



## FASTING INTRODUCTION

A primary aspect of our spiritual journey that produces spiritual growth is spending time in God's Word. In addition to daily prayer, your 21-Day plan includes this daily. This devotional will encourage and strengthen you as you set aside time to seek God.

Just like prayer and fasting, reading your Bible is about connecting to God in a more powerful way. It's not about an obligation, it's about a relationship. When we engage God through reading His Word, we experience His very presence. God's Word is living and active! As we read our Bible, we are drawing closer to God and positioning ourselves to hear from Him.

### What is a Daniel Fast?

The Daniel Fast is a great model to follow and one that is extremely effective for spiritual focus, bodily discipline and purification of the body and soul. It is probably one of the most commonly referred to fasts.

In the book of Daniel, we find two different times where the prophet Daniel fasted. In Daniel chapter 1, states that he only ate vegetables and water, and in In Daniel chapter 10, while the passage does not give a specific list of foods that Daniel ate, it does state that he ate no rich (or choice) foods, as well as no meat or wine. So, based on these two verses, we can see that either of these, or combinations of the two, constitute a Daniel fast.

Again, it is important to mention that there is nothing inherently spiritual about one type of fast as opposed to another. The foundation of the Daniel fast is fruits and vegetables. Some starchy vegetables and dairy could be included, but that depends on the individual. Your goal should be to seek God in prayer about this and follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do.

### Helpful Fasting Tips:

- Make a fasting calendar. Determine what each day and week will look like.
- Keep your fridge and pantry stocked with the items you need. Being unprepared to fast sets you up to give into temptation.
- Be intentional when selecting food products: stick to raw foods as much as you can, limit artificial ingredients, and keep tempting foods out of the kitchen.
- Make it a priority to attend church during your 21-day fast. Being around other believers will encourage you to keep on going when fasting gets difficult.
- If you are fasting with others, you may want to do a weekly devotional group to discuss the devotionals, messages from Sunday or something that God has showed you during your personal devotional time.
- If you mess up, don't get discouraged. Just get right back on track and keep going. God's mercies "are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23). He wants you to finish, and He will give you the grace and strength to do it.

### Daniel Fast Sample Menu:

Fruits, Vegetables, Juices and Water

Breakfast

- Fruit smoothie with whey protein

Mid-morning Snack

- Fresh fruit or fresh vegetables

Lunch

- Raw vegetable salad with light, organic dressing and vegetable broth soup

Mid-afternoon Snack

- Fresh fruit or fresh vegetables

Dinner

- Fresh salad with light, organic dressing and steamed or grilled vegetables

## Water

- Drink plenty of water - at least 100 ounces

Our prayer for you over the next 21 days is that your passion for God and His Word will be ignited, and that you will develop a hunger for His presence that is greater than ever before!

As you read these devotionals, keep in mind the following three things: read daily, read prayerfully and read with expectation. God is prepared to reveal Himself to you, so get ready to be Awakened!

## Section 1: Spiritual Disciplines

### Day 1

1 Peter 2:2-5, “<sup>2</sup>Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, <sup>3</sup>now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— <sup>5</sup>you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house<sup>[a]</sup> to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

At the time we receive Christ, we are adopted into the family of God like a newborn baby at the genesis of our faith in Christ, we begin to crave knowledge and insight pertaining to the word of God and what it means to be a citizen in His kingdom. As with most things in life, newness is accompanied by an air of excitement and curiosity. This is part of what helps us “crave” the things of God when we first receive Christ.

While the period of newness and excitement in Christ is beautiful, it does not last forever. Like 1 Peter 2:3 says, as we continue to come to Christ day in and out, we should be building our spiritual lives up, stone by stone. This is where spiritual discipline comes in. Once the “new smell” of Christianity begins to wear off, we must be even more sober-minded than ever, more committed than ever.

The spiritual disciplines that help us maintain a thriving walk and relationship with Christ are just that, disciplines. They are a way of training our body, soul, and spirit to remain in Christ and live out the purpose he has for us. There are several spiritual disciplines, but over the next six days we will discover how to grow in just a few of these disciplines so that we continue to be “built up into a spiritual house.”

Prayer: Father, sometimes life gets busy and I become complacent in my walk with you. I still desire to know you and so I ask that you help me focus in as I recommit to living a disciplined, Christ-centered life. Amen.

## Day 2

Exodus 34:21, "Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest."

Have you ever been so in tune with a day's work, running errands, leading meetings, updating your calendar, completing projects, and putting out fires that you forgot to take a break for lunch? Have you ever been so programmed by the day-to-day cares and responsibilities of life, only to take a short breather, realizing you haven't taken a break for 8 months?

Life has a way of luring us into auto-pilot mode if we aren't careful. Yes, there are the responsibilities that must be attended to, but we are actually commanded in scripture to rest, according to Exodus 34:21. The scripture says, "In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest." This implies that we must be ever so careful to take times of rest in every season, not just when it seems convenient.

See, when we are not rested, it is easier to miss the voice of God and the purpose of God for any given time or season. Refreshing comes when we make time to slow down and hear from our Father, to get his insight and perspective. Without the Father's perspective, we buy into the rat race that the culture has made the standard for success. The culture has made rest equivalent to low productivity. But we mustn't be so quick to run towards this trap, for even God rested on the seventh day after His creation was complete.

What lies have you bought into that have consequently stolen your rest? Have you been able to hear the voice of God lately? Has exhaustion gotten the best of your good-natured temperament? Friends, rest is so imperative to a strong walk with Christ. It's the answer to sweet fellowship with Him and enjoying all the pleasantries of life in Christ. Make room for rest today...because there is rest for your soul.

Prayer: God, I recognize that I've bought into the lie that I don't have time for rest. The truth is I've been in a bit of a rat race, but I am ready to take Sabbath rest so that I can enjoy life with you. Please help me to recognize those things that have stolen my time away so that I can get back to a place of peaceful rest. Amen.

### Day 3

Luke 9:28-29, "About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became bright as a flash of lightning."

Oftentimes, we look at prayer as a means of changing the undesirable things in our lives, but prayer is a powerful resource given to us by God that (1) connects us with His heart and presence and (2) changes us. When we look at Luke 9:28-29, we see that Jesus made a conscious decision to go away with a few of his disciples for the purpose of prayer—no doubt to talk to the Father. It wasn't until he was actually praying, though, that Jesus' face changed and became radiant.

When was the last time that we allowed prayer in the presence of God to change our minds, our countenance, our perspective? The fact remains that even in our time of legitimate need, prayer cannot be used to manipulate God's had and timing. Thus, our approach to prayer should be a deep desire to seek out our Father, to know him, to believe in his promises and power to perform, but to have a heart posture that says, "Your will be done."

At the very moment that prayer ceases to be a negotiating table and becomes a holy altar for us, we become changed as Jesus was in prayer. And as we are changed into the same image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18), this is where the power emanates from for breakthrough in our lives. So, as you develop the spiritual discipline of prayer in your life, remember to approach the Father with a holy desire to be changed from the inside out.

Prayer: Father, I come to you with reverence, desiring to know who you are, desiring to know who I am in you. I believe you know all the details of my life and that you care all that needs to be fixed. But right now, I ask that you change my heart as I continue you to come to you in prayer. Please give me your heart, your vision, your perspective. Amen.

## Day 4

Psalm 119:105, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

There is nothing that has rivaled the word of God at any time since before the beginning of time. Several times in the bible, the word of God is referred to as a light source. This light source cannot be rivaled or overcome by darkness. The promise that the entrance of God's word brings light (Psalm 119:130) is not reserved for the super spiritual, revelatory believer. This promise is reserved for all believers, because we were never intended to walk in darkness or confusion.

In the New Testament, there is an account of a group of people called the Bereans who were devoted to the word of God. Acts 17:11 tells us they, "they received the [Gospel] message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (NIV).

The benefit of scripture reading is multi-fold and serves the purposes of: (1) helping you to build your faith for when it is tested, (2) renewing your mind so that old way of living and thinking are diminished, (3) to rehearse and memorize the truth to engage in spiritual warfare.

Each of these benefits of scripture reading is critical to victorious Christian living. As such, the focused, careful reading of scripture is not optional in the life of the believer. If we look at the pattern of the Bereans, we see they examined the scripture every day. They weren't passive readers, but devoted students of the Word of God. The spiritual discipline of scripture reading is one that takes intentionality—for without intentionality, we are deceived into thinking we can survive without the meat of the word.

Prayer: Jesus, you are the living word and I desire to know more of who you are. Please give me a new hunger for your word, a hunger that causes me to become a student of scripture like the Bereans. I desire to be a victorious believer and I know I can't do this without your word. Amen.

## Day 5

Isaiah 58:6, “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?”

Fasting is the discipline of abstaining from something enjoyable—usually food—for a period of time in order to walk more closely with God. This spiritual discipline may seem scary or just plain old undesirable because it blatantly requires us to sacrifice what we feed our body and soul with on a regular basis (i.e. food, media, etc.)

At the core, fasting is essentially a breaking of our daily pattern and desires, and reaching for something that will benefit us far more. Do you find that you desire to draw near to God, but have a ton of distractions that constantly pop up? Do you feel that you lack clarity of purpose and direction even though you sincerely long for it? Have you been experiencing a dry spell in your spiritual growth and development? Do you need a breakthrough in a certain area of your life? If so, these are all reasons to engage in the spiritual discipline of fasting.

According to Isaiah 58, fasting breaks us from bondage, frees us from oppression and breaks yokes that hold us. So, whenever we feel stuck, under spiritual attack, or like we are far from God, it is time for us to go on strike against our fleshly desires, break our daily pattern, and engage in fasting (coupled with prayer) to realign our hearts with heaven. Yes, the stomach, the mind, and part of us that desires to be entertained instead of re-aligned will go kicking and screaming, but the spirit will come alive. And when our spirit is alive and in tune with heaven, there is nothing that fills us more and makes us more aware that we are covered in Christ.

Prayer: Father, I have felt far from you and disillusioned with life. I know that my spiritual life needs rejuvenation. As I embark on my next fast, I pray that you would empower me to remain focused and finish strong. After all, you are my goal and prize. Amen.

## Day 6

Luke 4:5-8, “<sup>5</sup>The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup>And he said to him, ‘I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. <sup>7</sup>If you worship me, it will all be yours.’ <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered, ‘It is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”

In our everyday lives, we are consistently confronted with the decision of who or what to worship. Worship is the spiritual discipline of giving honor, reverence, and adoration to something, usually a deity. While our deity in the Christian faith is the Holy Trinity, it is quite easy for us to become sidetracked and begin to worship created things more than our Creator.

In Luke 4, Satan attempted to cause Jesus to worship him, tempting Jesus with the allure of earthly gain. But Jesus, being full of the word of God told Satan that worship is reserved for God alone. To be clear, worship is not slow music or bowing down to the ground, because there are many examples of great slow music and bowing down to false gods all over the world. True worship is paying homage and respect to the God of the Bible through our daily actions and the acknowledgment of the truth of who He is.

Obedience, kindness, selflessness, talking to God, reading scripture, and saying no to fleshly desires as Jesus did, are all examples of worship. See, worship is a daily decision to glorify God in all that we say and do. So, whether you’re a stay at home more caring for your babies or a leader within a corporate organization making big decision, you can worship God. Maybe you’re suffering with an illness yet to be healed, you can worship God while you wait with faith. Perhaps you have a hard decision to make that will impact your family. You can worship God by seeking him for wisdom and fully resting in his peace and sovereignty. After all, worship is the daily decision to place Christ at the center of all we do.

Prayer: Jesus, you are so worthy and so faithful. I desire to glorify you in all I say and do. Please be the center of my life. I want your presence to be with me everywhere I go, I want my life to be a worship song to you. Be glorified in me. Amen.

## Day 7

Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

America boasts some of the most philanthropic individuals and organizations, giving millions each year toward noble causes. While philanthropy is needed and noble in itself, there was one person who walked the earth who has out-given even the most generous of philanthropists. This person is Jesus, Son of God!

Mark 10:45 tells us that Jesus came to earth solely to serve and to give his life for many. What makes Jesus' service of more value than any philanthropist is that it has eternal implications. Not only did Jesus provide physical healing to the sick, feed the hungry, and open blinded eyes, he provided a way for eternal life. In the same way that Jesus served, as believers, we must not forget that we have this same assignment.

When we serve others, both inside and outside the four walls of church, we are pointing to Jesus, the one who gave his life for many. He was never too busy to stop to heal, save, or give the words of life. Thus, it is of utmost importance that we never let the busyness of life to keep us from serving wherever we find ourselves. Although the spiritual discipline of service may seem very practical, it has eternal implications. According to Matthew 25:35-40, Jesus is looking for those who are willing to be inconvenienced to tend to the needs of those who are within their sphere of influence.

Service requires us to look up, ceasing to be consumed by our own lives, in order to look around to see how we can touch the lives of others. Service is an essential discipline that gives us the privilege of following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Prayer: Jesus, you came and gave your life so that all generations could experience life and your love. I commit to making sure that others know this about you so that your sacrifice is not in vain. Please help me by the power of the Holy Spirit to see who it is I can help and how I can serve in your house and in my everyday life. Amen

## Section 2: Wholeness

### Day 8

Philippians 4:12 "I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. 13 For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength." (NLT)

Many of us have experienced times in life where we thought that if we had more, or if things went our way, we could be happier or find peace of mind. It is common and quite normal to base our emotional state on external circumstances, but this is unstable and unreliable. External circumstances are unpredictable and ever changing. But, time and time again we find our emotions being dictated by what may be happening around us.

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the church at Philippi, shares that no matter what situation he finds himself in, he is able to find contentment. Through his faith in Jesus he had found a strength and stability that was unaffected by lack or even by abundance.

Contentment is the evidence of a stable mind. It is the reality of a heart rooted and established in truth. Think about all the things Jesus overcame through the power of God – sickness, hunger, ridicule, manipulation, even death. Now, meditate on the fact that you have access to the same power.

Our emotions shouldn't be dictated by unstable external forces. We have an unchangeable, unalterable power dwelling inside of us that we have uninhibited access to through Christ. Let us not allow the trials of life to steal our joy. Let us not allow the successes of life to manipulate us into relying on them to supply our happiness. It is Christ and Christ alone who is our strength.

*Prayer: Lord, protect my mind from being manipulated by state of things around me. Remind me that in you I find strength and stability. Help me to trust in you and find contentment in every situation.*

## Day 9

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (NIV)

The mind is the one battle field where, no matter what, we must navigate and fight on our own. Yes, we have people in our lives who love us and support us, who cheer us on, but they can never step into our minds and fight on our behalf.

This might seem like a lonely and dismal situation but be encouraged—God has given you access to divine weapons of warfare adequate for tearing down and taking captive any opposition that you face in your mind. He has given us His word and His Holy Spirit to aid us when we engage in battle.

The challenge we now face is the urge to select the wrong weapons. Although baseball bats, and knives can do some damage, they would be useless against an army. The fists of the most prized fighter may be powerful, but they don't stand a chance against the arsenal contained in a battle ship.

The world gives us so many options when it comes to bringing peace and wholeness to our minds, but the weapons of this world are powerless in the spiritual battles we face in our minds. When you lack peace, stability, or are challenged in your mind, what is in your arsenal? Do you have the right weapons prepared when a battle arises? Let God's word and His Spirit provide the means for you to destroy the enemies that encompass you on the battle field of your mind.

Choose your weapons wisely.

*Prayer: God, I know that you have provided all the weapons necessary for me to fight every battle in my mind. Help me to remember to rely on your word and to call on the Holy Spirit when I feel overpowered or outnumbered. Jesus, Thank you for the victory!*

## Day 10

Ephesians 6:11" Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. 12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm." (NLT)

It's never fun when you have to find a solution to a problem after the problem is already happening. It's much more comfortable when you had a plan in place just in case something went wrong. Most people who teach on preparedness will say things like "Don't plan for 'IF' plan for 'WHEN'". The idea is to never get caught off guard—never to be surprised by a challenge.

The reality is that the devil is constantly strategizing how he can manipulate and overtake us. His goal is to catch us when we least expect it, taking full advantage of our weaknesses. But God wants us to always be fully equipped with the armor of God so that when the attack comes, we are prepared with every available defense.

What we need to ask ourselves is, where are my blind spots and where are my weak points? These are the places in our lives that we need to be especially mindful of and keep guarded with the armor God provides. The attacks are coming and sometimes from multiple directions, but God promises that if we keep ourselves covered in His armor, we will find ourselves standing firm after every battle

*Prayer: God, show me the areas of my life that are uncovered, and exposed to the enemy. Help me to keep myself prepared with the armor that you provide. Thank you for keeping me on my feet.*

## Day 11

1 Corinthians 9:24

"Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! 25 All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. 26 So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. 27 I discipline my body like an athlete..." (NLT)

Have you ever watched how intense Olympic runners are when they are approaching a finish line? Their eyes are locked in on the goal, their muscles bulge, you can see the intensity of their breathing. It's as if everything depends on that one moment. Or, have you ever seen a body builder attempt to max out? It's as if they have to pull on a supernatural source of strength to achieve the last rep.

Sometimes our journeys can resemble that of an athlete. We are racing toward a goal, pressing toward a mark, and at times we need to call on a power that is beyond our capability.

This year many of us have fitness goals, and like most people, we might lose our grip on our commitment. As you attempt your fitness goals this year use your work outs as an opportunity to remind yourself of the diligence and commitment you need to stay in the will of God. Just as you push forward in your spiritual journey, I encourage you to also push forward in your journey to physical health and wholeness.

A major characteristic of an athlete is perseverance and that perseverance is due to an expectation of a reward or expected benefit. As you achieve your fitness goals and witness the results of your hard work, know that God will also honor your faithfulness and diligence with a reward that will never perish or diminish.

*Prayer: God, you are a rewarder of those who seek you diligently! I pray that as I pursue my fitness goals and strive to achieve physical results, you will remind me to pursue spiritual diligence to achieve supernatural results.*

## Day 12

3 John 1:2 "Dear friend, I hope all is well with you and that you are as healthy in body as you are strong in spirit."(NLT)

Eating right and exercise aren't necessary components in the life of a believer, right? Of course, God isn't holding us accountable to how physically fit we are. As long as we maintain a heart for God our physical hearts are not a factor.

In this passage John wishes his friend Gaius well, not only in his spirit but in his physical health. If health and fitness aren't factors in measuring our righteousness, why would John hope for this in regard to his friend? According to 3 John chapter 1 Gaius had a reputation for caring for people in an exemplary way. He would need to be in good health and well in order to be of help to those that he ministered to on a regular basis.

On one occasion Jesus refers to those that follow him as laborers. When we think of laborers, we think of those that work hard, those that work diligently. As God leads us to serve others we can only go as far as our physical health will take us. The Bible teaches that we should not grow tired in doing good and if our health and wellness is out of order, we are sure to fall victim to fatigue and weariness before we complete what it is God has set before us. So while physical fitness might not have direct relationship to our spiritual depth with God, it can cripple us from fulfilling all that God has set before us—limiting our effective

I want to encourage you today to view your health and fitness as a means to support what God has called you to and to be prepared for what He might call you to in the future. It may not be required for righteousness sake, but our health is definitely important and necessary for the accomplishment of the will of God for our lives.

*Prayer: God, help me to see my physical health as an extension of my spiritual well-being. I know that you have called me to put my hands and feet to work for your kingdom. Let my health not be a stumbling block but a stepping stone as I commit to accomplishing your purpose for me in this life.*

### Day 13

Proverbs 13:20 Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble."(NLT)

As we pursue wholeness mentally and emotionally, we must be careful to protect and maintain our progress. It is vital for us to be cautious of the company that we keep. Are the people around you motivating you to stay on track, or are they influencing you to turn back? According to the Bible, we have to have standards for our relationships or else we may find ourselves limiting our potential on account of our associations.

"Walk with the wise...". Who do you have in our circle that we would consider wise? To break it down simply, the wise are those who have been where we want to go, accomplished what we aspire to do, and have succeeded. These people can share valuable insights with us that will ultimately lead to the building up of our own wisdom.

But then there are the "fools". You know who they are. The ones that want you to stay out later even though they know you're trying to get an early morning workout in the next day. The ones who encourage you to continue in the same cycles that have contributed to your mental, emotional and spiritual struggles.

Now, don't take this as a license to go out calling people "fools", LOL. Just know that the company you keep has an effect on you (2 Cor 6:14). This is also not a call to cut people out of your life that you love, who may in fact lack in their maturity. It is, however, a call to identify who those people are in your life and to create boundaries and limitations for those relationships.

The people we spend the most time with and the people that we give the space to speak into our lives have a great effect on the outcome of our mental and spiritual state of being. Let us be intentional about making more time for people in our lives who exhibit wisdom. Let's be ok with saying no to those individuals who might inhibit our growth.

*Prayer: God, show me who in my life I need to place limits on and show me the individuals who add value to my life and help me to maintain order in my relationships. I pray that as I establish boundaries that you would keep me from falling into a fool's troubles but keep me on the path of the wise.*

## Day 14

Ephesians 4:32, NIV

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."(NIV)

Kindness, compassion and forgiveness are all characteristic of Jesus' heart toward us. His kindness is what He mercifully demonstrates toward us, His compassion is the motivation behind His kind and loving works, and His forgiveness removes any barriers that might keep Him from releasing his kindness and compassion. Let's first take a moment to recognize how fortunate we are to have such a merciful and loving God who expresses His love toward us.

Think about every reason why God could reject you. Think about how many times in your life you may have dishonored Him or rejected Him altogether. Now, think about how amazing God's grace is that He still saw fit to pour His love out on you despite your imperfections. The fact is, this demonstration is not only for the sake of our own comfort and assurance, but it is an example and a template for how we should interact with each other.

Kindness, compassion and forgiveness are characteristics of those who are spiritually and emotionally whole. Sometimes doing kind things for others can be incredibly euphoric and studies show that there are literally chemicals that are released that give us a sense of calm and happiness when we do good deeds. But, good deeds for the sake of feeling good about ourselves is not the sort of kindness God is asking for. He wants us to love like He does, and that is from a place of compassion and with a heart of forgiveness.

Don't let unforgiveness and a lack of compassion keep you from being the hand and the voice of Godly kindness that someone in your life may need. The fact of the matter is, your wholeness is not just for the sake of your own well-being but is for the sake of those you are called to.

*Prayer: God, teach me how to see people like you see them. Give me a heart of compassion and the will to forgive. Open my eyes to every opportunity to show kindness to someone else. Let me live and my actions be a reflection of you.*

## Section 3: Finances

### Day 15

#### MATTHEW 6:33 AMP

“But first and most importantly seek (aim at, strive after) His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right—the attitude and character of God], and all these things will be given to you also.”

Money is mentioned more times in the Bible than mercy, healing and even prayer. Money—our management and interaction with it—and other money-related matters are mentioned about 800 times in the Bible. God must want us to know a thing or two about the subject.

On one hand the Bible talks a lot about money and on another hand, Matthew 6:33 tells us it shouldn't come first—not even second. What a dichotomy! I think the emphasis and deemphasis are for reason.

If the pursuit of money is our principal occupation, we are bound to be derailed from God's way of doing things. I have noticed that whatever we focus on, we are attracted to. Whatever we spend the most of our time processing leads the rest of our lives. If we can be honest, we would admit there are many times we have spent more time thinking about money, balancing our budgets, moving funds around, checking our account balances than doing anything to deepen our relationship with God.

So why would God spend so many verses on money? He knew it was the one thing that could take our minds away from Him. It is the one thing that could steal our trust in Him. If we applied the wisdom the Bible expounds on about money to our lives, there really will be no reason why we can't seek FIRST God and His way of doing things. We mostly get anxious when we don't know what to do. But contained in the pages of the Bible is God's way of interacting with our money that puts Him first.

Prayer: Lord, help me to keep my eyes on what really matters. I submit to you as the head of my life. Everything else I desire and pursue come after you.

## Day 16

### PROVERBS 11:24-25 AMP

“There is the one who [generously] scatters [abroad], and yet increases all the more; And there is the one who withholds what is justly due, but it results only in want and poverty. The generous man [is a source of blessing and] shall be prosperous and enriched, And he who waters will himself be watered [reaping the generosity he has sown].”

From yesterday, it's becoming evident that when it comes to money, what we think should be up is down and what we would place low on the list is actually most important.

You would think that one of the first principles of money management would be 'Hold onto All You Can'. But it's not. Saving, hoarding, keeping-it-to-yourself doesn't guarantee enrichment. Don't get me wrong, saving is a solid financial principle. You must set something aside for the rainy day. It is financial irresponsibility to eat everything to make today with no thought about tomorrow.

What the scripture is addressing here is our attitude to money. Selfishness is not a multiplier of resources. Selfishness is not a security for our resources. You will not enjoy God's best for you holding onto everything you get. Some part of what you receive must be passed on. God blesses others through you, just like He blesses you through other people. We have been resourced to be a source for other people. God is seeking out conduits, not containers—people willing to be transmitters of God's blessings to others.

Here is the question: What part of what you receive every week or bi-weekly is meant for you and what part is meant to pass through you? In that answer lies a secret to abundance from God.

Prayer: Jesus, help me see that it's not all about me, what I want or what I have. Help me to see that some part of what you bless me with is supposed to pass through me.

## **Day 17**

### **Proverbs 29:25, GNB**

“It is dangerous to be concerned with what others think of you, but if you trust the LORD, you are safe.”

We all want to feel accepted, approved and appreciated. We want people to smile and admire our clothes, shoes, cars, stories of places we have vacationed at, tales of our experiences at high-end destinations and basically anything we consider noteworthy. We are social beings, and this is all normal.

There is a thin line between the healthy need for acknowledgement and appreciation, and an obsession that drives us to live to please and impress the people around us. The challenge is that most of us can't tell when we have crossed this line. It's dangerous to be motivated by what other people think.

Just as kids look to receive nods of approval from their parents, God wants us to seek to please Him and Him alone. The life that pleases God is one that is spent seeking out His will and obeying it. The life that pleases God is one that is self-controlled and lives within its means. The life that pleases God is one that honors Him with the disbursement of what He has blessed us with.

If we are truly concerned about what God thinks, we will be concerned about what God thinks about how we spend our money. And to get His nod of approval, we can't spend our money trying to live up to the expectations set by others.

Financial safety, security and abundance is locked in our desire to please Him and Him alone.

Prayer: Jesus, help me find the strength to handle the pressure to fit in with the crowd—living to meet up with the standard set by others. Help me to be all about You and what pleases You.

## Day 18

### LUKE 12:21 AMP

“So it is for the one who continues to store up and hoard possessions for himself, and is not rich [in his relationship] toward God.””

Some ant species store up food for the winter while others eat much more than usual to put on some fat, thereby allowing the latter to go without food for long periods of time.

Saving is a basic financial principle that predates any banking or financial institution. It's an innate characteristic—deep-seated wisdom—that compels us to save up for when the river isn't running as high as it is now, or when our bodies are incapacitated, thus hindering us from working. Saving is a security for when strength or source fail us.

So why does it seem like some shade is thrown on storing away resources in this Bible text? It's really not about the saving, but what wrong stewardship can produce in us. You see, this verse immediately follows an incredible story of overflow.

This man reaped more harvest than he ever did or planned for. He immediately destroyed his old barn and erected a new, bigger one. He had one thing in mind: store up ALL he has received and sit down to enjoy it. He became a bad steward of his harvest. Here are some pointers to his bad stewardship.

He stopped working and sat back to enjoy what he had saved up. Saving shouldn't eliminate work. It provides for when work doesn't produce as it did or when we cannot work as we could. The years of abundance cover the years of insufficiency.

Secondly, he attached his soul—his identity—to what he had stored up. No matter how much our culture dictates that we should, we cannot tie our self-worth, estimation and esteem to our resources. Why? Our joy and peace will then be at the mercy of the economy, most of which we do not control.

Thirdly, his security in what he had saved stole his eyes and heart from his Source: God. A rich relationship with God will always trump the fattest savings account.

So, save but don't let your saving lull you to laziness, determine how you see yourself or take your heart away from God.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for providing the reward for my labor. Thank you for the strength to work. Give me wisdom to manage what I have received and teach me to forever keep you first.

## Day 19

### Proverbs 22:7, NLT

Just as the rich rule the poor, so the borrower is servant to the lender.

Many dreams have been suspended or left for dead along the wayside of life. Many aspirations have been deprived of life, with little or no chance of ever seeing the light of day. Debt has been identified as a killer of dreams, a dampener of creative power, an extinguisher of world-changing ideas.

Debt holds us back—tethered to past decisions and priorities. Even though there are some worth good debts like house mortgages and school loans, if we are honest, most of the debts we take on either fuel our selfish desires or are consequences of poor planning and stewardship. The scripture today states that you are under the power of whomever you are indebted to.

There is a story in Matthew 18 that sums up the restrictive power of debt. In this story, a servant—he is referred to as a wicked servant—was just forgiven of his debt by his master. His master was prepared to sell his entire family and possession to recover what he owed. After much pleading, the master forgave him.

This wicked servant leaves his master and immediately bumps into a fellow servant that owed him much less. Instead of forgiving his colleague, he threw him in jail until he could pay—hence the reference as a ‘wicked servant’. But that’s not the point today. The second servant started his day like every other and was suddenly thrown in jail. That’s the power of debt. It truly decides the course of your life. Hope all you want, debt decides what you can reach for and what you can have now.

God wants us to be free. God wants the best for us. God wants us to be wise so that we remain free. The challenge is the discipline it takes to apply the wisdom that it takes to live within our means. But if we are going to be free and remain free to reach out for what God has for us today, there is no option than to live as debt-free as we possibly can.

Prayer: Lord, help me to live a disciplined life. Help me to live within my means. I pray you provide for me, as I promise to use every blessing in prudence.

## Day 20

### Deuteronomy 14:23, TLB

The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives.

In railroading, in front of the train, is a device called the pilot. It is mounted at the front of a locomotive train and its purpose is to deflect obstacles on the train track that could otherwise deflect the train. If the train doesn't have a pilot or any device that detects and deflects obstacles, there is a high possibility that something is going to get in the way of safe arrival at the train's destination. Cows and other four-legged animals have been found to be the greatest culprits.

Every time we receive blessings from God—especially monetary blessings—a train leaves our station. Think about it, sometimes, we find ourselves spending our money before it comes. Our minds go into creative frenzies when we receive monies we didn't expect. Thoughts of what we could buy, places we could go and experiences we could have flood our minds! The train leaves the station!

The tithe is designed by God to be the pilot. If we obey God's command to tithe, we put Him first in our lives. And when He goes first, He detects and deflects anything that would derail you. God provides safety for those who obey Him and put Him first.

Putting God first starts in the heart. We must settle where our money goes before it even comes. We must decide where God fits in the picture before our account balances change. And if we don't develop this discipline now, it will only get harder when more comes in.

Look at the promises God attaches to the tithe in Malachi 3:10-11:

10 "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.

11 "And I will **rebuke the devourer** for your sakes, so that **he will not destroy the fruit of your ground**, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," says the Lord of hosts.

God will detect and deflect anything that aims to devour you and your resources. Doesn't that sound like the pilot on a train?

Prayer: Lord, sometimes it can be hard, but I want to put you first with my money. I want everything else I spend on to be secondary to obeying you. And thus, I position myself to be protected and secured by you.

## Day 21

### Ecclesiastes 10:10, AMP

10 If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge, then he must exert more strength; but wisdom [to sharpen the axe] helps him succeed [with less effort].

If we are not careful, we lock ourselves into a thought pattern and life-set and work that way of living without any thought to seeking better ways of doing things. We pray to get jobs and promotions. We pray for our businesses to be successful. We put tons of energy into the making what we do work, but sometimes when the money comes in, it meets us in alarming financial illiteracy.

Overall people want to make wise financial decisions for now and the future, but we never really learn how to do so. Research shows that only about one-third of Americans will pass a basic financial literacy test. The challenge is that we don't realize how important learning about financial management is until it is too late to do anything substantial about it. Our overall lack of financial illiteracy is such a social issue that the month of April is designated as National Financial Literacy Month. So, you see it's not only the Bible that comes across like we need to know more about our money and related matters.

The scripture today challenges us to stop swinging our axes—take a break from our daily grind—and look for ways to sharpen our knowledge and edge. The Bible shouldn't be our only reference. There are tons of classes, books and tools that can sharpen our financial management skills. God will trust us with more if we have the wisdom to handle it. Wisdom increases our capacity to manage what we are blessed with. It also increases our capacity to receive more.

Check out Financial Peace University. It's one of those resources that will change your life forever. And if you find it as impactful as we think it is, sign up as soon as you can for the next class slated for March 14. Do whatever you must to get sharper!

Prayer: Lord, I don't just want to be blessed with material resources. I want to have the wisdom to manage whatever you bring to me. Lead me to the right recourses and environments that will sharpen my ax.