Lord, thank You for the way You see me today, in Christ. I pray You would guard my mind against thoughts that do not align with Your Word. Help me to remember that in Christ I am chosen and beloved. Help me to dwell on Your sufficient grace, mercy, and love in the year ahead. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 19: 1 John 2:15

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

As a parent you become very proficient in saying the word "don't." Why is that? The reason comes from the ambition of every 2 year old. Toddlers love to test their boundaries and explore their curiosity. Also, interpersonal communication in early childhood is not the best. Therefore, when a parent sees their child reach out to touch a hot stove, the immediate and loud reaction is "Don't touch that!"

Think about this concept for a moment. A parent's love and desire to protect his or her children means warning them of clear and present danger. When God, who is a perfect Father, warns us of the things in the world He points to the danger within you. God's creation is not evil. As we learned yesterday, it is the sinful nature within me that falls short. Therefore, God's Word addresses your heart. What do you love? Is it what God has created (the things in the world) or is it the Creator?

How do I know? Simply ask yourself do I have things or do they have me? When I wake up am I more concerned/excited about possessions or the lack thereof, or am I content and longing to spend time with the Father? To illustrate this further remember you should have your boat in the water, but the water cannot be in your boat. To love the world means you do not love the Father. You cannot love both. As love for the world increases, love for the Father decreases.

Lord, thank You for loving me. Your Word is the truth. It protects me, guides me, convicts me, and brings me to You. I pray today that You would audit my heart and expose areas where I have turned away from You. Help me to turn and repent from these things and love You more. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 20: Galatians 6:6-10

"Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."

A lot can happen in 20 days. Lives can be changed, chains can be broken, and relationships can be restored. Hopefully, through these past 20 days, together as a church we have been able to draw closer to Jesus and hear from His Spirit more clearly and fully.

The challenge for us going forward is not to grow weary in doing good. When life gets busy and difficult, it becomes easy to let things slide and fall into old patterns - old lies from the enemy and old thought patterns lead to death instead of the life of grace and peace from Jesus. Therefore, we must be diligent, we must be resilient, we must be steadfast in our pursuit of Jesus and where the Spirit may lead us. God has equipped us to resist the enemy, and through His power we can do just that.

Who knows what this fall may hold? Part of the joy is the mystery of it all and the excitement of the unknown. This next season of ministry could hold mountaintop moments for us with the Lord, where we can look back years later and remember His faithfulness and abundant kindness. Difficulties will come; that much is certain, but if we commit ourselves to loving Jesus more fervently day by day, then partaking in the expansion of the Kingdom of God becomes something exciting, like the sun peeking over the horizon inviting us into the day to come.

But we are not done! Let's keep moving forward together. Let's follow Jesus wherever He may lead.

*Lord, thank You for the ways You are moving in my life (list out or say outloud specific ways). Give me strength to continue pursuing You each day while I fast. Do not let me follow the desires of my flesh, but teach me to rely on Your Holy Spirit that I may persevere and continue the good work you have called me to.
In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.*

Day 21: Psalm 63:1-5

"O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food."

Start this day with a declaration. A verbal declaration. You are God's. Do not just know you are His; declare aloud to Him "you are my God."

He alone is Lord.
He is the Way.
He is the Truth.
He is Life.
He is your God.

As you look at the text this week, you will see David's declaration was not merely a factual statement but a relational endearment. While in the middle of wilderness and against the firecest trials, David begins this Psalm by proclaiming his greatest possession is God. Not food. Not water. Not shelter. Not security. David's most valuable possession comes with communion with the Father.

Earnestly he seeks after God. Other translations would state this as "early I seek you." David's first desire was to find time to be with God, to know Him more, and to be sustained by His presence.

As you begin the next 20 days of our fast, pray our church will earnestly seek after God and take hold of our greatest possession, which is God Himself.

*God, You are my God. Help me to see You. Teach me to know Your ways. Allow me to witness Your glory so that my heart's desire is to know You more each day.
In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Day 22: Psalm 63:1-5

"O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; **my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.** So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food."

A veteran backpacker plans his route for a multiday hike around the resource of water. A hiker may pack some water to carry, but water is incredibly heavy. Ideally, it is best to hike routes that cross streams or rivers or near ponds and lakes. However, even among experienced hikers, there may be times when they run out of water on their journey, or worse at a planned water stop they find a dry river bed with no water at all. Can you imagine hiking for several miles or even days without water? No longer are you searching for the best view or to conquer a particular peak, your priority is to do whatever it takes to find water.

As David pens Psalm 63, the kind of thirst David speaks of is one of desperation. Notice what is thirsty: it is not his dry mouth or dehydrated body but his soul. David is crying out to God proclaiming how much his soul wants to experience His presence: like one who is in despair and in great need.

In John 4, Jesus encounters a woman in great spiritual need. She is drawing water from a well, and Jesus provides a great picture of His mission and identity when He shares with her that what He offers is living water by which she will never be thirsty again. Her entire life she was seeking satisfaction in a variety of ways, but only when she believed in Jesus was she saved.

The challenge today is to seek God with desperation, for He is all we need. Like one seeking water, seek the Lord and He will satisfy your soul.

God, help me seek You like one desperate for water. I need You and am trusting You to satisfy my soul. You are my provider, my sustainer; and I as I seek You, please provide strength, joy, and perseverance. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 23: Psalm 63:1-5

"O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. **So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.** Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food."

David penned the words of Psalm 63 during a very difficult season in his life. It is likely that he was hiding from Absalom in the Judean wilderness. We, too, have days in our own lives when we experience loss, fear, and uncertainty. There are moments of strife and struggling that Christians battle on this side of eternity. The fact of the matter is that followers of Christ are not exempt from suffering. So, what is the antidote for the ills that accompany us in this life? What was David's response in the midst of his trials? The medicine that David took and prescribes is found in v. 2: "So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory." David looked to the Lord.

When David placed his focus upon the Lord, what did he see? He saw the Lord's power and glory. We cannot even begin to comprehend the depth, width, and height of the Lord's power and glory. We have a better chance of drinking the Pacific Ocean with a straw than to grasp the depths of God's power and glory. We have better odds of jumping across the Grand Canyon than to wrap our minds around the width of God's power and glory. We are more likely to visit every star in the Milky Way than to understand the heights of God's power and glory.

The truth is that so much in our lives are actually symptoms of a problem. It is like trying to put a band aid on a wound that requires stitches. You will never find true healing. Our greatest need has, is, and will always be to look upon the Lord. Oh, how many issues in our lives would simply become insignificant if we would only look to the Lord. When we look to the Lord and see His power and glory, everything in life is put into its proper perspective. Our fiercest enemy is rendered helpless against God's power. Our most selfish desire is crushed under the weight of God's glory.

When life becomes exceedingly difficult, it is incredibly valuable not only to look up to the Lord but look back on what He has done. When we look back, it is an opportunity to remember and reflect upon the Lord's faithful provision in our greatest points of need. The next time difficulty crosses the threshold of our lives, let us firmly fix our gaze upon the Lord. Charles Spurgeon said, "The Lord gets His best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction." Look to the Lord!

*Lord, thank You for being present in the midst of my momentary suffering. Please help me to remain fixed and focused on You in all things. I ask You to work in my difficult circumstances for Your glory and my good.
In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.*

Day 24: Psalm 63:1-5

"O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. **Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.** So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food."

Isn't it awesome watching little children hear music that has a good beat? What do they do? They start dancing, moving, bouncing, bopping, swaying, or as some people call it, "breakin' it down!" They hear the music and it touches something deep within them and they cannot help but express it outwardly, totally free of inhibitions or concern over what others might think of them.

We have seen the Psalmist write of a hunger and thirst for God in this week's text. He longs for God. He yearns to be in God's presence and is overwhelmed at what he experiences when in God's presence. Then what happens? He responds! He cannot help being moved by what he experienced in the presence of God.

He beheld God's power and glory, but what word does he use to describe his experience of those things? Love. He does not say "because of your power" or "because of your glory" but because of your STEADFAST LOVE. Think about that for a moment. Why would he choose the word love to describe that experience? It makes sense on one level because the Bible tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Therefore, if we are in God's presence, we are going to feel and be reminded of His love. Additionally, we understand why he uses the word love because without God's love it is impossible to draw near to Him; and if we cannot draw near to Him, we cannot experience any other aspect of God's character or nature.

God's love lets us draw close to Him through the gospel. Without the gospel, we are dead in our trespasses and sins. Without the gospel, we cannot draw near to God because our sin separates us from Him and to enter into His presence would mean instant destruction because of our sin. Without the gospel, we are God's enemies. BUT...because of His love for us, God made a way for us to enter His presence. That is why the Psalmist was so overwhelmed at God's love - it allowed him to draw near to God.

That love, like music to a child, elicited a response from the Psalmist. He said, "my lips will praise you." As you reflect on God's love for you, think about your own response(s) to God's love. What about His character or nature touches deep in your soul? What are you thankful for? List some ways God has shown love to you. After you have reflected on these things, pray and ask God to give you opportunities to share those things with others, just like the Psalmist did. God's love in you and through you can touch the hearts and lives of others deeply. Make it your prayer that His love through you will help draw someone to Christ.

God, thank You for Your indescribable love. I know I do not deserve Your love or blessings in my life, but You have still lavished them on me. Help me live with a life of thanksgiving and praise for all that You have done. Use my words, my praise, and my testimony to draw others to You. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Day 25: Psalm 63:1-5

"O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. **So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands.** My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food."

"Well, bless your heart!" If you grew up in the South like me, you have heard that phrase countless times. Sometimes it is uttered in true sympathy, but most times it is a polite way of saying, "You really are dumb and cannot help it!" In today's verse, David says he will bless the Lord as long as he lives. What does it mean to bless the Lord?

To bless the Lord simply means to praise Him, to lift Him up, to exalt Him. It evokes the feelings and actions associated with honoring Him for who He is and what He has done. While there are many ways to bless the Lord, I think David refers to a significant one in this passage. In battle, raised hands are a sign of surrender. When we lift our hands to bless the Lord, it indicates that we are in a posture of total surrender to Him, His will, and His ways. Likewise, when a child lifts his or her hands to a parent, it is an acknowledgement of dependence. When we lift our hands to bless the Lord, it is no different. We acknowledge that we are totally dependent on Him for everything – for as long as we live. So, next time you hear, "Well, bless your heart!" use it as an opportunity to pause and bless the Lord.

*Lord, I want to bless you as long as I live. Help me to be totally surrendered to and dependent on You. Thank you the results will be that my trust in You will reach depths it never has before and that You will be glorified in the process.
In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.*

Day 26: Psalm 63:1-5

"O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. **My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food.**"

There is a common mantra in real estate that says the three most important factors to consider when buying property are 1) location, 2) location, 3) location. While location when purchasing a house may be super important, location is also important in understanding Psalm 63. The note under the chapter heading in my Bible for this passage says, "A psalm of David. When he was in the Desert of Judah." If you have ever been in a desert, you know that food resources are very limited. It is in this sparse environment that David pens today's verse. Notice that his focus surprisingly is not on his undoubted physical hunger but rather his spiritual hunger, a hunger that could only be satisfied by God Himself.

In our culture today, there are many things that compete for our attention when it comes to soul satisfaction. The world offers wealth, status, happiness, pleasure, and success as the keys to satisfaction when reality is that these are all fleeting at best. As the writer of Ecclesiastes says, all are "meaningless, a chasing after the wind." What God has to offer us when we draw close to Him provides the satisfaction for which we are desperately looking. Ask yourself this question: "What am I relying on to bring satisfaction in my life?" If the answer is anything other than your relationship with God, then spend some time in confession and prayer about that. Ask the Lord to give you a heart that hungers only for Him.

Lord, in this world that seeks to distract me from You at every turn, help me to keep my eyes on You. Give me the desire to know and do your will. Help me not to settle for temporary, worthless things but to focus only on eternal, worthwhile things that will draw me closer to You. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 27: RECAP AND MEDITATION

"O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food." - Psalm 63:1-5

Meditate on this past week's Scripture. We are 4 weeks into a time of prayer and fasting. No doubt, this is a very busy season for most of you. The summer break is ending, and you are now confronted with new tasks, differing schedules, and competing priorities. Knowing this raises the importance of today's time with the Lord. We must be a church that applies what the Lord guides us in. So before we move forward, the questions we all must answer are what has God revealed to us and how have we responded?

Spend some time looking back through your notes, highlights, and journals. Remind yourself of what God has taught you. How He has convicted you. Encouraged you. Strengthened and sustained you. How He has revealed to you His steadfast love.

*Pray to the Lord the truth found in Psalm 63:1-5.
Respond to God today with praise. Bless Him. Raise your hands and proclaim His Glory.
Let your soul be satisfied today with His presence.*

Day 28: Romans 12:9-12

"Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality."

What does it mean to be genuine? In today's world of social media, instant access, and hot takes, it can be hard to find genuine people in our world. Do you find yourself questioning someone's motives and trusting what you hear? Throughout Scripture God calls out those who follow him to be genuine in their love for one another and their neighbors around them. In Philippians, Paul says this:

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." Philippians 2:3-4

We must not look at the world around us, even with all the madness we see, and have a selfish heart; we must consider others better than ourselves. Our genuine love must come even when there are those that stand against us or do not agree with us. We see it in this passage in Romans; we must abhor what is evil holding fast to what we know is good. In that, we must consider others better than us. Just as Christ gave Himself up for us, we must remember to do likewise for those we encounter that do not know him. Stay strong in your faith, hold fast to what is good, and love your neighbor as yourselves.

Father, as we interact and live our lives, may we stay strong to do the good You have taught us. May we hate the evil we see. May we love those that may seem unlovable or even immovable. May they see in us what is good, which is a life that reflects You. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 29: Romans 12:9-12

"Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. **Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.** Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality."

Paul's use of the word brotherly to describe the love we should have for one another paints such a beautiful picture of the kind of relationship we should have with other believers. We are meant to be intimately bonded to one another like family. The Lord desires us to live in close relationship with each other and love one another despite our faults or any conflict we may have. Just like earthly families may go through hard seasons or bother each other, we as brothers and sisters in the family of God must make allowance for each other's shortcomings and love each other despite them.

It is so important that we love one another with this type of genuine affection. The way that we love each other is how those outside the family of God will know that we follow Him. God has shown His great love for us that even when we were His enemies, completely rebelling against Him, He sent Christ to die for us. We must demonstrate this love Christ has shown us to each other and love each other despite our differences, conflicts, etc. This kind of love is what attracts the world around us to Christ because it shows them His love on display. One way we can practically show this kind of love to each other is to honor each other.

When I think of honor, I think of a high amount of respect and seeing someone in the light of being in a higher position than me. This is how we should think of each other. Instead of placing ourselves, our wants, our giftings as more important than our brothers, we should place honor on them by considering them higher than ourselves. We should not only pursue things that lift us up or bring us honor, but we should empower each other to use our individual callings and giftings for God's glory. We should selflessly humble ourselves and give honor and respect to our brothers and sisters. When we do this Christ's love is shown evidently to those around us. When we consider each other as more important than ourselves, we are living out the servant leadership that Christ demonstrated for us.

Honoring one another does not mean we never get to use our gifts or that our opinions/wants do not matter or cannot be used. We just need not to serve and honor ourselves always first. We must put our brothers and sisters before us and consider them before we consider ourselves. We should not do this from a place of false humility and boast in our selflessness. However, our love for Christ should overflow into the way that we love each other; and this should lead to self-sacrificing, brother-honoring love.

Father, help me to love my brothers and sisters the way that You have loved me. Help me not to consider my comforts, desires, or giftings as greater than anyone else's. Lord, help me to honor my brothers and sisters so that others may come to know You through my love for them. God, help me to see others as higher than myself and to honor You in the way that I love others. Father, let my love be kind, compassionate, and considerate. Father, help me to love in a way that draws lost people into a relationship with You. Guide our church into self-sacrificing love that honors You and honors each other. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Day 30: Romans 12:9-12

"Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. **Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.** Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality."

The Lord God is intimately acquainted with all our ways. This command to resist laziness and apathy is not coming from a task master who is standing above us cracking a whip saying, "Do more!" or "Try harder!" or "Be better!" This is a reminder from a loving Father who knows our deepest needs. He created us first and foremost to be with Him, to know Him, and to delight in Him. The natural result of delighting in Christ is a desire to do the good works He prepared for us to do before the foundations of the earth were laid. Only when we are doing what we were created to do are we truly fulfilled. Our Creator God and Father collaborates with and through mere man in order to further His Kingdom. He does not need our help, but He wants to involve us. We are invited in this passage to be a part of what He is doing.

We must be mindful to remember where there is a spiritual truth from God's Word there will be a spiritual lie from the enemy to match it. The enemy is efficient at exploiting our obsession with entertainment, comfort, and indulgence. The lie is that those things are much more fulfilling and worth our time than bothering with the eternal purpose of growing the family of God.

How does the enemy do it? Very easily when our hearts get distracted from our first love. An apathetic believer is much more useful to the enemy than someone who is living a life of sin. Apathy within the Body is as damaging as it is contagious. That is why we get a reminder from Scripture here to be "fervent in Spirit."

The literal translation of the word fervent here means to boil or to burn. When we are abiding in Jesus, His Spirit stokes the fires of our hearts and prompts our own spirits to desire and pursue with passion those things closest to His own heart, namely the reconciliation of lost souls to their Creator and Redeemer. However, when our hearts are far away, lost in busyness, self indulgence, and worldly ambition, that fire is allowed to die down to just a flickering flame. If you were to audit your life and heart's affections today, what would they reveal?

*Father, forgive me for where my heart wanders away from You. Continue to expose areas of my life where I have become apathetic or lazy. Teach me to draw near to You when my flesh wants to fall away. Spirit, revive me with the joy of my salvation. Jesus, thank You for calling me and commissioning me to serve as You did. Reveal to me the traps set by the enemy, and guard me from my own sin nature.
In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.*

Day 31: Romans 12:9-12

"Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. **Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.** Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality."

Sometimes people confuse happiness and joy. Happiness is a feeling that depends on circumstance. I am happy that my favorite song came on the radio or that this Southern heat and humidity finally relented to a decent level. But, while also stirring up "good feelings," joy is not dependent on circumstances. Joy is more of a by-product of trusting God. We have hope that we can rejoice in because of Jesus. I know that He is preparing me a place in Heaven (John 14:2). And although my day to day life here may contain some things which are not pleasant, I can be joyful as I recognize that I am not going through it alone and this life is not the end. The Holy Spirit is with me as I daily invite him into my life for guidance and comfort.

When my children were young, someone once told me that I was such a patient parent. That person meant to give me a compliment, but they were incorrect in their assumption. Patience has never been something at which I excel. But, I have developed coping skills. I may find something else that needs doing so I am too busy to spend much of my time lamenting over whatever thing I was being impatient about. While being absorbed in a task, I do not appear to be impatient. However, if there were thought bubbles over my head that everyone could see, people would see the real me.

When faced with a problem that does not resolve quickly, it is easy to become impatient. But when I remember that God has a different timeline than me, I can trust Him and know that whatever the outcome of this problem, He will use it for good.

My mom and I were very close. After I married and moved to Little Rock, we spent a lot of time on the phone. In the first months after my mother passed away, I would often get the urge to call her and ask a question or share some news as that was our habit. In those moments, I would have to catch my breath and hold back tears as I remembered that was no longer possible. Great sadness came when I thought of never getting to have another conversation with her. But, there is joy in knowing Jesus as the friend who sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24). We are supposed to be sharing our daily lives with Him. And as for praying constantly, that does not mean walking around mumbling with our heads down and eyes closed. When we are constant in prayer, we leave the conversation with God open throughout the day, knowing that He is never more than a whisper away.

Do you truly know the One in whom we hope? Are you daily inviting the Holy Spirit into your life and leaving the conversation open with Him? This is the key to the power to live life with joy and patience while in the midst of troubles. There is no substitute.

Father God, thank You for Jesus and for giving me reason to hope. Thank You for always being available to me especially during the trials of life. Forgive me for the times when I try to push ahead on my own power. Help me to focus on You rather than my problems. Help me to see how I can encourage others who may be going through similar trials and point them to You. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 32: Romans 12:9-12

"Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. **Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.**"

We live in a world that is very focused on self, and we oftentimes find ourselves focused inwardly instead of on the needs of those around us. As Paul has instructed in Romans 12, true transformation is found in renewing your mind. If we want to be people who focus on the needs of others and be able to show hospitality to all people we encounter, our mindset and focus has to be transformed. We can no longer look to our own needs but focus on those around us.

What would your life look like if when you woke up your mind was set on focusing on Jesus and showing His love to those around you? What if the thought of whom can I serve and how can I serve was at the forefront of your mind? Not only would transformation take place in your own life, but those around you would experience something that is not very common in the world today. As a follower of Jesus, our heart's desire should align with that of God's heart. God's heart is not for us to build up our earthly kingdoms but instead to build His Kingdom. This looks like us taking a step back and pursuing His ways above all else.

I think many times we can be overwhelmed at the calling of God and feel as if it is our sole job to meet the needs of others, but if you read what the Scripture says, it calls us to "contribute to the needs of the saints..." We are not called to meet the needs but to contribute to them. This is an effort that requires multiple people desiring to reach the same common goal. As believers, as the Church, you are to give yourself and your own resources for their material needs, like food, clothing, and shelter, to contribute to the needs of the saints. True love is fervent, relentless, and practical, and it is an overflow of Christ dwelling in us and passed on to others. Every single day we have a choice to make—will I point people to Jesus or will I point them away from Jesus? The way that we love and serve others is a direct reflection of who Christ is to us and the value that we place on the eternal implications we see in the gospel.

So the question we conclude with today is this, "Does the life that I live and the priorities I pursue do these things point people to Jesus' goodness, or do they make much of myself?" Spend time in prayer and reflecting today on how others might view your walk with God and how others can experience the goodness of God because you are focused on "contributing to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality."

Father God, thank You for the love that You showed me in sending Your Son to die for me. I pray that as a response to that act of love shown to me, I am able to portray that in my own life. God, I ask that You give me a heart for others and allow me to make much of Your name. God, I ask that You show me my missteps and how I can remain faithful to what You are calling me to. God, I ask that You help me contribute to the needs of the saints and let hospitality flow through me to others. God, I ask this is your Holy name, Amen.

Day 33: Recap and Meditation

"Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality."

Take some time to reflect over the past 5 days. Think deeply and focus this day on what God has revealed to you about your relationship with the Lord. If meditation on Scripture is difficult for you, here is a helpful resource from Don Whitney that will guide your time today: *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 56-68. After you read through this, spend some quality time with the Lord and close your time in prayer.

"Meditation is not folding your arms, leaning back in your chair, and staring at the ceiling. That's daydreaming, not meditation. As opposed to daydreaming wherein you let your mind wander, with meditation you focus your thoughts. You give your attention to the verse, phrase, word, or teaching of Scripture you have chosen. Instead of mental aimlessness, in meditation your mind is on a track—it's going somewhere; it has direction. The direction your mind takes is determined by the method of meditation you choose."

Here are 12 methods Whitney presents to help your time of meditating on Scripture:

1. Emphasize Different Words in the Text
2. Rewrite the Text in Your Own Words
3. Formulate a Principle from the Text—What Does It Teach?
4. Think of an Illustration of the Text—What Picture Explains It?
5. Look for Applications of the Text
6. Ask How the Text Points to the Law or the Gospel
7. Ask How the Text Points to Something About Jesus
8. Ask What Question Is Answered or What Problem Is Solved by the Text
9. Pray Through the Text
10. Memorize the Text
11. Create an Artistic Expression of the Text
12. Ask the Philippians 4:8 Questions of the Text
 - What is true about this, or what truth does it exemplify?
 - What is honorable about this?
 - What is just or right about this?
 - What is pure about this, or how does it exemplify purity?
 - What is lovely about this?
 - What is commendable about this?
 - What is excellent about this (that is, excels others of this kind)?
 - What is praiseworthy about this?

Day 34: Matthew 6:9-13

"Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

As we close out our time of prayer and fasting, we are going to look closely at what is called "The Lord's Prayer." The Lord's Prayer is often recited in churches or at religious events, but there is so much more to this prayer. Jesus provided this model as an outline to teach us how to pray in a way that connects us to God, aligns our priorities with His, and helps us live dependently on Him. This model takes us through each part of The Lord's Prayer, showing us how to pray the way Jesus instructed.

"Our **Father** in Heaven"

God is not interested in us practicing religion; instead, He desires a relationship with us. God has adopted us as His children and loves for us to call Him our Father. Starting your prayer time acknowledging your relationship with God is powerful. It is an identity statement that God delights in. Remember the text we find out of Romans 8:15, "You have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when He adopted you as His own children. Now we call Him, 'Abba, Father.'"

Abba is an endearing and intimate term. In English we understand it as dad or daddy. Understanding this verse draws us to know God in a closer way. How would you describe your relationship with God today?

In your own words, take some extended time in your prayer life this week to move closer in your relationship with God. Address Him lovingly as your Father and thank Him that you are His child.

Father, I come to You in prayer today thankful that I am Your child. I know I am a sinner, but You have forgiven me and adopted me as Your own, and I am so grateful to call You my Father. Thank You for loving me. I love You. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 35: Matthew 6:9-13

"Our Father in Heaven, **hallowed be Your name**. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

"Hallowed be Your name" God loves when we worship Him, and there is power in His name. Here is a list of some of His names to help us worship Him specifically and personally:

God is Righteousness – He makes us clean.

God is Sanctifier – He has called us and set us apart.

God is Healer – He heals all our diseases.

God is Banner of Victory – He defeated our enemies.

God is Shepherd – He speaks to us and leads us.

God is Peace – He is our peace in every storm.

God is Provider – He supplies all of our needs.

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe."
Proverbs 18:10

Speak God's names outloud. When we proclaim who He is, we not only worship Him but we also remind ourselves how powerful and great our God is. Spend some extended time in prayer today looking through the Word and proclaiming the truth of God's glory.

God, I am in awe of You. Your name is a strong tower, a place of protection and safety for me. I praise You as my Healer, my Shepherd, and my Banner of Victory. You are my Peace, my Provider, my Righteousness, and my Sanctifier. Your name is great, and I worship You. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 36: Matthew 6:9-13

"Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come. **Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.** Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

Pray His agenda first. "Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven" Part of being a child of God is caring about what He cares about and loving whom He loves. We know His will is perfect, and we acknowledge His wisdom and sovereignty when we pray His agenda first. When we read Scripture, what comes to the top of the priority list? Does your personal list look different?

Spend time focusing on what God is focused on. His priorities include:

- Saving the lost
- Wisdom and guidance for those in authority (parental, spiritual, governmental, work-related)
- Caring for the poor and marginalized
- Unity and love
- Justice
- Freedom for those in bondage
- Accomplishing His purpose in our lives

God, I recognize there is no better plan on earth than Yours, and I pray for Your will to be done in our world and in my life (name the areas of your life where you need more of God's presence today). This world is lost and needs You desperately, and I pray for every person to know You as their personal Lord and Savior. I pray for the leaders in my life (pray specifically over parents, spiritual leaders, governmental leaders, employers, and any other leaders in your life) that You would show them Your will and give them supernatural wisdom and discernment as they lead. God, I pray that Your heart for justice and unity would be seen in our world, that those who are in bondage will be set free, and that the needs of the poor and marginalized will be met. Show me what my role is in seeing the realities of heaven come to earth. Make Your priorities my priorities. Help me love whom You love and see value in all people. I give my life to You again today; have Your way in me. Please give me wisdom and clarity as You show me my next steps. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 37: Matthew 6:9-13

"Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. **Give us this day our daily bread.** And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

"Give us this day our daily bread." God promises to supply all our needs; and He wants us to come to Him with our problems, needs, and desires and to trust Him to provide. "I look up to the mountains—does my help come from there? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth!" Psalm 121:1-2

Ask God for what you need today. It may help to write down the concerns weighing on your mind or the desires of your heart. Bring them to God and trust Him enough to hand them over to Him fully. It may help to open your hands before God to show physically your surrender to Him. Problems can either be ours or God's; they cannot be both.

Father, I acknowledge that everything I need today will come from You. You made the heavens and the earth; You are more than capable of handling any situation I am dealing with, so I give it to You completely (specifically talk to God about what is on your mind and heart right now and give it to Him). I look to You to help me, sustain me, and give me Your peace. Remind me of Your hope and power today. Thank you for taking care of my needs.

In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

Day 38: Matthew 6:9-13

"Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. **And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.** And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

God has offered us complete forgiveness, and we can receive it at any time. When we turn away from our sins and receive His forgiveness, our hearts are more prepared to forgive others as well. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

Ask God to check your heart and life and show you areas where you might need to ask for forgiveness from Him. Then, it is your turn to forgive those who have offended you. We can even choose to forgive people in advance. Ask God to forgive you and to help you forgive others.

*God, thank You so much for offering me the gift of forgiveness. Show me any areas in my life that I need to bring before You in order to receive forgiveness and healing. I confess that I have been struggling with sin (talk to God about any areas of sin in your life), and I know that You want me to be clean again. Please forgive me for my sin. Thank You for showing me unfailing grace. As You have so freely forgiven me, I also want freely to forgive others. Help me let go of the things that have offended me and acknowledge when I have offended others. I release to You those who have hurt me, and I trust You to handle those situations according to Your perfect will.
In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.*

Day 39: Matthew 6:9-13

"Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. **And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.** For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

Spiritual warfare can seem difficult to understand, but the Bible makes it very clear that we have an enemy who is trying to steal from us, kill us, and destroy us.

As we pray, we take our stand against the enemy and fight from a place of victory through Jesus as we are empowered by His Holy Spirit. There is power in God's Word, and every lie the enemy has told us can be replaced with God's truth. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Ephesians 6:12

By recognizing that the enemy wants to destroy you, you can shed light on his lies and claim God's truth over your life. Ask God to show you any lies you are believing or areas of warfare happening in your life. Ask Him to expose the enemy and to help you understand and receive His truth. Simply speaking the name of Jesus has great power in the spiritual realm. The Bible tells us in James 4:7 that if we resist the devil, he will flee from us. Through prayer, we can resist him and walk forward in freedom.

*God, I recognize that my struggles today are not against the people or circumstances around me but against the enemy. Please help me to see how the enemy is lying to me. Help me to recognize his lies, take them captive, and make all of my thoughts obedient to the truth of Your Word (list out any specific areas God shows you where you have believed a lie that needs to be replaced with His truth). While the enemy wants to destroy me, I know that You came to give me life to the fullest. I speak the name of Jesus over my life and declare that no weapon formed against me will prosper. I do not have to fear the enemy because the One who is in me is greater than the one who is in the world.
In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.*

Day 40: Matthew 6:9-13

"Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. **For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**"

Express faith in God's ability. "For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever." God is more than able to move in every situation, and ending our prayer time claiming His authority and power focuses our minds on the truth and hope of who He is and what He can do. "Ah, Sovereign LORD, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You." Jeremiah 32:17

Remind yourself of God's limitless power and then return to praising Him and declaring your faith in Him:

"Yours is the Kingdom" – All authority belongs to You.

"Yours is the Power" – All mightiness flows from You.

"Yours is the Glory" – Your victory will be complete.

Father God, nothing is too hard for You! Through Your great power, all things are possible. All authority is Yours, all might is Yours, and I know that Your victory will be complete. You are amazing, and I worship You. I praise You for Your power and presence in my life. You are my God, and You are worthy of all praise. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.