



2018 PRAYER & FAST GUIDE





January is a great time to begin new things.

Each year, as a church, we pray and fast together as a family asking God for his wisdom, strength, and clarity as we go into the new year. 2018 will be a very exciting year for Celebration. We also believe it will be an exciting year for you and your family. Jesus encouraged us all to take time to fast and pray. In fact, in Matthew 6 he says... *when you pray and when you fast...not if you pray or fast.*

Prayer and fasting helps you many ways: It helps you gain control over your flesh. It increases your sensitivity to the voice of God. It helps create a new desire for God. It brings victory in areas of your life. And it deepens your fellowship with God.

This year, our prayer & fast focus is "Love Your Neighbor." We'll talk more about this new initiative in the weeks to come. In this guide, you will find a number of fasting options. We encourage you to pray and ask the Lord to lead you into the fast he wants you to do. Talk with your family about what fast you and your spouse and children will participate in for these next 2 weeks, and then just 'do it'. You'll love the results.

To enhance this time, we invite you to join us for prayer and worship on the first two Wednesdays of January, **that's January 3rd and 10th, from 7-8pm**, and the first two **Saturdays, the 6th and 13th, from 6-7 pm.**

This investment could help bring the change you need in your life. Looking forward to the journey.

Blessings friends,

WORSHIP & PRAYER SERVICES:

- January 3 & 10: 7pm to 8pm
- January 6 & 13: 6pm to 7pm





WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is to voluntarily abstain from eating/drinking for an extended period of time. “Eating” and “drinking” can represent anything that is holding you back. What do you “consume” in terms of social food, intellectual food, spiritual food, and emotional food? Are these things distracting you from your relationship with God? Are you relying on things that have nothing to do with God to get you through your day? You may not even realize you have an addiction. For example, if you “have to have” coffee every day, and you are not willing to give it up, you are addicted. Maybe your fast needs to just be about coffee. Ask God and He will show you. Everyone doing a physical fast should consult a physician first. If you have medical issues, consider fasting TV or media. The point is that there is something God wants you to separate yourself from for the next 14 days so that you can see Him more clearly. Don’t cheat yourself by removing yourself from the fast entirely.

FASTING GOAL: A PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH THE LIVING GOD

- “He must increase and [we] must decrease.” (John 3:30)
- “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16)

You may experience many benefits from fasting (cleansing your body, breaking addictions, etc.), but the goal of fasting is to experience God. Right now your life may be all about you, what you want, and when you want it. Imagine if you separate yourself from your perceived needs (such as food)...you may see that life is all about Him.





OTHER EXAMPLES OF BIBLICAL FASTING

- Special revelation - Exodus 34:27-28
- In times of war - Judges 20:26
- Courage and wisdom - Esther 4:3,16
- In times of grief - Nehemiah 1:4, 2 Samuel 1:12, Samuel 31:13, 1 Chronicles 10:12
- Spiritual recuperation - 1 Kings 19:1-9
- Mourning - Daniel 10:1-3
- Repentance - Jonah 3:5, Daniel 6:18
- Ministry preparation - Matthew 4:2
- Spiritual power - Mark 9:29
- Ministry commissioning - Acts 14:23
- Set aside self for holiness - 1 Corinthians 7:5
- Spiritual discipline - 1 Corinthians 11:24-28 (Paul "fasted often")

FASTING PREPARATION

Prepare your heart:

In 2 Chronicles 7:14, God appears to Solomon and explains that if His people are going through a hard time, they should seek Him and follow His ways. Then, He will hear their prayers and heal them. Be willing to hear what God says needs to change, and be willing to change. Don't continue to sin. What are the paths He wants you to walk? How much does He want you to pray and read His Word? Tell God that you surrender your life to Him and that you want more of Him and His way.

Prepare your motives:

Ephesians 1:3 says that there are spiritual blessings assigned to us. We can never exhaust them! Who knows what God wants to give you or show you? Maybe He wants to bestow gifts such as wisdom, anointing, prayer power, healing power, teaching power, joy, or encouragement. When you eliminate things that are keeping you from focusing on God, He is able to show you things about your life that you never knew.





Prepare your body:

If you decide to eat only fruits and vegetables for your fast, it will result in cleansing of your physical body. You may feel sick as your body detoxes, but you'll make it! This isn't a mind game to see if you can survive eating less or not watching ESPN, but about experiencing God. Some people ask, "What does not eating have to do with my relationship with God?" Our suggestion is to stop eating and find out!

Prepare your schedule:

Decide where you will meet with God, what and when you will eat, and how you will spend your time differently. Remember, the fast is about communing with God, so don't fill your time with distractions that will keep you from feeling hungry. Create a plan and commit to spending more time with the Lord.

FASTING GUIDELINES:

- Explain to your family in advance what you are doing.
- Ask them not to discuss it with you until your fast is over.
- Never complain or brag about your fast, and avoid talking about it.
- Establish an accountability partner for prayer & encouragement.
- Stay away from negative people.
- Spend ample time alone in solitude and prayer.
- Acknowledge that your flesh cannot be trained, but must be crucified.
- Journal as you pray and meet with the Lord.
- Write down the miracles God does in your life!





TYPES OF FASTS

Complete Fast:

- Drinking only liquids, typically water and/or light juices.
- Broth or soup may be included as options.

Selective Fast:

- Removing certain elements from your diet.
- The Daniel Fast: abstaining from meat, sweets, or bread; drink water and juice, and eat a variety of fruits and vegetables. More information on the Daniel Fast can be found on the following pages.

Partial Fast:

- Abstaining from eating any type of food in the morning and afternoon.
- Fast during specific times of the day, e.g. 6AM-3PM, or from sunup to sundown.

Soul Fast:

- Common for: anyone new to fasting food; those with health issues that prevent them from fasting food; those wanting to refocus specific areas of life that are out of balance.
- Suggestions: abstain from engaging in social media, shopping, watching television, etc.





MENU SAMPLES

SAMPLE MENU 1: FRUITS, VEGETABLES, JUICES & WATER

- Breakfast - Fruit smoothie with protein powder
- Mid-morning Snack - Fresh fruit or fresh vegetables
- Lunch - Raw vegetable salad with light dressing and vegetable broth soup
- Mid-afternoon Snack - Fresh fruit or fresh vegetables
- Dinner - Fresh salad with light dressing and steamed grilled vegetables

SAMPLE MENU 2: LIQUIDS ONLY

- Breakfast - Fruit smoothie with protein
- Mid-morning Snack - Herbal tea or vegetable broth soup
- Lunch - Raw juiced vegetables
- Mid-afternoon Snack - Fresh fruit juice or fruit smoothie with protein
- Dinner - Vegetable juice or vegetable broth soup

SAMPLE MENU 3: MODIFIED DANIEL FAST

- Breakfast - 1 - 2 servings whole grains with fresh fruit juice
- Mid-morning Snack - Fresh fruit or fresh chopped vegetables
- Lunch - 1 - 2 servings whole grains; fresh salad with legumes and light dressing
- Mid-afternoon Snack - Fresh fruit juice or fruit smoothie with protein
- Dinner - 1 - 2 whole grains; fresh salad with legumes and light dressing





THE DANIEL FAST

FOODS TO INCLUDE:

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

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

All Whole Grains: Including, but not limited to, whole wheat, brown rice, millet, quinoa, oats, barley, grits, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat tortillas, rice cakes, and popcorn. All nuts and seeds, including, but not limited to, sunflower seeds, cashews, peanuts, sesame. Also, nut butters, e.g. peanut butter and almond butter.

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

All Quality Oils: Including, but not limited to, olive, canola, grape seed, peanut, and sesame.

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

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





THE DANIEL FAST (continued)

FOODS TO AVOID:

All Meat and Animal Products: Including, but not limited to, beef, lamb, pork, poultry, and fish.

All Dairy Products: Including, but not limited to, milk, cheese, cream, butter, and eggs.

All Sweeteners: Including, but not limited to, sugar, raw sugar, honey, syrups, molasses, and cane juice.

All Leavened Bread: Including Ezekiel Bread (it contains yeast and honey) and baked goods.

All Refined and Processed Food products: Including, but not limited to, artificial flavorings, food additives, chemicals, white rice, white flour, and foods that contain artificial preservatives.

All Deep Fried Foods: Including, but not limited to, potato chips, french fries, corn chips.

All Solid Fats: Including shortening, margarine, lard, and foods high in fat.

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





AFTER YOUR FAST

Ending your fast properly is just as important as beginning your fast properly. Just as you prepared yourself to begin a fast, you must prepare yourself to stop or break your fast.

Here are a few questions you can ask yourself as you end your fast:

- What are the key lessons learned?
- What new habits or disciplines do you want to keep?
- What new dietary rules will you follow?
- What foods will you begin eating and not eat anymore?
- What dreams and visions have you seen pertaining to your personal walk with the Lord or your ministry?

GET IN THE “FAST LANE”

Before you end your fast and establish a regular eating schedule, it will be important to set aside time to get in the “Fast Lane” on a regular basis. This is vital if you are going to apply and live out the lessons learned during your fast.

1 Corinthians 11:24-28 says that Paul “fasted often.” But why? You must view fasting as a new way of life, not just a vacation from the old way. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, “The old is gone and the new has come.” Fasting regularly will help you maintain a level of discipline and spirituality that is necessary to hold the ground surrendered by Satan.

Regular fasts will keep the flesh in submission and serve as a reminder as to who is in charge of your life. Choose a regular fasting schedule to follow. There are those who have chosen to fast one twenty-four hour period per week. Others fast sun up to sun down, one day per week. You must pray and design a format that you feel God wants for you, a system that you can be faithful to and consistent with.





AFTER YOUR FAST (continued)

PHYSICALLY:

Controlling your eating habits when you end your fast will be important. After you fast, you will feel good about yourself, that you deserve “a break today,” tomorrow and the next day. Remember, the abuse of food, not food itself, was the root of many evils. If you allow food to take its place back on the throne of your heart, you are allowing bad habits to take root and push God farther from the center of your heart than He was before you began your fast.

Once you begin to eat again, if you are not careful, you will feel uncomfortable. Your stomach will feel bloated and full. Introduce solid food slowly. There is a very good chance you will experience stomachaches and diarrhea from the shock on the digestive system.

EMOTIONALLY:

Satan will be working to take back the ground he has surrendered over to the Lord and he will use your emotional vulnerability to accomplish his goals. It could be an intense time of discouragement leading to depression. Remember to be mindful of this and to eat wisely once you break your fast.

In 1 Kings 18-19, when Elijah is challenged by the 450 prophets of Baal who all followed Jezebel in a most vile and immoral religion. God confronts and defeats them through one man, Elijah. But after this great spiritual victory, Elijah finds himself running for his life from one woman, Jezebel. She had threatened his life and he felt all alone. He became incredibly discouraged and asked God to end his life. Elijah experienced a supernatural and spiritual high, followed by an emotional low. You very well could experience this same type of roller coaster ride.

**THANK YOU FOR JOINING WITH US ON THIS 14 DAY
FAST! IT WILL BE LIFE-CHANGING!**





DAY 1

LOVE GOD

Deuteronomy 6:5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

Love is not passive, it's active. David wrote God's lovingkindness was better than life, therefore his lips would praise Him. (Psalm 63:3) Lovingkindness comes from the Hebrew word, CHESED which brings the understanding of covenant love or covenant loyalty. This simply means God is not going to break His covenant with us, even if we are unfaithful. God's love for us was useful and filled with action in that He redeemed us back to Himself. He didn't just say He loved us, He did something about it. While our love for one another can be tainted with feelings and emotions, God's love for us is both loyal and dependable. God loves when He is not loved. The Apostle John reminds us, "We love because He first loved us." In other words, we can love the way He wants us to by receiving the love He has both displayed and provided for us through His Son, Jesus Christ. God knows you better than you know yourself, and knows how to fulfill your heart's desires. It is time for you to yield to God's love and love people the way He does.

DECLARATION:

"I will love the Lord My God with all my heart this year and love people in the manner that pleases Him."





DAY 2

SERVE

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

To truly serve the Lord, one must live their life according to the word of the Lord. When we hear the word, "serve", we think of tasks and getting things done. When God says the word, "serve", what He means is "believe". Jesus also said, "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." If you believe right, you will do right. What if, instead of thinking of earning and working your way this year, you believe how God wants you to believe this year. Right believing produces right actions which produces the God-kind results. Do you want the God-kind results this year? Then serve the Lord passionately by believing what He said in His word and is saying to you personally. Be like Mary this year: "Be it unto me according to your Word."

DECLARATION:

"I will serve the Lord this year by believing what God says to me."





DAY 3

FRIENDSHIP

Hebrews 10:24 “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.”

In order to motivate people to show love and acts of kindness toward their neighbors, it must be modeled for them. Think about a close friend you have in your life. Who comes to your mind? What has your friend done or modeled for you to cause you to call them your friend? There is a common characteristic of people we call our friends. They are friendly. Friendly people are sacrificial people who think of the welfare of others before thinking of themselves. Jesus put it like this, “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.” (Luke 6:32) Jesus went on to say, “Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward in heaven will be great and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for He is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked.” (Luke 6:35)

The challenge of 2018 is to be friendly to those who you don't know. Being friendly to people we don't know is not only something we need to be motivated to do, it is something we need to be dedicated to do. A true friend acts, while expecting nothing in return. It is time for us to be friends to our family members, community, and the people we see on a regular basis.

DECLARATION:

“I will demonstrate God's love to those whom I do not know, and those who have treated me unfairly. I will serve them with acts of kindness, while expecting nothing in return.”





DAY 4

LOVE YOURSELF

Mark 12:29-31 “Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.”

You will have a difficult time trying to find the phrase, “Love yourself” in the Bible. Perhaps the reason for this is God already knows loving yourself is your life’s default position. The two most important commandments in Scripture are mentioned above and define for us how to build a solid foundation and framework for a successful life. The world tells you to work hard and be diligent with your gifting, making sure to spend adequate time developing yourself. We spend hours of our life making ourselves better, working out, eating right, saving money for our future, spending money for things we want or claim we need. James Hudson Taylor was a missionary to China and lived in the country 51 years. One of his famous quotes was, “If I had a thousand pounds China should have it- if I had a thousand lives, China should have them. No! Not China, but Christ. Can we do too much for Him? Can we do enough for such a precious Savior?” Taylor lived his life outward, not inward.

The 2018 challenge is for you to live your life more outward and radical for Jesus than you ever have. We live such busy lives, we don’t even notice the needs of people. It is time for Christians to stop waiting for a move of God and *be* the move of God. God will work miracles when you move your most dominant thoughts and actions away from yourself and direct them toward the needs of others. When you live your life this way, what you realize is, “We are not waiting on God, He is waiting on us.” (*continue...*)

DECLARATION:

“I will love the Lord My God with all my heart this year and love people in the manner that pleases Him.”





DAY 5

RELATIONSHIPS

Mark 3:14 “And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach...”

It is interesting to read the verse above. Notice the ordered purpose which drove Jesus’ intention for selecting the twelve apostles. One would think He would choose men who were the most talented in order to sharpen their ability to be even more successful. That makes the most sense. Organizations and leaders in our day, search for gifted and talented people to invest into so they can be productive in a specific field. It is amazing sometimes when pondering how the Lord turns the paradigm upside down to accomplish His will. He selected twelve men to be with Him, not twelve men to serve with Him, or work alongside Him, or help Him accomplish His vision. Sure, all that stuff would come later, but not before they learned the art of being with the Lord. Serving, giving, sacrificial works, reaching out to others, teaching, leading, vision-casting. All of that is important when it is in its proper order. Truthfully, God’s work becomes easy when we spend time with Him, listen to Him, and enjoy being with the community of believers.

The challenge of 2018 is to rest in the reality that God wants one thing from you above all else: your time. Time = Love. Spend time with the Lord, spend time with your spouse and family, but make sure to spend time with people you don’t know, and have no motive in your heart when doing so. Just be with them and listen intently to what they are saying. Influence is a byproduct of authentic relationship.

DECLARATION:

“I will spend time with Lord this year and make it a priority in my daily life. I will build relationships with people I do not know, and allow them to observe how I live my life to honor the Lord.”





DAY 6

INCONVENIENCED

Isaiah 1:19 "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land..."

Nothing good or of value comes easy in life. Success does not get dropped off at the front door of your house in a package. Success is going to cost you something. The question you have to ask yourself is this, "Is my sacrificial investment worth it?" Jesus was willing and obedient, even in the small things. The Song of Solomon 2:15 says, "Catch the foxes for us, The little foxes that are ruining the vineyards, while our vineyards are in blossom." It is the small, seemingly unimportant steps of obedience that have the most leverage when accomplishing goals. Those small steps of obedience to the Lord will be undoubtedly inconvenient in the moment, but afterward will yield peace, joy, and fulfillment. Sharing your faith when the Holy Spirit prompts you, bringing all the tithe and offering into the Lord's house, joining a Connect Group, going to church rather than sleeping in, working out and eating healthy, putting your family ahead of your job and recreational activities... all of these are principles, if left undone, can be little foxes that destroy your vineyard. It is inconvenient to apply the above-mentioned principles, and the fruitful results of doing them are not instantaneous. It is convenient to sit on the couch, watch a great movie, eat a bag of potato chips, and drink a liter of soda. On the other hand, it is incredibly inconvenient to go without eating and spend time reading your Bible and praying. However, we know which option produces the greatest results. Consistent application of doing the right things over time produce character, and character attracts the blessings and favor of the Lord.

DECLARATION:

"I will allow myself to be inconvenienced this year so others may see my good works and glorify my Father who is in Heaven."





DAY 7 JUSTICE

Hebrews 10:30 "For we know the *One* having said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge His people."

People who do evil do not really know what is truthful or right. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the people of God, who know the truth and what is right, to seek the Lord when they are wronged and trust Him to defend their cause. When Peter drew a sword, and commenced to use it against the soldiers who came to take Jesus, Jesus had to tell him to put his sword down and remind him He had the ability to call 12 legions of angels to His rescue. A legion in Roman times represented 6,000 soldiers. After doing the math, we understand what Jesus was really saying to Peter, "Peter, don't you know I can call 72,000 angels right now and they would be here to rescue Me?" Was Jesus rescued by angels? No, not even close. Neither Peter, the soldiers, nor those plotting Jesus' demise knew the plan God had formed or the true victory about to take place. When we suffer for Christ's sake, there is a reward on the way and a greater purpose we usually cannot see. The next time someone steals something from you and you find out about it, say a blessing over their lives. They are stealing because they don't believe God is their provider. The next time someone says something about you that is not true, say a prayer for them and bless them. People who talk negatively about others, struggle with insecurity and don't really know who they are. Remember, people said a lot of evil things about Jesus that were not true.

The next time someone takes advantage of you and uses you for your gifting and talents, bless them and forgive them. People who do things like this are not visionary leaders, and are more focused on the present than they are the journey. God is your defender. He told Abraham He would be His shield and exceeding great reward. The challenge for 2018 is to forgive people quickly and let God defend you when you are wronged.

DECLARATION:

"I will submit my life, talents, gifting, and ability to God. I will quickly and sincerely forgive those who wrong me. I will let God defend me, rather than my actions and my mouth."





DAY 8

COURAGEOUS

Joshua 1:7-8 "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do."

Courage is necessary to obey God and fulfill His plans for your life. There are pressures coming from every angle to pull you away from God's purposes. Some of those pressures can be thoughts of intimidation, insecurity, and fear. In the passage above, God encouraged Joshua by telling him to be strong and courageous. The task the Lord gave him was coupled with a lot of responsibility, and big shoes to fill. God knew the children of Israel were difficult to lead, and Joshua knew Moses had done an excellent job leading them. Joshua could have been intimidated by the assignment given to him, and he may have thought about the respect the people still had for Moses. "Surely, they won't respect me and follow me like they did Moses", Joshua may have thought. What is extremely interesting is how God had to remind Joshua, "Moses, My servant is dead." It isn't like Joshua and the entire nation didn't already realize Moses was gone, yet it was as if God still needed to tell them. One of the reasons God told Joshua Moses was dead, was to prevent him and the nation from remaining in the past, both physically and mentally. They would have continued to dwell on all the miracles God did through Moses to deliver them. God was doing something new now, and He was going to use Joshua to do it. This was a new season and a new era. While receiving his new commands from the Lord, Joshua's mind may have reverted back to the time when Moses was on a mountainside, when Israel received a surprise attack from the Amalekites. Moses raised his hands up over the nation of Israel as they fought the battle. Moses told Joshua to lead the men of Israel into battle as he, Aaron and Hur stood on the mountainside praying. The Scripture says as Moses' hands stayed in the air, the children of Israel prevailed over the Amalekites. However, Moses was old and his hands were heavy. (continue...)





DAY 8 (CONTINUED)

When his hands began to lower, the Amalekites prevailed. Aaron and Hur recognized what was transpiring and thrust Moses' hands back into the air, and the nation of Israel won the battle. Joshua may have been thinking, "Moses is gone, who will pray for me and lead me? Who is God going to send to support me as Aaron and Hur supported Moses? Or better yet, who will be for me what I was for Moses?"

If you read the entire chapter of Joshua 1, you will see God repeating this phrase to Joshua, "Only be strong and very courageous." God is saying those same words to you today as you contemplate your next decision, next leadership opportunity, or next step toward fulfilling your God-given assignment for 2018. Be strong and very courageous because God is with you.

DECLARATION:

"I will submit my life, talents, gifting, and ability to God. I will quickly and sincerely forgive those who wrong me. I will let God defend me, rather than my actions and my mouth."





DAY 9

GENEROUS

Proverbs 11:24-25 “One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.”

The ancient proverb, “Curiosity killed the cat”, is used to demonstrate how being inquisitive about the affairs of other people can lead someone into trouble. While there is some truth to this, I would not let it prevent you from reaching out and being generous to others. In order to be a blessing to people and fulfill the mandate Jesus has given to His church, you are going to have to push against social normality and spiritual lethargy. At times, you will find yourself doing the exact opposite of the ancient proverb mentioned above. Philippians 2:4 says, “Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” In order to do that, you will have to concern yourself with the affairs of other people. When you concern yourself with the needs of others, you see the real trouble people face on a daily basis. If you took inventory of your life, you would probably discover you have a lot to be thankful for.

The challenge of 2018 is for you to be generous until it hurts you. What do we mean by that? Generosity will not kill you, but it will hurt those worldly desires you desperately cling to. Many Christians don't desire to involve themselves in the lives of others because they feel like they have enough problems of their own. While that may be true, we either believe the Bible or we don't. The text above says, “if you water others, you will receive water.” In essence, instead of working real hard to dig yourself out of your problems, help someone get out of their problem first. All who claim to follow Christ should take advantage of every opportunity to be a blessing to someone else. Be a blessing to someone this year, knowing God will enrich you in the way you need it. If your needs are going unmet, ask yourself this tough question: “Am I holding on to something God is asking me to give away?” Recognize this – when you let go of something God tells you to let go of, you're not just giving it away, you are planting a seed into someone else's life, and YOU WILL reap a harvest.

DECLARATION:

“My life will be enriched in 2018. I will be generous and concern myself with the needs of others.”





DAY 10

HONESTY

John 8:32 “Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”

There is a story of a guy who was pulled over for speeding by a State Trooper in Wisconsin. The guy had already been issued a speeding ticket two days prior to this particular incident while driving across the state and now, here he is pulled over again for speeding. This individual has what we call “a heavy foot” when it comes to the gas pedal. As the trooper approached the driver’s side of the vehicle, he knew he would be asked how fast he was going. A thought passed through his mind, “I could lie about my speed and tell the trooper I was going slower, all while giving the impression my speedometer isn’t working properly.” However, something deeper inside the man said, “Just tell the trooper the truth.” The female state trooper arrived at the driver’s side door and said, “Sir, how fast were you traveling today?” The man responded, “I was going about 79 to 80 miles per hour.” The man knew the speed limit was 65mph all the way across the state and he just admitted to traveling 15 mph over the speed limit. “My goose is cooked”, the man thought. The trooper responded, “Let me see your license and registration and I will be right back.” As the man gave his license and registration to the trooper, he pondered her short responses to his answers. Brevity during an encounter like this only meant one thing to him – another ticket. He had just received a ticket two days prior to this and had also received another ticket a month prior. This would make three tickets all within a month’s time. “Surely, I will lose my license,” he thought as he sat and waited. It felt like an eternity waiting for the trooper to return to the man’s car. Tears began to form in his eyes as he contemplated the worst of outcomes for his driving situation. The female trooper exited her vehicle and re-approached the man’s vehicle. It was getting dark so all he could see was the outline of her silhouette as she passed through the beams of her headlamps. “She appears to be on a mission”, he thought. Based on the fact she was in her vehicle for a while, he knew she was walking back with some expensive paperwork for him. When she arrived at the man’s driver’s side door, the trooper handed the man his license and registration back and said to him, “Sir, you are a breath of fresh air. (continue...)





DAY 10 (continued)

When I stop cars for speeding, I already know how fast they are traveling. The reason I ask them how fast they are going is because I want to see if anyone will be truthful. Sir, you are the only person I have stopped today who told me the truth. You are free to leave." As the trooper turned around and headed to her vehicle, the man sat in his car in bewilderment. He couldn't believe she released him without penalty. It just didn't make sense to him. As the man began to cry and pull out into traffic, he heard a voice speak to him and say, "The truth will set you free." Tears began to pour out of the man's eyes in greater measure than earlier, for the man knew it was the Holy Spirit who spoke to him. It wasn't a lie or partial truth that released him, it was the truth that released him.

The challenge of 2018 is to be truthful, even when it is to your own detriment. If you have lived in the realm of partial truth or lying, it is time to make a change. Let this year be the year you wear truth like a belt. Just as a belt fastens and secures things to your body, truth will enable you to keep things you would normally forfeit if you were caught lying about it.

DECLARATION:

"I will live in the truth and speak the truth. I will not compromise by speaking partial truth or lying. This year, I will surround my life with the truth, knowing it is the truth that makes me free."





DAY 11

MISSIONAL LIVING

Matthew 5:14 “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.”

The world is dark and getting darker each day. People use to compromise and cut corners in secret. Now, people do evil openly and get praised for it. In fact, many times evil is celebrated more often than doing the right thing. Doing the right thing is no longer popular and the societal pressure is heavy when it comes to standing for righteousness. In the above passage, Jesus is reminding His people their lives are lights shining in a dark place. What is the single most important characteristic that influences people? A debate could be made for many things, but a strong argument can be made for a person’s attitude. Your attitude influences how you make people feel, and people will remember how you made them feel more than they remember what you said to them. In 2 Corinthians 2:15 the Apostle Paul writes, “For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.” Here is a modern-day translation - *God can smell your attitude and so can others.* Do your family members, friends, co-workers, un-churched, and un-saved people around you see an authentic faith being lived out in you? The way you live every day, the attitude and character you exude, and the values you model are all examples for others to imitate. If you aren’t imitating Jesus, then who or what are you imitating? People should know Jesus and experience His presence by spending time with you. If people cannot see a difference between you and someone not living for Christ, then there is a problem.

The 2018 challenge is for you to influence others for Christ by letting them see your Godly attitude and character. Missional living isn’t so much about what you say as it is what you do and how you live. Here is the reality, “You are speaking even when you are not using your mouth.” In 2 Corinthians 3:3 the Apostle Paul goes on to write, “clearly you are a letter of Christ, having been ministered to by us, having been inscribed, not with ink but with the Spirit of God living in you, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of the human heart.”

DECLARATION:

“I will imitate Christ with my life and decision making this year for others to see. I will influence others toward Christ by exemplifying a Godly attitude.”





DAY 12

SACRIFICE

Romans 12:1-2 “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

The term, “living sacrifice” is an oxymoron. How can something sacrificed be alive? Further understanding of this term is gleaned when we read Galatians 2:20 where Paul writes, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...” If you belong to Christ, then you have died and your life is hidden in Christ. Hidden in Christ means God no longer sees your sins. He sees Christ’s sacrifice for you. Christ Jesus sacrificed His life to bridge the gap between unholy people and a Holy God. As Christ presented His body in sacrificial atonement for us, so we are called to live a sacrificial life before the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. No, the sacrifices we make in this life do not earn our salvation. Salvation has been paid for by the blood of Jesus. The sacrifice we are called to live out is to do the will of God with our lives. In the Old Testament, there is a story of King Saul and the Prophet Samuel. Samuel gave direction to King Saul and the entire nation of Israel concerning the will of God. Samuel gave an assignment to Saul from the Lord concerning a people group named the Amalekites. The Amalekites attacked the children of Israel right after God delivered them from Egypt. The assignment required Saul to be obedient, but he was only partially obedient to the command of the Lord. Saul had a great victory that day and sacrificed offerings to the Lord. When Samuel arrived at the camp, he questioned Saul as to why he was not fully obedient. Saul began to reason with Samuel and defend his perspective and actions. Saul went on to say, “Look, I have even made sacrifices to the Lord.” Samuel, knowing Saul had not been obedient, responded “to obey is better than sacrifice...” When we, as followers of Jesus, hear the word “sacrifice”, we dismiss it, usually because it involves us giving away something. In the Scriptural context, the word “sacrifice” doesn’t mean “giving something to the Lord” as much as it means “surrendering what you want for what God wants.” (continue...)





DAY 12 (continued)

Obeying God's voice is to reign supreme in our lives. Obedience makes us healthy in our body, mind and spirit.

The challenge of 2018 is to be a living sacrifice. Obedience means you are dead to what you want to do and willing to live for what God asks of you.

DECLARATION:

"I will live sacrificially before the Lord this year by obeying His voice. I hear God's voice and respond promptly."





DAY 13

INVESTING

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

Making financial investments seems to be a principle most make secretively. Jesus even put it like this, “Where your treasure is, there your heart is also.” (Matt. 6:21) Solomon may have been one of the richest men who ever lived, but in the passage above, he reminds us where a person’s heart needs to be invested. Jesus tells us, “Store up treasures in heaven where moth and rust don’t corrupt and where thieves cannot break in and steal.” (Matt. 6:20) What constitutes a heavenly reward? The love we have for the Lord, the things we do to serve others, and the way we live our lives as witnesses, are three awesome areas to start “storing up treasures” in heaven.

The 2018 challenge is to invest your time, energy, and talents in a manner that honors the Lord above all else. Contrary to popular opinion, your good works should not be done to draw attention to yourself but rather should be evidence of the love you have for the Lord and the desire you have to please Him. When you receive investment, you’re more prone to invest into others. God invested His best. Therefore, we should not withhold any investment He asks of us. God is going to judge everything at the end of our lives, including the motives that fuel our actions. To “fear the Lord” means to respect Him and what He says above all other wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. If the world’s wisdom is in an opposing direction to God’s wisdom, then you should choose to believe and respond to God’s wisdom. God deals with man in the arena of compound interest. You may not see overnight returns on your investments, but you will eventually step into your season. Investing into the kingdom of God not only impacts your life, but it affects your children’s children. (continue...)





DAY 13 (continued)

Deuteronomy 6:2 says, “Fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.” Invest your finances wisely and honor the Lord with the substance He blessed you with. Make sure to bless and invest into other’s needs. It will bring more joy into your life.

DECLARATION:

“I am a kingdom investor. I give for the purposes of blessing others and storing up substance in my heavenly account. Great is my reward in heaven, for I am passionate about serving and obeying God rather than fulfilling my worldly passions.”





DAY 14

RELATIONAL EVANGELISM

Luke 10:1 “Moreover after these things the Lord also appointed seventy-two others and sent them each two by two before the face of Himself into every city and place where He Himself was about to come.”

Evangelism and Outreach cannot be about church growth or saving souls; it must be about sowing the seed of the Word of God with others. Because the above verse is overlooked in Scripture, the pressure of evangelism and winning souls produces disappointment and has caused many to give up before they even begin the journey of reaching others. The phrase in the text above, “before the face of Himself”, is synonymous with other Biblical phrases such as, “from His presence”, “with His presence”, or “with His countenance”. The phrase in the text also emphasizes the fact that Jesus is looking toward and focused on what He sent His disciples to do and where He sent them. From reading this passage, it was as if God Himself was busy doing something and stopped what He was doing to focus on what His disciples were doing. There are two principles from this passage that we must remember. First, God Himself turns His face in the direction of His disciples as they scatter the seeds of the kingdom of God. The seeds of the kingdom can be defined by what you say, what your actions are, how you serve (attitude), and how you live. Second, Jesus Himself revisits the places you visit. Jesus sent His disciples into every city and place where “He Himself was about to come.” In other words, Jesus was not going to send anyone in His place. Rather, Jesus was going to do the visiting. Christians get overrun with fear when it comes to Evangelism. The reason they do is because they take the focus off of Christ and put it on themselves. Before you harvest a crop, you have to plant a seed. Before you plant a seed, you need to till the soil. In 1 Corinthians 3:6, the Apostle Paul writes, “I planted, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.” The 2018 challenge is for you to scatter the seeds of the kingdom of God. Jesus will visit that seed by sending men and women of God to water it, and God will make it grow.

DECLARATION:

“I will not put pressure on myself to win souls for Jesus. I will be obedient to sow the seeds of the kingdom of God and leave the results in His hands.”

