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Today is Sunday, October 15 and we are starting our “40 days for fullness” experiment tomorrow. We will spend the next 6 weeks reading scriptures, praying and reflecting on ways we can grow in our relationship with the Lord. While scripture teaches us that God is always with us and ever present in His creation, we don’t always feel the reality of this truth. These next 40 days will be all about our growth in embracing God’s nearness and experiencing the fullness of His presence in our daily lives.

Traditionally, Sunday has been set apart to be a day of reflection, prayer, worship and rest since the first generations of Jesus’ followers. We’ll hold to this tradition with our own Sunday devotionals following a slightly different format than the other days of the week.

Before we get to today’s reading take a moment to quiet your spirit before the Lord and connect with Him, embracing the idea that to “be still and know He is God” is enough for today. (Ps. 46:10)

OPENING PRAYER: *Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for the chance to spend some time with you and thank you that you are not distant, but near to me and excited to spend time with me. May your Spirit draw me into your nearness and speak to me in this quiet time and may your words transform me into the likeness of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

TODAY’S READING: Ephesians 3:14-21 NIV

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. **16** I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, **18** may have power, together with all

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the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, **19** and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

DEVOTIONAL: What would it be like if you could actually see the form and face of the Father every time you kneeled to pray? How different would your prayers be if your engagement in this practice more resembled the face to face conversations you have every day rather than religious mental exercises? I like to imagine that the Apostle Paul prefaced his prayer with the language of verses 14 and 15 because he was trying to help his readers enter a mindset of prayer that would get them beyond the realm of mental exercises and into the arena of experiencing the unseen reality of just how present God really is.

I suppose to some degree, this reality is experienced best in our mind's eye because the spiritual realm is often invisible to our human eyes, but there are ways of approaching the Father in prayer that help us connect with Him more than others. In this passage, Paul doesn't just imagine himself just "praying to the Father" but he engages his mind in painting a lot more detail so that he'll be more immersed in the reality of the experience. Rather than just "praying to God" Paul connects his experience to a number of added details that, when paid attention to, can help facilitate a very rich moment of connection with God. He describes himself as "kneeling before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives it's name".

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Take some time to reread the passage, slowing down to note each detail. Allowing the Holy Spirit to bring revelation to you as your imagination is immersed in the richness of this passage

REREAD: Ephesians 3:14-21

REFLECTIONS: Typically we'll have a few reflection prompts with space for you to take notes which will help you to be ready to engage in a spiritual discussion with your small group in the coming week, but today, since it is a day of rest, please set a timer for 2 minutes and just sit quietly in the Lord's presence, meditating on the words of this verse.

*The LORD your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.” Zeph 3:17*

Spend these two minutes considering the following:

- How does it *feel* to be assured that God is WITH you?
- What would it be like for you to be in the presence of the “Mighty Warrior”?
- What is it like to know you are His “great delight”?
- What does God rejoicing over you with singing sound like?

(Set a timer for two minutes and reflect)

CLOSING PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, Gracious God, thank you for meeting with me and speaking to me today. Thank you for the invitation to experience your presence, not just in these minutes set aside for you, but in every moment of my day. Would you please help me to stay connected to the reality of nearness as I go through these next 40 days with you, In Jesus name, Amen.*

DAY 1

Week 1 - Hunger for God

Hello, Today is Monday, October 16th. Day 1 of 40 Days for Fullness. This is Bonnie Joslen and I'm excited about this title and opportunity to build and grow in community with one another. It's a great feeling to have your heart full. I've experienced this when I'm with my kids and grandkids, when Randy and I have time away together or when I've been in Bible Study with other women or have seen YL Mamas come to know that Jesus can make a difference in their life. We have a chance to experience this together by building a habit over the next 40 days that hopefully will continue in each of our lives.

It just so happens that this week I will be talking about Hungering for God. Several years back, a group of women studied a book by Lysa Terkeurst, called Uninvited. She said, "If we grasp the full love of Christ, we won't grab at other things to fill us." Let's see if we can fill up on his goodness during these next 40 days. Before we read today's passage, let's take a moment to quiet our spirit before the Lord. I like to take a deep breath and imagine that Jesus is sitting next to me.

OPENING PRAYER: *Father, thank you for today and giving us an opportunity to hear your Word and be changed by it. Fill us up with more of you and help us to see that nothing else can take your place and give us the fullness we desire. Be near to us now, in the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.*

Psalm 63- A psalm of David.

When he was in the Desert of Judah.

¹ You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land where there is no water.

² I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.

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- 3 Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.
- 4 I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.
- 5 I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.
- 6 On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night.
- 7 Because you are my help,
I sing in the shadow of your wings.
- 8 I cling to you; your right hand upholds me.

DEVOTIONAL: While studying this passage, I found that my Bible breaks it down into 3 parts. A desire for God's presence, God's provision and God's protection. Let's read this again and see what this looks like.

Read verse 1; **I Still Have God.**

- 1 You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water.

David is desiring God's presence. The word earnestly means in a serious manner, not lightly or casually or flip-pantly – lacking proper respect. The word casually means occurring without regularity or lacking a high degree of interest or devotion. So here is the first question to think about.

Q. Have you ever desired God's presence like David? If so, what were the circumstances that led to this? And if not, why do you think that longing is lacking? _____

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Read verses 2-5; I Still Have a Song.

² I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.

³ Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.

⁴ I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.

⁵ I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

Here we see David desiring for God's provision.

When I think about the first line of vs. 2 "I have seen you in the sanctuary" I think of the times at Renewal where I have witnessed people praying for one another and knew that God was in their midst and have felt the Spirit move during worship or while James is speaking and even in the follow up questions as we move into small groups at the end. When we see that, we are beholding God's power and glory as well. God is showing up and showing us that He is present in our lives and continues to meet our needs.

When we praise God, we are ushered into his presence. Worry and fear fade away. Psalm 22:3 from the KJV says, God inhabits the praise of his people.

Q. Have you ever determined in your heart that you will praise him as long as you live? What does that look like for you? What are the ways David used to describe how he will praise God? Vs. 4-5 _____

Read verses 6-8; I Still Have Joy

⁶ On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night.

⁷ Because you are my help,

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I sing in the shadow of your wings.

⁸ I cling to you;
your right hand upholds me.

Here we see David desiring God's protection. The night was divided into three watches. Someone aware of all three would be said to be having a sleepless night. The Life Application Bible suggests a cure for a sleepless night is to turn our thoughts to God.

Q. what kinds of things keep you awake at night? (Illness, stress or worry?) sleepless nights can be turned into quiet times of reflection and worship. Tell about a time when you did this and it made a difference for you? _____

Let's have a moment of stillness... is there anything else You want to say to me Lord? (If you're comfortable, share with another person what you heard God speak to you)

CLOSING PRAYER: *Thank you, Lord, for speaking to us in personal ways. Thank you for bringing examples to mind how we can praise you and determine in our hearts to glorify you. Help us to see that your love is better than life and at the end of the day remember, that we still have You. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen*

BONUS: Today's recommended song: "Praise The Lord" by Micah Tyler.

Let this song be extended worship as you praise our good God.

DAY 2

Hello, Today is Tuesday, October 17th. Welcome to day 2 of 40 Days of Fullness. This week we were talking about Hungering and thirsting for God. Jesus often used meals to connect with people and teach important lessons. He continues to call us to his table to feast on who he is and learn from him through his word.

Before we read today's passage, let's take a moment to quiet our spirit before the Lord.

OPENING PRAYER: *Thank you Father for being here with us today. Thank you for your continued patience and many opportunities to learn from you. Fill us up as our desire for you increases. Open our eyes to new truths from scripture today and may we reflect your son, Jesus. It's in his name we pray, Amen*

TODAY'S READING: Deuteronomy 8:1-5 NIV
Do Not Forget the Lord

8 Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors. ² Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. ³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. ⁴ Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. ⁵ Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.

DEVOTIONAL: This passage begins with a warning to be careful. This shows the importance of what is being said. The Israelites spent 40 years on a journey that

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should have lasted 11 days. 11 days! That blows my mind and then I wonder; how long have I camped out somewhere God didn't anticipate me staying? Have there been lessons that took me too long to learn? I'm certain of it.

Q. share about a time when you stayed in a place too long before seeking God's answer to the problem? Why do you think you waited so long before going to Him? _____

It wasn't distance that stood between them and the Promised Land. It was the condition of their hearts. God's purpose is always deeper than what we can see. He prepares us to live in obedience with him once we get to where he wants us. The journey can be a painful and necessary part of the preparation.

Let's read through this again and this time I'm going to insert the question "why" after each directive. Listen for the answers and reflect on the importance of the lesson.

Read Deuteronomy 8:1-5 again

8 Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, **WHY?** so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the Lord promised on oath to your ancestors. ² Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, **WHY?** to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. ³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, **WHY?** to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. ⁴ Your clothes

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did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. ⁵ Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.

Week 1 - Hunger for God

I read this passage and I think, what a loving Heavenly Father we have. To discipline is to train and correct, to mold or perfect the mental faculties or moral character. But discipline can be hard and painful and who likes hard and painful? Ugh...

Q. What hardships have you faced that could be seen as discipline?

How did God meet your need? What did you learn from it? _____

In verse 4, it says that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. As humans, we seem to continually be trying to satisfy the flesh and it can be a battle. Bread is the most widely consumed food in the world. And while it is an important source of essential carbs for daily energy, Jesus is speaking beyond the needs of our human body. He is talking about our body, soul and spirit. We need more than food. We need the very word of God as our life-giving source. Jesus quoted this verse when Satan tempted him in the wilderness. Jesus had just spent 40 days alone and without food and he was hungry. The enemy knew that if he could get Jesus to satisfy the flesh then his spirit would be weakened.

Q. What are you tempted to satisfy the flesh with? Can you think of a time you were tempted that God showed you a way out? Did you take it?

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Let's take a moment of stillness. I'm listening Lord, what do you need me to hear today?

CLOSING PRAYER: *Thank you Father for taking care of us, even when we experience hardship. You provided manna for the Israelites, and we know you will continue to provide for our needs as well. Help us to remember to be grateful for the everyday ways you provide. Lord, remind us to do a heart check when we are tested. Help us to be quick to repent and quick to turn back to you. In Jesus name, Amen*

Today's recommended song: "Come as You Are" by Crowder

Close your eyes and let God continue to speak to your heart

DAY 3

Hello, today is Wednesday, October 18th, 2023. Welcome to day 3 of 40 Days of Fullness. You'll remember that Monday we saw David acknowledge that he still had God, he still had a song and he still had joy in the midst of loneliness and running. Yesterday, we were reminded to be careful to remember the Lord and follow his commands. Today is our invitation to those who are thirsty.

Before we read today's passage, let's take a moment to quiet our spirit before the Lord.

OPENING PRAYER: *Father, God, quiet our minds as we meet with you now Lord. May we openly accept the invitation you have for us. You want good things for us. Help us not to settle for anything less than your plans. In Jesus name, Amen*

TODAY'S READING: Isaiah 55:1-7 **Invitation to the Thirsty**

55 "Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.

² Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.

³ Give ear and come to me;
listen, that you may live.

I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.

⁴ See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
a ruler and commander of the peoples.

⁵ Surely you will summon nations you know not,

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and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor.”

⁶ Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

⁷ Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

DEVOTIONAL: Wow! God offers us free nourishment that feeds our soul. It's the kind of fullness we are looking for in this 40 days together. We can have this individually and in community. Its real and it's offered to you and me. So how do we get it? Verse 1 says, We come, we show up. Verse 2 tells us to listen to see how we get the very best and verse 6 tells us to seek and call on God. He offers salvation freely, but to be nourished by it, we must eagerly receive it. That sounds simple enough, so...

Q. Why do we complicate it? _____

Q. Have you ever been offered something that seemed too good to be true? What was it and how did it turn out? _____

It can be easy to think, what's the catch? Nothing is ever free. Well, here we have an invitation from Jesus himself for something that is free and life-giving.

Q. What is another example from scripture where Jesus offers this gift? Who did he offer it too and

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did they choose to receive it? _____

Week 1 - Hunger for God

Let's read through this again and listen for the three words: Come, Listen and Seek.

Isaiah 55:1-7 Invitation to the Thirsty

55 "Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.

² Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.

³ Give ear and come to me;
listen, that you may live.

I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.

⁴ See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
a ruler and commander of the peoples.

⁵ Surely you will summon nations you know not,
and nations you do not know will come running to
you,

because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,
for he has endowed you with splendor."

⁶ Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.

⁷ Let the wicked forsake their ways
and the unrighteous their thoughts.

Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on
them,

and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

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I think of the woman at the well in John chapter 4. Jesus offered her living water so that she could stop trying to fill her soul with another new husband. We can't expect people to fill a place in our soul that only God can fill. But we continue to try.

Take a moment and bow your head before the Lord. Ask him to show you what it is that you are trying to fill yourself up with. He is faithful and will show you. Now, before it slips away, confess it to Him and ask him to fill that place that was only meant for him. If you feel comfortable, share it with another person. _____

In verse 25 of John 4, The woman tells Jesus that she knows The Messiah is coming. When he arrives, we'll get the whole story. 26. I am he, said Jesus. "You don't have to wait any longer or look any further."

If you're listening to this and have yet to decide to follow Jesus, let me tell you...He is real in my life and can be in yours as well. Choose to believe, you won't be sorry.

CLOSING PRAYER: *Oh Father, thank you for your free gift of eternal life for all who believe. I'm sure most of the one's listening have already chosen to follow you but you put this on my heart and I'm trusting it's for someone special. Thank you for reminding us to keep showing up and to keep seeking, for it's there, you will always be found. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen*

Today's recommended song: "Untitled Hymn, Come To Jesus" by Hillary Scott

DAY 4

Hello, today is Thursday, October 19th, 2023. Welcome to day 4 of 40 Days of Fullness. Hey, thanks for coming back. We're talking about hungering and thirsting for God and today we will see how God's unfailing love feeds his people. John Piper says, "For when God is the supreme hunger of your heart, he will be supreme in everything. And when you are most satisfied in him, he will be most glorified in you."

Let's take a moment to quiet our hearts as we begin another day. Let the stillness settle in.

OPENING PRAYER: *Abba Father, thank you for your priceless unfailing love. We take refuge in the shadow of your wings and you cover us. Still our hearts today as you speak, help us to listen and hear what it is you're saying. We put our hope in you. In Jesus name, Amen*

Psalm 107

- ¹ Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.
- ² Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,
- ³ those he gathered from the lands,
from east and west, from north and south. ^[a]
- ⁴ Some wandered in desert wastelands,
finding no way to a city where they could settle.
- ⁵ They were hungry and thirsty,
and their lives ebbed away.
- ⁶ Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.
- ⁷ He led them by a straight way
to a city where they could settle.
- ⁸ Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind,
- ⁹ for he satisfies the thirsty
and fills the hungry with good things.

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DEVOTIONAL: The promise from today's passage that stands out to me is from verse 9. "For he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things."

What two things from the passage do we need to be to be filled? (Thirst and hunger, Verse 9)

We need to evaluate our spiritual thirst and hunger. Our spiritual appetite for God can be awakened. John Piper said, "If we don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because we have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Our soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great." That's a strong quote and I'm afraid it's been accurate plenty of times in my own life.

The greatest manifestation of God's love for us is sending his Son to be payment for our sins. Jesus paid the ultimate price as he was mocked, whipped, scorned and ultimately, crucified on the cross.

Verse 2 says, Let the redeemed of the lord tell their story. **Share your personal story in a minute or less how Jesus redeemed you.** _____

And since I'm asking you to do this, I will also share. I was 8 years old when I learned that Jesus died for me. Of course, he died for you too but the realization hit me and it was personal. I told my parents that I wanted Jesus in my heart. My Dad asked me questions to make sure I understood what this meant to me. I've never regretted the decision I made that day and this year marks 50 years walking with Jesus. I know, I just told you my age, but that's okay, I think it's worth celebrating!

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Read Psalm 107: 1-9 again.

Psalm 107

- ¹ Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.
- ² Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,
- ³ those he gathered from the lands,
from east and west, from north and south. ^[a]
- ⁴ Some wandered in desert wastelands,
finding no way to a city where they could settle.
- ⁵ They were hungry and thirsty,
and their lives ebbed away.
- ⁶ Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.
- ⁷ He led them by a straight way
to a city where they could settle.
- ⁸ Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind,
- ⁹ for he satisfies the thirsty
and fills the hungry with good things.

Is there a particular verse in this passage that describes your life before meeting Jesus? Explain. Or maybe it just describes your life currently and you can relate... _____

Lost, hungry, thirsty, exhausted? These words can describe the Israelites in exile but they also parallel anyone who has not found the satisfaction that comes from knowing God. Or maybe they describe one who knows Him but cancels dinner reservations with him frequently.

Take a moment to follow this up with prayer, thanking God for one thing he rescued you from.

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Just as there are healthy foods that stick with us longer or act as an appetite suppressant, think of activities we participate in that may be suppressing our spiritual hunger. That would be anything that pulls us away or discourages us from wanting more of Jesus. There are also activities we can engage in that bring us closer to Jesus and whetting our appetite for more of Him.

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Name some things that bring you closer to Jesus. Besides the obvious, you can also check out our Renewal news and find several opportunities each week that can draw you closer to one another in community and ultimately closer to God. _____

Today, in a moment of stillness, think of a few actions steps you can take this week to increase your appetite for God and his word. _____

Closing prayer: Father, we are so grateful that you sent Jesus to show us his great love. Thank you that we can experience this every day. Help us to keep faith messages playing over in our minds as we grow, and this becomes a natural part of walking with you in relationship. Let this be so fluid in our lives that we are sharing Jesus with everyone we meet just by living it out. In Jesus name, Amen.

Today's recommended song: "No Hold on Me" by Matty Mullins

DAY 5

Hello, and welcome to day 5 of 40 Days of fullness. Today is Friday, October 20th, 2023. I'm glad you're here I hope you've found someone to meet up with to discuss these 40 days. I know for me, when I'm meeting with others and getting to hear how God is speaking to them; it is so encouraging.

Let's take a moment to quiet our hearts before the Lord and eagerly anticipate what He wants to say to us today.

OPENING PRAYER: *Hello Lord, we are here to meet with you. Show us the gift you have for us today and help us to lean into what you say. We want more of you and less of us. Give us understanding as we read your word together. Amen*

We are reading in John chapter 4:10-15 and it begins with an answer, so let me back it up and explain...

Jesus, tired from his journey, stopped in a town called Sychar. He sat down by a well and when he saw a Samaritan woman come to draw water, he asked her for a drink. By doing this, Jesus crossed all barriers to share the gospel with her. This woman had a reputation about town, and it wasn't a good one. No respectable Jewish man would talk to her, but Jesus did. In verse 9, she says to Him, "How can you ask me for a drink?"

TODAY'S READING: John 4:10-15 NIV

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?

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¹³ Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” ¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

DEVOTIONAL: In the opening verse, He says he brings living water that could quench a person’s thirst for God forever. Here Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah. Only the Messiah could give this gift that satisfies the soul’s desire. We can see that the woman did not immediately understand what Jesus was saying. It can take time to accept something that changes the very foundations of your life. That’s what Jesus was offering to her.

Many spiritual functions parallel physical functions. Our bodies get hungry and thirsty and so do our souls. The woman confused the two maybe because no one had ever told her about her spiritual needs before. We wouldn’t think of depriving ourselves of food and water; I had to get a snack just to complete this devotional. So why should we deprive our souls?

He wanted to change her life forever. And He wants to do that for us as well. As I mentioned on Wednesday day 3, Jesus was offering her a way out of the perpetual way she was seeking to be loved. She was on husband number 5 and he wasn’t actually her husband.

One way we can be transformed by Jesus is to continually seek his truth in scripture every day. The Holy Spirit meets us there.

What are some things you would like to see transformed in your life? _____

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Think of a few small steps you can take to begin to shift your thinking and action for transformation to take place.

The Living water Jesus offers will “become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’ **Look up the word spring referring to water or describe a spring you’ve seen yourself.** _____

One of the definitions for the word welling is to rise like a flood of liquid. **Think of someone you know that overflows with Jesus like this.** _____

Read the passage again John 4:10-15 NIV

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”

¹¹ “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

¹³ Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” ¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Verse 14 is the highlight for me. I love the promise we are given here.

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John 7:38 references this again and says, “Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”

So, the question begs again, Do you believe? Are there times you can recall when you stopped believing? _____

I don't like to think that I would ever stop believing, but my actions may prove otherwise.

Think about this and unpack this together if you're in a group. What kind of water flow did you experience when your belief came into question? Did it feel like the description in verse 14 or much different? _____

Think about how valuable your soul must be for Satan to tirelessly pursue it, and the King to lay down his own life for it.

Let's have a moment of stillness and ask him to show us any place we have opened ourselves up to enemy attack. Satan is the tempter who wants us to stop believing in the first place.

Closing Prayer: God you are faithful to show us when we ask. When we come before you with a surrendered heart and open hands, you always meet us here.

Thank you, Loving Father, for not leaving us where we are today but growing us to look more like you. Help us to follow you every day. In Jesus name, Amen

Today's recommended song “First Things First”, by Consumed by Fire.

DAY 6

Hello, today is Saturday, October 21st, 2023. Welcome to day 6 of 40 Days of Fullness.

Week 1 - Hunger for God

Let's do a quick recap for the week as this is my last day with you. I hope you are beginning to find that the fullness we desire can only come from spending time with Jesus. I can tell you the time I have spent getting ready for this has been a tremendous gift and makes me want even more of Jesus. Don't you also find that whatever we feed grows?

We've talked about hungering for God, how God provided manna in the wilderness to teach the Israelites to trust Him. Wednesday was a call for the thirsty to seek the Lord. Thursday was about God's unfailing love feeding his people, yesterday we were reminded that Living water cures our soul's thirst and today's theme is the bread from heaven cures hunger.

Let's quiet our hearts once again and get ready to hear from the Lord.

OPENING PRAYER: *Thank you God for your faithfulness and loving care for us. You show us time again that when we draw near to you, you draw near to us. And there is nothing greater in this life than a relationship with you. It's the very thing that can propel us to get up in the morning and see what you have for us. Fill us up again with a heart overflowing, Amen.*

Dave Butts from Harvest Prayer Ministries said, "When there is no hunger for the presence of God, it is an indicator that something is wrong spiritually."

Feel free to circle back to this quote later and discuss it with your group.

Before we read, let me catch you up with what's happening in our passage. Miracles were happening and

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and Jesus' popularity was growing. A large crowd of people who had been a part of the feeding of the five thousand had gathered and were looking for Jesus. If you remember, Jesus was now on the other side of the lake. Of course, the crowd of people got into boats and came to find him there. Jesus tells them they only came, not because of miraculous signs but because they ate the loaves and had their fill. They mention their forefather's eating manna in the dessert and asked what miraculous sign Jesus will give them...we will begin reading John 6:32-40

TODAY'S READING: John 6:32-40 NIV

³² Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

³⁴ "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread."

³⁵ Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. ³⁶ But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. ³⁷ All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me but raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰ For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."

DEVOTIONAL: This is powerful my friends! This is the full meal deal; this isn't the budget menu rather this is the preview of the feast that's to come. He said, "I will raise them up at the last day!" who are they? All who believe.

DAY 6

In verse 35 we are reminded that we can satisfy spiritual hunger and sustain spiritual life only by a right relationship with Jesus Christ. Like bread must be eaten to sustain life, Christ must be invited into our daily walk to sustain our spiritual life.

We see some recurring words in today's passage that have shown up in the previous days. The action words Come and Believe. He gives us this invitation because Jesus was all about doing the will of his Father. When we follow Jesus, we should have the same purpose.

Let's read through this again

John 6:32-40 NIV

³² Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

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I feel like a light is shining on verse 36. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe.

DAY 6

Have you ever questioned something God told you to do? _____

Do you know someone who hasn't decided to truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God? What do you think is holding them back? _____

What can we do to show them that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life? _____

John 14:6-7, Psalm 145, Psalm 27:1

In John 6, a phrase repeats four times. Two of them are in verses 39 and 40: "raise them up at the last day." Describe what you believe that day will be like. _____

Jesus is patient with us and gives us a choice to follow him. I can, without a doubt, say it is the best decision I have ever made.

CLOSING PRAYER: *Father, is there anything else you want to say? Help me to make space everyday to stop talking and be silent. To be comfortable in the quiet and embrace knowing you are sitting right next to me. Lord, when we feel drained, remind us that we need You to fill us back up. Help us not to grasp at other things. We love you, in Jesus' name, Amen*

Today's recommended song is "I'll Call His Name" by Madison Carroll

DAY 7

Today is Sunday, October 22 and on this day of rest we will return to our main text for our “40 days for fullness” experiment. This coming week we will also turn our attention to the topic of “The Word of God”. Many years ago the psalmists sang that God’s “word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” May this coming week be all about us growing in our understanding of the ways God communicates with His created world and the ways He is speaking to our hearts all the time.

Before we read our scripture for today, take a moment to quiet your heart in the presence of God.

OPENING PRAYER: *Father, thank you for for being near to me on this day. You are the one who has called me by name and you are the one who continually pursues me with your love. May your Spirit draw me into your nearness and open my ears to hear your voice today and may your words transform me into the likeness of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

TODAY’S READING: Ephesians 3:14-21 NIV

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. **16** I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, **18** may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, **19** and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. **20** Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

DAY 7

DEVOTIONAL: Take a moment to picture a room full of glorious riches. Piles upon piles of golden treasure and precious stones. For me this brings to mind an Indiana Jones movie or Disney's Aladdin. I think we're meant to hold a scene like this in mind when we consider the magnitude of resources at God's disposal to accomplish his will.

Where does the apostle Paul think God will turn in order to provide for the needs of his people? God has glorious riches, the kind of eternal wealth He can dip into at any time and pour out in abundance over His people. Our need to be strengthened; our need to have power in our inner being can be more than provided for from these heavenly storehouses that are filled with the glorious riches of God's might and majesty.

Even in times when our need is great, be reminded that God's treasure rooms are overflowing with every good thing, and he delights in sharing his goodness with us. Take sometime to reread this passage again, reflecting on the idea that every single one of your past, present and future needs will find fulfillment in the glorious riches of God's provision in your life.

REREAD: Ephesians 3:14-21

REFLECTION: Today, because it is a day of rest, in place of our typical reflection questions, we are going to set a timer for 2 and a half minutes and just sit quietly in the Lord's presence, meditating on the words of this verse.

12 *Praise be to you, LORD;
teach me your decrees.*

13 *With my lips I recount
all the laws that come from your mouth.*

14 *I rejoice in following your statutes
as one rejoices in great riches.*

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15 *I meditate on your precepts
and consider your ways.*

16 *I delight in your decrees;
I will not neglect your word. Ps. 119:12-16*

You might spend these two and a half minutes considering the following:

- **What are some things God has taught to you?**
- **How would it feel to “rejoice” in His law as one “rejoices in great riches”?**
- **How could I be more mindful of considering His ways through the course of my daily thoughts?**
- **Try “delighting” in His decrees, what does that feel like?**

Take two and a half minutes in silence to try to connect to the portrait of God this verse shares with us. (Set a 2 1/2 minute timer and reflect)

CLOSING PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, Gracious God, thank you for meeting with me and speaking to me today. Thank you for your Word. Those words that were written down for me and preserved from long ago as well the whispers that my soul catches ear of from time to time. Your words are so precious to me Father. May your Spirit continue to open my ears to hear your words this week and my heart to receive those things you long for me to treasure. In Jesus name, Amen.*

DAY 8

Today is Monday, October 23 and this week we are reading scriptures about the “Word of God” as we seek to grow in our ability to hear and understand the things God wants to reveal to us.

Before we get to reading take a moment to quiet your spirit before the Lord and connect with Him embracing the idea that to be still and know He is God is enough.

OPENING PRAYER: *Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for the chance to spend some time with you and thank you that you are not distant, but near to me and excited to spend time with me. May you be as near to me now as the breath in my lungs and may your Spirit speak to me in this quiet time and may your words transform me into the likeness of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen*

TODAY’S READING: *Hebrews 4: 6-13*

6 *Therefore since it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience, 7 God again set a certain day, calling it “Today.” This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted:*

*“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts.”*

8 *For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. 9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any*

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double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

DEVOTIONAL: I am struck by a few ideas from this passage. In previous paragraphs, the author of Hebrews implores their audience that they should be seeking God's rest. They insist that the way into God's true eternal rest is not found in the traditions of the sabbath or even entering the "promised land" but has actually been opened to us through the man, Jesus Christ.

The author encourages us to enter this rest through Jesus Christ (the Word made flesh) and reminds us that the Word of God, (maybe another way of saying this would be "the revelation of Jesus Christ,") is something that pierces to the depth of our hearts, searches out our motives and attitudes, and ultimately is capable of bringing us into righteous before God.

Thank you Heavenly Father, that you would send your word so close to us in order to accomplish your fruitful work in our lives! Let's read the passage again, noting anything further the Holy Spirit would highlight in our minds for today.

REREAD: Hebrews 4: 6-13

REFLECTION: Take some time to reflect/take notes on these questions and be ready to share with your small group this week.

The author of Hebrews talks about salvation and the "rest" promised to God's people as being fulfilled through the mission of Jesus Christ. How have I experienced this fulfillment of God's rest?

DAY 8

What would it mean for me to connect with God's word in a way that I experience it as a vivacious and active force in my life? What sort of practices would help to facilitate this kind of experience with God's word? _____

Please take a moment to be still and reflect on your time with the Lord today. Is there anything else I sense God is specifically speaking to me through the scriptures today? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *Father, I thank you for speaking to me today. May I experience your Word as active and alive in my life. May it pierce the depth of my heart and reveal every thought and attitude inside of me. May your Spirit guide me into repentance, that I may be more like Jesus. May I be aware of your presence with me today, guiding me, delivering me from evil and using me however you see fit for the growth of your kingdom. In Jesus name, Amen.*

DAY 9

Today is Tuesday, October 24 and this week we are reading scriptures about the “Word of God” as we grow in our understanding of who God is and his plans for us.

Prior to jumping into the reading I encourage you to take a moment to settle your mind and spirit to be in a place to connect with the Father and better understand his love for you.

OPENING PRAYER: *Thank you Father for the way that you desire for us to connect with you. Thank you that even though we may never fully comprehend or understand your will for us, we still are for us and with us all of our days. Amen.*

TODAY’S READING: *Psalm 119: 9-16*

9 How can a young man keep his way pure?

By guarding it according to your word.

10 With my whole heart I seek you;

let me not wander from your commandments!

11 I have stored up your word in my heart,

that I might not sin against you.

12 Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes!

13 With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth.

14 In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. **15** I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. **16** I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

DEVOTIONAL: When I personally think of the word “pure” I can tend to replace it with the worldly view I have of “perfection”. I’m not quite sure why that I immediately jump from a desire that God has for us in purity versus an unrealistic and truly unattainable goal of perfection.

DAY 9

Thankfully we have a God that doesn't desire our attempts at perfection, but instead wants us to pursue a more vibrant relationship with him. Part of any strong relationship is learning more about the other person and one of the best ways for us to do that with God is through His word.

As I reread this passage again and again I can't help but love that God's word is actively working through us in different ways. We first look to keep God's word in hearts then we transition to declaring or in other words sharing His word. Then the word becomes something that we begin to fall in love with, sit with, focus on and never want to forget. The word of God is not stagnant, it's beautiful and wants to permeate throughout every aspect of our lives, now the question is will you let it?

REREAD: Psalm 119: 9-16

REFLECTION: Take some time to reflect/take notes on these questions and be ready to share with your small group this week.

What practical ways do you attempt to store up God's word in your heart? Is it working? Why or why not? _____

How in this upcoming week do you believe you can better delight in God's word for you? _____

DAY 9

Pause and slowly reread the passage one more time.

Psalm 119: 9-16

9 How can a young man keep his way pure?

By guarding it according to your word.

10 With my whole heart I seek you;

let me not wander from your commandments!

11 I have stored up your word in my heart,

that I might not sin against you.

12 Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes!

13 With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth.

14 In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. **15** I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. **16** I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

Is there a specific word or line that God is highlighting for you to spend more time with?

CLOSING PRAYER: *God thank you that we have access to your written word that you have brought to life in our lives. Help us to delight in your word, help us to desire your word, help us to declare your word to those around us. We thank you for this time that we have with you today. In Jesus Name, Amen.*

DAY 10

Today is Wednesday, October 25 and this week we are reading scriptures about the “Word of God” and finding hope that his word is the light that guides us in the darkness.

Take a breath and settle your heart and mind as we acknowledge that God our Father is bigger than any situation, relationship or obstacle that we may have today.

OPENING PRAYER: *God we are so grateful that you freely give us your love and grace. God as we seek to know you better today I pray that you reveal more of your goodness and faithfulness through your word. Thank you Father for who you are in our lives. Amen.*

TODAY’S READING: *John 1:1-13*

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was with God in the beginning. **3** Through him all things were made. **4** In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. **8** He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. **9** The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. **10** He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. **11** He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. **12** Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - **13** children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

DEVOTIONAL: The writer of this passage John wasted no time stating the importance and power that God’s

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Word has in the story of humanity, it's the starting point. John wanted us to understand that his Word is the truth and is the light that provides vision and direction for us. However, I also think John was very intentional with not burying the lead that was Jesus Christ. Jesus was the Word of God that lived among us. I believe that John knew that some people would need to see that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

What God had to say to us was not only or mainly what Jesus said, but who Jesus was and what he did. Jesus came to witness to the truth (John 18:37) and he was the truth (John 14:6).

REREAD: John 1:1-13

REFLECTION: Take some time to reflect/take notes on these questions and be ready to share with your small group this week

Why do you think that John (the writer) starts with introducing “the Word” at the beginning of the passage? Was it intentional? What was the purpose?

In verse 10 we are reminded that Jesus was in the world but the world didn't recognize Him. In our humanity we too have failed to recognize God in our midst. How, today, can you look for the presence of Jesus in your life? _____

DAY 10

Were there any words or verses that stand out to you in this passage? Is there a reason that God is asking you to press into that today? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *Father, we stand in awe of how you cared so deeply for us that you brought your Word to life in the form of your son Jesus. Father, we are grateful that we don't have to earn this gift of a relationship with you and your son, but rather you choose freely to give that to us. Let us have eyes to see you more and more today. Amen.*

DAY 11

Today is Thursday, October 26 and this week we are reading scriptures about the “Word of God” and seeking to learn how God’s Word can transform our lives and hearts.

Before we jump into the text take a moment to be still and get into a posture of prayer, growth and worship. Let the spirit guide your time.

OPENING PRAYER: *Dear God we come to you today ready to learn from your word in whatever way that might look. We pray that your spirit would guide us and prompt us to embark in a deeper and more intimate relationship with you. Thank you father for the way you delight in us. Amen.*

TODAY’S READING: Proverbs 30: 1-9

1 “I am weary, God, but I can prevail. **2** Surely I am only a brute, not a man; I do not have human understanding. **3** I have not learned wisdom, nor have I attained to the knowledge of the Holy One. **4** Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Whose hands have gathered up the wind? Who has wrapped up the waters in a cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is the name of his son? Surely you know!

5 “Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. **6** Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.

7 “Two things I ask of you, Lord; do not refuse me before I die: **8** Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. **9** Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.

DEVOTIONAL: There is some uncertainty around the writer of the collections of Proverbs, but in this passage

DAY 11

we are introduced to and learning from the perspective of Agur. At the beginning of verse 5 and 6 Agur makes claim that the source of his knowledge is Holy One (God) because of his ability to listen to the Word of God.

In Psalm 12:6 we are reminded that the Word is pure and tested in fire, so that all the base metals have been purged from it. Because the Word is purified and tried by the fire of the Spirit, the word is a shield to those who trust Him, those who cling to God find refuge and protection in Him (v.5). With God's word, Agur is certain that he can enter any battle and be unscathed.

God's word is not only a pure word, its a strong and protective shield. God doesn't mind if we talk back to Him. He desires for us to search out and discover what he has revealed. But we need to beware of the dangers of adding anything to God's word because then we would be making it into our own and God has the ability to expose those lies and rebuke them.

REREAD: Proverbs 30:1-9

REFLECTION: For you personally what does it look like to take refuge in God? _____

Where in your life have you experienced God or God's word, protect or provide for you? _____

DAY 11

Why is the prayer of Agur a wise response to circumstances that are beyond our wisdom? Why does he pray only for God to provide what is needed (v. 7-9)? What might we learn from praying this way? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *God we give you praise for the refuge that your word allows us to have. Lord, we know that we need you and we ask that you protect us and love us through your grace and mercy each day. Amen.*

DAY 12

Today is Friday, October 27 and this week we are reading scriptures about the “Word of God” and how we can try to get a better understanding of who God is in our lives.

I encourage you to take a moment to pause and take a few deep breaths and exhale any burdens or anxieties that are weighing you down. We are loved by a God that is able to overcome anything that is dragging us down.

OPENING PRAYER: *Father God, we lay down our burdens at your feet today knowing that you are a compassionate father that wants to heal our physical or emotional wounds. Father we don't claim to understand your will, but we do believe that you are faithful to us.*

TODAY'S READING: 1 Peter 1:13-25

13 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. **14** As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. **15** But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; **16** for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

17 Since you call on a Father who judges each person's work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. **18** For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, **19** but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. **20** He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. **21** Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. **23** For you

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have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

24 For, "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, 25 but the word of the Lord endures forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.

DEVOTIONAL: A lot of people have said that, "The Bible is good and it has good morals and principles inside of it. And it shows us how to be a good person." Their idea is that the Bible has principles for us to live by, yet they don't actually believe in God.

People can tend to like the Bible and God's Word because it shows us how to do good deeds, but it's not accepted that the primary message of God is to truly believe in the truth.

So if the Bible is not the truth there is no point or reason to study it or furthermore obey it even. If it's not the truth of God to us then it can just be opinions from some dead people that wouldn't matter. But the Bible is the truth and we know that the Word of God is living and enduring (v.23).

REREAD: 1 Peter 1:13-25

REFLECTION:

Pause for a moment and ask the spirit to reveal to you a specific theme/phrase/word that is found in the passage. What if anything was highlighted for you? Why might this be highlighted for you by the Lord?

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If we were to truly be living into the truth of God's Word and obeying that truth (v. 22) we would have sincere and deep love for one another. If I'm honest, in the broken world we live in I can tend to disobey that truth and create division in relationships and let differences be the reason for not loving others well. How do you believe you are obeying this truth from God towards those around you? (Friends, Family, Co-workers, Strangers, Etc.) _____

How do you believe the Word of God is described? Why are these two adjectives (living and enduring) chosen? How is the Word of God compared to earthly things? _____

CLOSING PRAYER:

Father, we thank you that regardless of our current circumstance or situation your Word is consistent and steadfast. Spirit, help us to have the vision to see the living Word of God around us today and always. As we see the endurance and beauty of your Word God let us desire you more. In your name, Amen.

DAY 13

Today is Saturday, October 28 and this week we are reading scriptures about the “Word of God” and discovering how God’s Word is a light unto our feet and can give us strength when we have nothing left of our own.

Before we dive into the reading and devotional today reflect on the ways that God has been faithful to you. Now pause and give thanks for those areas of your life that God is doing a good work in.

OPENING PRAYER: *Father, today we acknowledge that you are a God that does not need to have a relationship with us, but you still desire to be with us and for us. Thank you father that we don’t have to strive for perfection to be with you or earn our way towards your grace. Amen.*

TODAY’S READING: Psalm 119: 105-112

- 105 Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.
- 106 I’ve promised it once, and I’ll promise it again: I will obey your righteous regulations.
- 107 I have suffered much, O Lord; restore my life again as you promised.
- 108 Lord, accept my offering of praise, and teach me your regulations.
- 109 My life constantly hangs in the balance, but I will not stop obeying your instructions.
- 110 The wicked have set their traps for me, but I will not turn from your commandments.
- 111 Your laws are my treasure; they are my heart’s delight.
- 112 I am determined to keep your decrees to the very end.

DAY 13

DEVOTIONAL: This passage begins with some of my favorite imagery found in scripture, light versus darkness. Darkness can create chaos and fear because of the unknown, but light always prevails when the two meet. Light provides vision, light provides hope and that is the same with God's Word.

Without God's Word, we would be sunk into total darkness. We live in a world that is very dark and our minds have also been darkened due to Adam's fall into sin. Our only hope to have light on our path is truly the Word of God.

When we state that God's Word is a light to our path were not just saying for just day to day guidance. Instead the Word is bright enough to rearrange our priorities and check our intent and motivations. It ultimately drives us away from the path of sin and destruction.

REREAD: Psalm 119: 105-112

REFLECTION:

Verse 107 refers to suffering and giving that suffering or pain over to the Lord to restore or heal. Is there a time in your life that you suffered and nothing but God's word and promise brought you out of that season? Please reflect on that time, and if there is nothing that comes to mind is there an area of your life that needs restoration only God can provide. _____

DAY 13

In your day to day life what does your “offering of praise” (v.108) to the Lord look like? Does this look like verbal acknowledgement through worship and prayer or journaled in times set aside for reflection and contemplation? If this offering is not taking place as frequently as you would desire, ask yourself why that may be? _____

Is there a specific word that stands out to you in this passage? Sit with that word. What does that word mean in the context of the passage? What meaning might this word hold in your life currently? _____

CLOSING PRAYER:

God thank you for your Word that is not only a guiding presence in our life but also a powerful force that can restore things that are broken, protect us from the many traps of this world and provide us with unexplainable joy. God you are good and we thank you for your hope that we truly don't deserve. Amen.

DAY 14

Today is Sunday, October 29 and on this day of rest we will return to our main text for our “40 days for fullness” experiment. This coming week we will also turn our attention to the topic of “Prayer” as we are hoping to experience many opportunities to connect with God on a deep conversational level in the days ahead.

Before we read our scripture for today, take a moment to quiet your heart in the presence of God.

OPENING PRAYER: *Father, thank you for for being near to me on this day. Thank you for listening to me when I speak to you and thank you for speaking to me when I find the time to listen. May I be drawn into the reality of your presence and my ears be open to hear your voice today as your Holy Spirit empowers me to commune with Jesus Christ, your son. Amen.*

TODAY’S READING: Ephesians 3:14-21 NIV

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. **16** I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, **18** may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, **19** and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

DAY 14

Week 3 - Prayer

DEVOTIONAL: Paul writes about this “inner being”. On this day of rest, take some time allow God’s presence to connect with you in the very core of who you are. There is a “you” that lives below the surface of what others see. A sense of self that dwells in what psychologist may label as your id and ego or the subconscious and theologians call the soul. This “lower brain” part of you operates faster than the rate of conscious thought and is constantly reacting to your surroundings based on your own past experiences, emotional memories and external stimuli.

Paul’s prayer is that this inner place would experience an empowering through the presence of the Holy Spirit. That people would be changed in the core places of their identity through the indwelling of God’s Spirit.

What would it look like for you to invite God’s presence to fill this inner place in a new and fresh way today? How might the light of His presence, bring growth and strength to this most vulnerable of places? What kind of impact would it have on you to have your inner monologue be transformed into a dialogue with the Spirit of God?

REREAD: Ephesians 3:14-21

REFLECTIONS: Today, because it is a day of rest, in place of our typical reflection questions, we are going to set a timer for three minutes and just sit quietly in the Lord’s presence, meditating on the words of this verse.

*“I have loved you with an everlasting love;
I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.
I will build you up again,
and you, will be rebuilt.*

DAY 14

*Again you will take up your timbrels
and go out to dance with the joyful.*

Jeremiah 31:2-4

You might spend these three minutes considering the following:

- **Imagining the light of His presence permeating to the depth of who you are**
- **Your core self being embraced and enveloped in His restorative, everlasting love**
- **What might God want to rebuild within you?**

Take three minutes in silence to try to connect to the portrait of God this verse shares with us. (Set a 3 minute timer and reflect)

CLOSING PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, Gracious God, thank you for meeting with me and speaking to me today. Thank you for the gift of dialoguing with you in prayer. I long to have the kind of relationship with you where I feel heard and have confidence that I am learning to listen. Please use this week to draw me into life changing conversations with you In Jesus name, Amen.*

DAY 15

Today is Monday, October 30th and this week's devotional will be focused on prayer. We have the great privilege to talk to God whenever we want. We get to thank him, bring our needs to him and even hear him in our spirit. God's written word goes hand in hand with prayer.

Take some time and quiet your spirit...

OPENING PRAYER: *God I recognize you as creator of the universe and lover of my soul. I know you give me every breath and every moment here on this earth. I know that every good and perfect gift comes from you. As I spend intentional moments with you help me to hear your voice more clearly.*

TODAY'S READING: Here are a couple passages that describe how awesome and caring our God is. It is he that we get to build relationship with by spending time in prayer.

"For the Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life."

Job 33:4 NLT

"The Lord merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born."

Psalms 33:6 NLT

"But you, O Lord, are a shield around me; you are my glory, the one who holds my head high."⁴ I cried out to the Lord, and he answered me from his holy mountain. Interlude. Psalms 3:3-4NLT

All relationships depend on communication and ours with our heavenly Father is certainly no different. Daily recognizing who God is can set the tone for everything

DAY 15

and can set the foundation for our conversation with our Father. I think we can often take God for granted, but a consistent, focused prayer time can guard against that tendency.

At times when I pray, my words are about what I want God to do for me. He does want us to cast all of our cares on him and he loves to meet the needs of his kids. However, it takes more than that to build a closer relationship with our Father. Expressing our gratitude and spending time with quieted minds to hear him speak is also what I believe God desires in our relationship.

Consider these verses, describing people taking time to spend with God.

“Be still and know that I am God.” Ps. 46:10

“Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray. Later Simon and the others went out to find him. When they found him, they said, “Everyone is looking for you.” Mark 1:35-37

If “later” Simon went out to find Jesus and it must’ve been a significant amount of prayer time.

REFLECTION: Take time in prayer and ask God for the amount of time you could commit to in the remaining 40 days of this devotional. During these times it may be helpful to have a prayer list to help stay on track. Be sure to include others and pray for them daily.

What is your biggest challenge in setting time aside for prayer? _____

DAY 15

The Bible is full of descriptive phrases about our heavenly father. What are some that mean the most to you personally? _____

Week 3 - Prayer

CLOSING PRAYER: *Father I thank you so much that I can reach out to you in prayer and you welcome and even desire these times together. I know Jesus made it possible though his sacrifice. I ask that you guide me and enhance our times together so that you would be glorified and other people will experience the abundant life you desire for them.
In Jesus name let it be so.*

DAY 16

Today is Tuesday, October 31st and on this day two of our prayer devotional we are going to take a look at the Holy Spirit's role pertaining to our prayers.

OPENING PRAYER: *Father today I acknowledge your greatness, it is beyond my comprehension. Evidence of you is all around me. I approach this time with a thankful heart. I thank you for your Holy Spirit that is ever present with me. Teach me to partner with him more purposefully in my prayer times. Amen*

We serve a great God that is revealed in scripture as three very distinct persons who are yet all One. This "Trinitarian" mystery is foundational to the Christian faith. As this fact pertains to prayer it is certainly relevant, yet it is also important we do not get too hung up on which member of the trinity you address in prayer, God is bigger than that.

TODAY'S READING John 16:12–15 (NLT): 12 "There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. 14 He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, 'The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.'

Romans 15:13 (NLT): 13 I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jude 20–21 (NLT): But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, 21 and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God's love.

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Galatians 5:16 (NLT): 16 So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.

Week 3 - Prayer

Luke 11:13 (NLT): 13 So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

DEVOTIONAL: These verses all show how present and active the Holy Spirit is meant to be in our daily lives. With this in mind, I simply think that recognition of the Holy Spirit's role and direction can be especially beneficial in our prayer life as he guides us in our communication with Jesus and the Father.

REFLECTIONS:

What might we do to pursue a greater involvement of the Holy Spirit in our conversation with the Father? _____

Why is the Holy Spirit Important for you personally? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *God thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit and the promises that you have given through him and the truth of his presence. I ask that I would have a greater recognition of his presence in my life causing me to better hear your voice.
Amen*

DAY 17

Today is Wednesday, November 1 and this is day three of our prayer devotional where we will look at Jesus' example and directions concerning prayer.

OPENING PRAYER: *Father we take a bit more Time this day to focus on prayer we again acknowledge your sovereignty and your greatness. Thank you for your word. We thank you for the words of your son as we focus on his example and his direction in communicating with you which you so deeply desire. Amen.*

Jesus gave us this framework for prayer as he taught his disciples in the gospel of Matthew.

TODAY'S READING: Matthew 6:9-13

Pray like this: Our Father in heaven,
may your name be kept holy.

May your Kingdom come soon.

May your will be done on earth,
as it is in heaven.

Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins,
as we have forgiven those who sin against us.

And don't let us yield to temptation,
but rescue us from the evil one.

DEVOTIONAL: I like this simplistic breakdown from the life application commentary -

“This prayer is called the Lord’s Prayer because Jesus gave it to the disciples to pray, as well as to be a pattern for their prayers. Jesus did not give this prayer as an incantation to be recited over and over— Jesus said, “in this manner, therefore, pray.” In other words, this is how I want you to pray—praise God (6:9), intercede for his work in the world (6:10), ask for provision of individual daily needs (6:11), and request help in daily struggles (6:12–13). Jesus gave the prayer to his disciples; therefore, those who follow Christ should pray it as well.

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The pattern of praise, intercession, and request helps believers understand the nature and purpose of their personal prayers in their relationship with their Father. “

Week 3 - Prayer

Forgiveness or the lack of it has a huge impact in our lives. The lack of it can restrain us in so many ways as well as others if we do not extend it. Giving and receiving it can put us in the center of the abundant life that Jesus came to give us where we can experience the peace that we can't truly understand . Holding onto unforgiveness and judgments of others can be like a spiritual wedge in our relationship with our Father and has the potential to hinder our communication with him.

Working through forgiveness for others, and even ourselves can be a long process, however, recognizing the need for it and being in the process with our heavenly Father is where we need to be.

Remember these words about forgiveness, spoken by Jesus in Matthew 5: *“²³So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, ²⁴leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.”*

REFLECTION: Consider in your prayer time today thanking our Father for the forgiveness he extends to us and ask him to direct through his Holy Spirit any areas of forgiveness we need to receive ourselves or extend the others..

What is been the most impactful experience you have had extending forgiveness towards someone else? _____

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In what ways do you think forgiveness or the lack of it can affect our prayers? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *Father, thank you for the example of prayer that Jesus gave us. Thank you for your mercy, for forgiving our sins and washing us white as snow. Help us to be quick to forgive, not holding onto unforgiveness so that it would not at all hinder our relationship with you or them.
Amen*

DAY 18

Today is Thursday, November 2 and today we'll be looking at scriptures which affirm our place in God's family and his love for us.

Week 3 - Prayer

OPENING PRAYER: *Father as we approach you today we thank you creator of the universe and the lover of our souls that we've become part of your family. As we look into that truth today we ask you to set that fact deep into our spirits, and then change our souls as we affect your Kingdom and that would glorify you in Jesus' name.*

TODAY'S READING Romans 8:15–17 (NLT):

15 So 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." 16 For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. 17 And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

Galatians 4:4–7 (NLT): But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. 5 God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. 6 And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." 7 Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

Ephesians 1:3–5 (NLT): All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. 4 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. 5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself

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through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

Ephesians 3:12 (NLT): 12 Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence.

DEVOTIONAL: How truly spectacular these words are! The paradigm God gives us for understanding His relationship with us is one of family. Our prayer time should be saturated with the same warmth, acceptance and fellowship of a loving family's dining room table.

As often as I have read these passages and others like them that declare our position in his family as well as his kingdom, I still find myself distracted from the truth of my adoption, not experiencing what blessings it affords me.

I far too often, even in my prayer times, find my self distracted by comparing my past present and future to others. It leaves me assuming that my heavenly father is somewhat unhappy with my life. Still other times I find myself distracted by worry about material things or what other people think. I have to be intentional about taking those thoughts captive, and binding or wrapping them up with the truth of what God says.

There is a saying, "there's a difference between believing in God and believing God." I think that saying applies to this truth. It's my prayer that God will help us to experience our adoption in a more real way throughout our lives life moment by moment.

REFLECTION: What are some of the distractions you face in your prayer times? _____

DAY 18

Week 3 - Prayer

How might your life change, if you were to more deeply experience the truth, that you are adopted by a perfect father who is the creator of the universe. _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *Father I thank you for making me part of your family, thank you that I have been adopted by you. I pray the reality and truth of that would not be minimized by anything the world or Satan may tell me. May that truth to allow my light to shine to those around me, that you would be glorified and your kingdom would grow.
Amen*

DAY 19

Today is Friday, November 3 and we'll be looking at how setting a specific time aside to communicate with our Heavenly Father should be a pattern for us. One natural outcome of that practice can be more consistent communication with Him throughout our day as we enter into the practice that scripture calls "praying without ceasing."

OPENING PRAYER: *God, we thank you for these moments and this day that you have given us, we thank you for broadening the horizon of our communication with you. Help us to better grasp what it means for us personally to pray without ceasing.*

TODAY'S READINGS:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (AMP)

Rejoice always *and* delight in your faith; be unceasing *and* persistent in prayer; in every situation [no matter what the circumstances] be thankful *and* continually give thanks *to God*; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 5:7 (NLT): Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.

Matthew 7:7–11 (NLT): Effective Prayer

7 "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

9 "You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? 10 Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! 11 So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.

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Week 3 - Prayer

Luke 18:1–8 (NLT): Parable of the Persistent Widow
One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. 2 “There was a judge in a certain city,” he said, “who neither feared God nor cared about people. 3 A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, ‘Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.’ 4 The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, ‘I don’t fear God or care about people, 5 but this woman is driving me crazy. I’m going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!’ ”

6 Then the Lord said, “Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. 7 Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don’t you think God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?”

DEVOTIONAL: Praying without ceasing would probably be much easier if I was a monk living in a commune but I’m not. Our initial understanding of the phrase could be of someone whose mind is focused on God and his unseen kingdom every moment throughout the day. We know that would not have been possible for the intended audience in the first century, nor for us.

My goal is to be more consistent in recognizing the leading of the Holy Spirit Throughout my day to be willing to turn my spirit towards God in prayer? I found it can only take a few seconds for me to cast my cares or worries to God in the midst of a busy day.

I wonder if praying without ceasing is a bit like juggling. If you’ve ever watched someone juggle that has put in the practice you notice they don’t have to pay complete attention to what they are doing, they are great at multi-

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-tasking. When you first start juggling, you need to keep your eyes on the balls, and occasionally you drop one or maybe two. As I have practiced praying throughout my busy day, it can be difficult at times. Practice is key (just like with juggling.)

Praying while we're driving or at work can feel uncomfortable and seem unnatural. That can change as we push those feelings aside and practice to build a pattern of prayer throughout our day.

REFLECTION: What does praying without ceasing look like for you? _____

How many little become more of a life pattern for you personally? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *Father, thank you that you are ever present that your Holy Spirit is always with us even in the busyness of life. Making ceasing and spontaneous prayer a priority is something that doesn't come naturally. I asked that you would help me to listen to your direction and empower me to get past any of the discomfort I might experience in following your leading. Thank you for the opportunity to affect your kingdom in the middle of my day in Jesus name.*

Amen

DAY 20

Today is Saturday, November 4th and this is the final day of the prayer devotional in our 40 day series of devotionals. We are going to take a look at praying for and with others.

Before we get to our readings for the day, take a moment to quiet your heart before the Lord.

OPENING PRAYER: *Father, thank you for your word and thank you that I can come into your presence today where you have been waiting, just to meet with me. Use this time today to draw me closer to you. Amen*

TODAY'S READINGS:

James 5:16–18 (NLT): 16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. 17 Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! 18 Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.

Matthew 18:19–20 (NLT): 19 “I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. 20 For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.”

Colossians 4:2–4 (NLT): 2 Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. 3 Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains. 4 Pray that I will proclaim this message as clearly as I should.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NLT): 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

DAY 20

DEVOTIONAL: I'm sure many of us have experienced the blessings of others consistent prayer for us, maybe our grandparents or an aunt or an uncle. My oldest brother and sister in law have consistently prayed for the members of our family over probably the past 30 years. (I have three brothers and two sisters,) I am certain of the fruitfulness of those prayers as our family is full of adults and kids serving God. There's a movie called the war room. If you haven't seen it, I would suggest getting your hands on it and watching it.

One thing that each of us can do to affect the kingdom of God is to pray for others. We may not be speakers we may not be teachers we may not be missionaries, but we can set time aside to see God's will done in the lives of those around us.

It's interesting how uncomfortable it is for some Christians to talk about their faith. In the same way it's difficult for many of to pray together. It truly can be a step of faith to begin the practice praying together.

Asking for prayer can be even tougher for some. Regardless of the thoughts that may ,why not to ask for prayer, we need to push through and be vulnerable by having someone partner in prayer with us when we need it.

Our comfort levels are often determined by what was modeled for us by those around us. That same brother modeled spontaneous and consistent prayers for me. He would often say well let's pray about that right now and even on the phone. I remember how awkward it felt at first praying on the telephone now I may even prefer it.

If it is difficult for you to pray with others I want to encourage you to ask God to help you push through the

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hesitation and give you the words to pray. And even if you go away from that prayer time, feeling funny, like you prayed the wrong thing... don't give up.

Week 3 - Prayer

One of the most difficult partnerships for prayer is often husband and wife. Over the years I have experienced and seen many husbands struggle greatly to set consistent meaningful prayer time aside with their wives. It took a lot of practice and commitment for my wife and I to make this a life pattern in our marriage. But I'm convinced over the past 30 years it has been the most effective moments of prayer that I have spent. Yet I still hesitate to make it as consistent as it should be.

It is vital as Christ followers that we recognize that we have an enemy that does not want us to pray and that it's not natural for our flesh to practice prayer.

REFLECTION: What has been the most meaningful time for you in prayer for someone else? And what about a meaningful time when someone prayed for you? _____

On the scale of 1 to 10 how comfortable are you spontaneously praying for someone else? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *God again we come to you, amazed by your greatness and your mercy. Again we thank you that you have brought us into your family and have adopted us making us part of the family of believers around us. We desire to be effective in praying with and for others as your Holy Spirit leads. And we pray, as we do that we would model to others and it would cause prayers priority to increase in the generations ahead and cause you to be glorified and your kingdom to be evident in a greater way on this earth. Amen*

DAY 21

Today is Sunday, November 5 and on this day of rest we will return to our main text for our “40 days for fullness” experiment. This coming week we will also turn our attention to the topic of “Sacrifice”. God’s redemption of all things is built upon the foundation of his own, self giving, self sacrificing love demonstrated most effectively in scripture through Christ’s death on the cross. As Jesus’ followers, we’ll be exploring what it means to share in Christ’s suffering and sacrifice, that we may also share his eternal life and goodness.

Before we read our scripture for today, take a moment to quiet your heart in the presence of God.

OPENING PRAYER: *Father, I acknowledge you as the one who is near to me and not distant. Thank you for loving me and not withholding any good thing that I have needed. May I be drawn into the reality of your presence and my ears be open to hear your voice today as your Holy Spirit empowers me to commune with Jesus Christ, your son. Amen.*

TODAY’S READING: Ephesians 3:14-21 NIV

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. **16** I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, **18** may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, **19** and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. **20** Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

DAY 21

DEVOTIONAL: As we will be considering our own response to Christ's sacrifice this week, I am mindful of the way that everything about our faith hinges on God's plan; rather than make us pay for our sins, he atones for our sins with His son's sacrifice. Jesus once said to his disciples, "Greater love has no one than this, that they would lay down their life for their friends." In other words, Jesus' offering up his life for his "friends" on the cross is the ultimate expression of love.

In his prayer for the Ephesians, Paul prays for an outpouring of the Lord's power over those people who are "rooted and established in love." What better foundation for the Lord's work in our lives than a world view that is built upon the truth of Christ crucified as the ultimate demonstration of God's love for us? I love the use of the word "rooted" in this passage as it helps me to think of the systems of roots that hold a large tree into the ground, at times in gravity defying or cataclysmic-weather-event defying fashion.

May our understanding of God's love be like those roots. May it be like something that digs ever deeper into the soil of God's love, not just bringing nourishment to the whole body, but stability and resiliency too. May we be found rooted and established upon the truth of God's love for us, demonstrated in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died to save us.

REREAD: Ephesians 3:14-21

REFLECTIONS: Today, because it is a day of rest, in place of our typical reflection questions, we are going to set a timer for three and a half minutes and just sit quietly in the Lord's presence, meditating on the words of these verses.

DAY 21

“...They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the LORD
for the display of his splendor...
...**11** For as the soil makes the sprout come up
and a garden causes seeds to grow,
so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness
and praise spring up before all nations.” Isaiah
61:3b, 11

You might spend these three and a half minutes considering the following:

- **Are there any specific expressions of God’s love that he is inviting you to “tap your roots” into today?**
- **How have you experienced the firm hold of God’s faithfulness keeping you rooted during storms of life?**
- **What parts of you might God want to bring growth (think flowers and sprouting foliage) to in this season?**

Take three minutes in silence to try to connect to the realities these verse shares with us. (Set a 3 1/2 minute timer and reflect)

CLOSING PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, Gracious God, thank you for meeting with me and speaking to me today. Thank you for the way that you continue to lavishly pour expression of your relentless love into my life. I long to be found rooted and established by experiencing your love in greater and greater measure. In Jesus name, Amen.*

DAY 22

Today is Monday November 6th and I am glad you are joining us this week to reflect upon sacrifice as we seek out the fullness that we can have in Christ. Many of the passages from this week are challenging because they ask us to think in a way that may look like foolishness to the world.

So, before we dive into the scripture take a moment to sit before the Lord and ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we read his word. Ask for wisdom. Ask that our minds may be open to what he wants to teach us.

TODAY'S READING: John 15:9-17

⁹ “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

DEVOTIONAL: Jesus had several teachings that we could refer to as upside down teachings: the first are last, to find your life you must lose it, and give everything away and you will have treasure in heaven. These are counter intuitive and definitely not the message that we receive from today’s culture.

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Jesus is telling us to pour ourselves into the people around us and to do it in a manner that is sacrificial to the point of laying down one's life for another. The mindset here is that we put the lives of others before ours. And he says that these actions will make our joy complete. It will bring us fullness.

But our culture tells us the exact opposite. It tells us that we should focus on ourselves. It says, "treat yourself". It promotes 'self care'. It tells us that we should put ourselves first above all others. It tells us that we need to take care of ourselves above all others. Do not be fooled by it. It may appear to make sense, but it will not bring you the fullness you are looking for.

Jesus has a different destiny for you. In fact, he has chosen you. He has appointed you to go bear fruit in the world. He has chosen you to show this sacrificial love to all around you. This is what you are made for and where you will find joy and fullness.

REFLECTIONS: Jesus says, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete". In what ways have you experienced this joy when you have loved others sacrificially?

In verses 15 and 16 Jesus talks about choosing us and appointing us for this work. He sends us out not as servants but as friends, as partners in this ministry of love. What emotions are stirred in you when you read that Jesus has chosen you to be a partner in his ministry?

DAY 22

What is one thing you can do today to show sacrificial love to someone? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *Lord, we thank you for your words - for your teachings. Open our hearts to receive these words. Help them to bring about positive change in our lives. Help us to be more like you. That we may see others the way you do and reach out to them with love that is like yours. Amen.*

DAY 23

Today is Tuesday November 7th and this week we are reflecting on sacrifice. Today, specifically, I want to talk about the fear that comes with sacrifice. On paper we can paint a beautiful picture of sacrifice, but sometimes when we go to make that sacrifice, we find it to be a struggle.

OPENING PRAYER: *Lord, we again ask for your Holy Spirit to talk to us today. Give us wisdom to understand your teachings. We invite your Spirit to work on our hearts today and to bring the change that is needed so we may experience fullness in you.*

TODAY'S READING: Matthew 6:25-34

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

²⁸ "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

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DEVOTIONAL: When you serve sacrificially, you will often ask, “will there be enough left for me?” If you are writing a check to a missionary you may be wondering what will happen if your car breaks down tomorrow. Will I have enough? I don’t think we need to be ashamed of thoughts like this. I think they are natural.

One thing to consider when we find ourselves afraid to give of our time or wealth is to remember that it was never ours to begin with. Everything we have is from the Lord. Every breath we take is from him. If you find yourselves struggling with this, here is something to practice; close your eyes and imagine yourself on your knees in front of Jesus handing everything back to him. Tell him it is his. Tell him you don’t want sole control of it. Acknowledge the gift from him and ask him for help and wisdom for what to do with it.

Another thing we can do is to lean into the promise we find in verse 33. God promises to take care of you if you make it a priority to put the Kingdom of God first. In the parable of the talents three servants are entrusted with money. (Read Matthew 25:14-30 for extra credit.) God has entrusted you with good things. He has given you abilities, talents, a beautiful smile, laughter, light, wealth. You are a steward of these things.

How will you use them in the Kingdom of God? Will you bury them in a hole or will you invest them in those around you to bring light to the world so others may know the light of God. Don’t be afraid to share what God has entrusted you with. He promises to take care of you when you put his kingdom first.

REFLECTION: What are the things that you worry about when you look to give of your time and wealth? _____

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What are the gifts God has given you to share with others? _____

In what ways have you overcome the fear that is associated with sacrificial giving? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *Lord we thank you for this promise in scripture that you care for us – that you find us valuable. Help us to lean into that promise. Help us to acknowledge that you are the giver of all that we have. Give us insight into the gifts that you have given us. Give us wisdom in how you want us to share these things with those around us. Help us to hold everything you have entrusted to us loosely and to be willing to pour out blessing onto those around us.*

Amen

DAY 24

Welcome to Wednesday November 8th. We are continuing our week reflecting on sacrifice. And specifically today we will be talking about how it is essential to tap into God's strength and power.

Week 4 - Sacrifice

OPENING PRAYER: *Lord we invite you into our study of your word today. Send your Holy Spirit to guide us into truth.*

TODAYS READING: John 15:1-8

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. **2** He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. **3** You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. **4** Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. **6** If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. **7** If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Devotional: Often I would get an idea from God and run with it. Often it would turn out mediocre. Looking back I often wonder what kind of success I would have had if I had taken God along with me. If I had prayed at every decision. If I had inquired of Him every time I needed inspiration. If I had sought His power every time I was tired or worn out.

What would the harvest have been like if I was fully connected to the vine? Instead of a handful of fruit, perhaps it would have been baskets full.

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When I look at our passage three things come to mind. One, sacrifice and service to others can be difficult and challenging, thus it is essential to be tapped into the vine for God's wisdom and grace. Two, sacrifice and service and can be draining on your own power, but it can be delightful when you are led and fueled by the Vine. Three, real fruit is produced when you are connected to Jesus.

The last thing I see is that God tends the branch that is connected to him. He cares for us. His desire is to see us produce fruit. God is ready to help. Don't go it alone.

REFLECTION: What differences do you experience in your life when you are fully connected to God than when you are less connected? _____

What are the challenges you face to 'remain in the vine'? _____

Ask God for a strong connection today and that he will guide you to someone where you can have a fruit bearing experience while utilizing his power, wisdom and grace.

Closing Prayer: *Lord we thank you that you care about us. We thank you that you want to see us produce fruit. We thank you for your pruning in our lives to make us more fruitful to those around us. We pray that you will continue to teach us how to share your love, that you will continue to share your wisdom with us, and that you will continue to change our hearts so we can love more like you. Amen*

DAY 25

Today is Thursday the 9th of November and we are continuing our reflection on sacrifice. Today we will talk about what I think is one of the most amazing forms of sacrificial love and that is generosity.

OPENING PRAYER: *Lord we ask for your Holy Spirit to open our eyes and hearts today to your words. Let them penetrate deep to our souls and bring about real change in our lives. Amen*

TODAY'S READING: Matthew 20:1-16

20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

³ “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴ He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ ⁵ So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶ About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

⁷ “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered. “He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

⁸ “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

⁹ “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰ So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹ When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹² ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of

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the work and the heat of the day.’

¹³“But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? ¹⁴Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

¹⁶“So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

DEVOTIONAL: Have you ever wanted to be a rebel? To be someone who challenged society’s norms? If you have, you might want to give generosity a try. When you practice generosity people will criticize you for not being fair. They will complain that you are throwing the ledgers out of balance. They will label you as someone who is reckless and out of control. They may say that you have no regard for yourself or your family.

Paul says in Corinthians 1:25 that the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom.

Generosity appears to be utter foolishness. People will think it is foolish to give away your time, wealth and love to those who are undeserving and with no hope or desire of ever getting anything in return. However, generosity is a beautiful thing. It abounds in joy for both the giver and the receiver. And it is a perfect reflection of God’s grace.

If you are looking to fill yourself with joy I would suggest practicing generosity.

REFLECTION: How would you feel about being one of the workers who labored all day? Would you have trouble celebrating the generosity of the landowner? Would you have a hard time rejoicing with your co-worker’s good fortune? _____

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Week 4 - Sacrifice

A friend once told me, "You can never be too generous." Is this true? Why or why not? _____

Think back to a time that someone was generous to you. How did it make you feel? What did it communicate to you about how that person felt about you? _____

Pray that will God will reveal someone to you today that you can be generous towards.

CLOSING PRAYER: *Lord we praise you for your generosity to us. We are so undeserving and you are so generous. We love you for your generosity. Help us to celebrate generosity when we see it. Help us to be generous to those around us. Help us to put others before ourselves and share the gifts that you have given us. Amen.*

DAY 26

Happy Friday. It is November the 10th and we are continuing our reflection on sacrifice – this idea of putting others ahead of ourselves. Today we will be going to talk about kindness and not just kindness to those you love but kindness to all people.

OPENING PRAYER: *Lord open our hearts today to not only hear your teaching but also that our hearts may be open to all people – to those that are easy to love, to those that are hard to love, to those that disagree with us and to those that have wronged us.*

TODAY'S READING: Matthew 5:38-48

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ ³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor ^b and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

DEVOTIONAL: Some aspects of kindness are easy. It's inexpensive and it doesn't have to be horribly time consuming. It's not too hard to share a smile and some kind words with someone. It's easy to give kindness out to those you love and easy to give it out to strangers.

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Where kindness gets difficult is when we need to show it to those that we may consider our enemies.

Week 4 - Sacrifice

In this passage Jesus raises the bar. He asks us to love our enemies and to pray for those that persecute you. In verses 38-42 Jesus is telling us to be kind to those who are wronging us. If someone wants to punch you, let them punch you twice. If someone wants to take your shirt give them your coat as well. If they force you to go a mile, go two miles. These concepts seem ridiculous. Why would we be kind to these people? This is not fair! In our minds we scream, "All bad people should be punished!"

It is easy to put people in the 'bad people' box and then treat them differently. But God says there is only one box and it is labeled God's children and we are all in that box together. When we want to label someone as a 'bad person', we need to challenge ourselves to think about that differently. Maybe, try envisioning the person as your own child. How does that change your perspective? Does it make you want to be more forgiving and gracious? Maybe try stepping into their shoes. Ask yourself what struggles they have faced in life that you did not have to face. Ask yourself if they have hurts, wounds and scars that they carry. There is an old saying that we should not judge someone until we have walked in their shoes. This should remind us that we probably do not have the right perspective to judge anyone.

And if that doesn't work and you are still asking, "Why show them love?" The answer is, "because that is what God did to us." In Romans 5:10 it says that while we were enemies with God, He sent his Son to save us.

In a world that is full of hate and anger Jesus is asking us to be different. We are to shine like children of the

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Light. Live into your identity as a child of God. Don't live up to the worldly standard but the Godly one.

REFLECTION: Who is someone you might need to forgive? _____

Think about the worst people in the world? Is God asking us to love these people as well? _____

Think about someone in your life that needs a little kindness. Reach out to them today.

Pray that God will remind you today to show kindness to all that you encounter.

CLOSING PRAYER: *Lord we acknowledge today that this is a tough teaching. We ask for your Spirit to fill us with the power and love that is needed to live this out. Give us your eyes to see people as you see them. Help us to not harbor anger or resentment but to practice forgiveness which opens the door to kindness. We praise you for your words and your love today.*

DAY 27

Today is Saturday November 11th and we are winding down our week on sacrifice. I hope that this week has brought fullness to your life as you have reached out with generosity and kindness to those around you. Today we will talk about being a light to all those around you.

OPENING PRAYER: *Lord, open our hearts to your words that you have spoken about us. We praise you for your words and for your love towards us. Thank you for believing in us and inviting us into your ministry.*

TODAY'S READING: Matthew 5:14-16

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

DEVOTIONAL: You are light! Your identity as a child of God is light. Jesus says your light should shine brightly for others to see. This is what this whole week has been about. That we would be overly generous and unnecessarily kind to all those around us that they may recognize a light that is not of this world. When people see us, we would hope that they may recognize a Godly presence and glorify God.

Therefore, we need to avoid the traps that surround us and that try to hide our light from the world. I believe the biggest trap of our world is the one of busyness. We need to be very intentional about making room in our lives for other people. We need to leave margins in our day to be available to serve. We need to carve out that space. We need to regard it as precious and important.

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If we don't carve out that space it will not get done. We know this because we are always trying to carve out space and often we are failing. We need to make this a priority. It is the only way to live into your identity as a child of God. It is the only way to prevent the bowl of busyness from covering your light.

Another obstacle that we face is one of self-centeredness. The concept of selfies is strange to me. Maybe it is because I am from an older generation. But I think the idea of a selfie is in direct contrast to being a light. Light is meant to shine outward onto others around you, not on yourself. The next time you are tempted to take a selfie, instead take a youie. Point the camera at those around you, shine the light on them. Let the world know how special they are.

REFLECTION: Do you believe that you are indeed the light of the world? What are some things that you do to shine God's light to those around you?

What is your favorite way to serve other people? Does it bring you joy? _____

How busy is your life? What are some ways you can carve out space so you can shine your light on others? _____

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Who is a person in your life today that could use some light in their life? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *Lord thank you for considering us light. Speak to us today about how we can make are lights shine brighter. Give us wisdom and strength to shine in this world. Let us have your eyes to see everyone as one of your children who needs love. Helps us to always be ready to be kind and generous. Guide our paths so our light may shine on all that we encounter.*
Amen

DAY 28

Today is Sunday, November 12 and on this day of rest we will return to our main text for our “40 days for fullness” experiment. This coming week we will also turn our attention to the topic of “Empowered”; a theme built around the way God’s Holy Spirit has been sent to us to be with us and in us. One of the most common assurances that God gives to his people in the Old Testament is the promise that He is “with them.” Additionally, Jesus promised his disciples that upon his ascension back to the Father, He would send His Spirit to be with them and in them. In Acts Chapter 2, we have a story about the first “outpouring” of the Holy Spirit on Jesus’ followers. This account is followed by a narrative history that documents years of the Holy Spirit’s continued presence and work through the early church.

This week is all about growing in our understanding of what this all means for us, that we live in an age when the Holy Spirit is present and active in our world, working in us and through us to reveal the gospel to all.

Before we read our scripture for today, take a moment to quiet your heart in the presence of God.

OPENING PRAYER: *Father, thank you for being near to me and hearing me when I pray. May I be drawn into the reality of your presence and my ears be open to hear your voice today, as your Holy Spirit empowers me to commune with Jesus Christ, your son. Amen.*

TODAY’S READING: Ephesians 3:14-21 NIV

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. **16** I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, **18** may have power, together with all

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the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, **19** and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

DEVOTIONAL: Near the end of the gospel of Luke, Jesus spoke with his disciples about the coming Holy Spirit saying, "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." The verses we've been meditating on that are recorded as Paul's prayer for the Ephesians certainly paints a portrait of the Holy Spirit that leans heavily into the roll the Spirit plays of infusing our humanity with the strength and power of God.

In the book of Acts, the Spirit's power was made manifest with all kinds of miracles and signs and wonders, but here in Paul's epistle, he highlights the roll this same Spirit's power plays in drawing us deeper into experiencing the love of Christ and the fullness of fellowship with God.

Think of it this way, the same Spirit who empowered gifts of healing and prophecy, even raising the dead, is the Spirit who empowers you to find true connection and fellowship with God. The same power that split seas and conquered armies is committed to drawing you into the ever increasing experience of knowing the love of your savior. May His divine power be at work in you today as you continue to walk with him.

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REREAD: Ephesians 3:14-21

REFLECTIONS: Today, because it is a day of rest, in place of our typical reflection questions, we are going to set a timer for 4 minutes and just sit quietly in the Lord's presence, meditating on the words of these verses.

“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”

2 Peter 1:3

You might spend these four minutes considering the following:

- **Are there any moments in your life when you have felt a sense of God's power at work?**
- **What are some needs you currently have that could be fulfilled by His power?**
- **Where have you seen God's glory or goodness this week?**

Take four minutes in silence to try to connect to the realities this verse shares with us. (Set a 4 minute timer and reflect)

CLOSING PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, Gracious God, thank you for meeting with me and speaking to me today. I embrace the fact that your divine power is at work in me, accomplishing those things you long to do in me and through me. Have your way today as I commit this day to walking in step with your Holy Spirit. In Jesus name, Amen.*

DAY 29

Today is Monday, November 13. Welcome to Week 5 of our 40-day devotionals. This week we are exploring some scriptures regarding the nature of God's empowerment for our lives.

Now is a good time to close your eyes before proceeding, quiet your thoughts, and invite the Holy Spirit to guide you into the truths that He wants to reveal to you.

OPENING PRAYER: *Lord God, thank you for the gift of your written Word. I declare by faith that you have truly provided what it says you have provided so that I can do what it says I can do. My mind is being renewed on Your Word. I am alert. I am ready to receive, and by your grace I will never be the same again.*

TODAY'S READING: Acts 1:1-8, Luke 24:49

1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach **2** until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. **3** After his suffering he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. **4** On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. **5** For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

6 So, when they met together they asked him "Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them; "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. **8** But **you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes**

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on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Luke 24:49: (Jesus speaking to the disciples after His resurrection.) “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have **been clothed with power from on high**.”

DEVOTIONAL: Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary defines Empowered as “... having the knowledge, confidence, means, or ability to do things or make decisions for oneself.” For a Christian, that definition is too self-focused and, frankly, entirely insufficient. From today’s readings we know that God’s definition is far superior: “To have the Holy Spirit come on you”, and thus “be clothed with power from on high”.

The implications of this scriptural reality are staggering. God does not abandon us to fulfill our calling using only our own meager resources and abilities. Instead, the promise is that the Holy Spirit will be **resident in us** and will **clothe us** in heavenly power to do the work of the gospel. We are **baptizo** (literally, immersed) in His presence and power.

This reminds me of the parable of the Prodigal Son. We come to the Father believing we are unworthy of anything except to be treated like a hired hand. Instead, He embraces us with joy, covers our filthy rags by clothing us with His powerful mantle of authority, and restores us as Heirs to the Kingdom. Praise be to God for such a demonstration of His Love!

REFLECTION: Re-read Acts 1:1-8 and Luke 24:49 (back up and start at Luke 24:46 if you have a moment) and then reflect on the following questions. Take some notes on your thoughts and be ready to share with your small group this week.

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In Acts 1:8 and in Luke 24:47, Jesus specifically mentions his disciples (which includes us) being His witnesses right before he reminds us of the promise of being empowered by the Holy Spirit. What do you think is the connection? Have you ever experienced a time when you just KNEW that God was either inspiring your words or empowering your actions as a witness to others? _____

Jesus told his disciples they would be "clothed with power", which brings to mind the elaborate robes the Old Testament priests wore when they served in the temple. Every article of clothing was highly symbolic of the priests fulfilling humanity's purposes in God's created world as they are empowered by His presence. Take a moment and create a mental picture for yourself of heavenly power being draped over you like an Old Testament priest's robe. Picture the Holy Spirit being resident in you, and try to understand by faith that this is really how God sees you. As that mental picture takes form, what emotions, thoughts or revelations does that evoke in you? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *Lord God, this day I chose not to count on my own capabilities to accomplish Your call on my life. Instead, I take comfort and encouragement knowing that the Holy Spirit dwells within me, and that you have given me the power to be a witness to the revelation of Jesus. This week please give me an opportunity to be that witness, and empower my words and my hands to speak and serve to your glory. Amen.*

DAY 30

Today is Tuesday, November 14. We are continuing our exploration of scriptures regarding the nature of God's empowerment for our lives. The Holy Spirit wants to speak to you today. The hard part can be hearing Him through all of the mental and physical noise around us.

You should therefore spend a minute, quiet your thoughts, and prepare yourself to hear Him.

OPENING PRAYER: *Lord God, thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit. I declare by faith that you have truly provided what Scripture says you have provided so that I can do what Scripture says I can do. As your servant Samuel said I do also declare "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening".*

TODAY'S READING: Acts 2: 14-21, 37-39
(Peter speaking to the crowd after the apostles begin speaking to them in tongues on the day of Pentecost)

Acts 2:14-21

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who are in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. **15** These men are not drunk, as you suppose. Its only nine in the morning! **16** No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 *In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. **18** Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. **19** I will show wonders in the heaven above, and signs on the earth below. Blood and fire and billows of smoke. **20** The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. **21** And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

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Acts 2:36-39

36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

DEVOTIONAL: Exactly who has the Holy Spirit been promised to? Just those in church leadership positions, so that they can rightly lead us?

Just our Pastors, since they have the duty to comfort and teach us?

Just the senior saints in the church, since they have the wisdom and experience to “handle” His presence and rightly discern His guidance?

Just people of high social status, so that God’s church will be recognized as being respectable and dignified?

Don’t worry, I don’t actually believe any of those ridiculous statements that I’ve just written. They are there to drive home a point: Peter, quoting Joel 2:28 says the Spirit will be poured out on all people who “call on the name of the Lord” regardless of their **gender** (“...*your sons and daughters will prophesy...*”), their **age** (“...*your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams*”), or their **social standing** (“*Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.*”)

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This is rightly still happening today (*The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.*)

That means the Spirit is being poured out today on all believers in Christ, empowering us to do God's work, regardless of what we think of our own worthiness.

That means the Spirit is ready to work through you and me. Right now. In our current condition.

Wow. Just...wow.

REFLECTION: Re-read Acts 2:14-21 and Acts 2: 36-39 and then reflect on the questions below.

There are plenty of examples of individuals in the Old Testament being touched by the Spirit of God. For example, He anointed the kings of Israel to enable them to rule, and empowered the Old Testament prophets for their calling. Yet, now with the glorification of Jesus to the Father's right hand the Holy Spirit has been poured out on ALL believers. Why the change? _____

As a believer in Christ you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, even though you likely still have some sin issues in your life (yep, just like me.) Does that mean we have permission to leave those sin issues unresolved? If not, then what are we supposed to be doing instead? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *Lord, the love you show me through the gift of the Holy Spirit is too awesome to comprehend. Now I pray give me ears to hear what He is saying to me so that I can ever more closely follow you and effectively witness to the name and work of Jesus. Amen.*

DAY 31

Today is Wednesday, November 15. In the last two Devotionals we established that the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer, and that His power is poured out on us. For the next several days we are going to explore some of the specific things He does to empower us. Please take a moment, get quiet and centered, and recognize that God is with you as you open your heart to the words of the Scriptures.

OPENING PRAYER: *Lord God, I am ready to receive from the fullness of your presence. I pray that you will show me Your truth as I meditate on your word. Amen.*

TODAY'S READING: John 14:15-18

15 If you love me, you will obey what I command. **16** And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – **17** the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him for he lives with you and will be in you.

John 16:5-14

5 Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me “Where are you going?” **6** Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. **7** But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: **9** in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; **10** in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; **11** and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. **12** I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. **13** But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell

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you what is yet to come. **14** He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

DEVOTIONAL: Understanding two Greek words will give us more insight into the richness of these scriptures.

Jesus says in John 14:16 that the Father will give us another Counselor. In the Greek this is “*allon Parakleton*”. “*Allon*” doesn’t just mean “another”, it means “another of the same sort”. “*Parakleton*” is literally someone called to your side or called to your aid. It was used in the legal system to mean a counselor for the defense, an advocate, someone who pleads your case. In the very widest sense, it means a Comforter.

The Apostle John uses the exact same word to describe Jesus in 1Jn 2:1 when he says that Jesus is our Advocate with Father. The implication of Jesus saying “*allon Parakleton*” is that when Jesus returned to heaven, the Holy Spirit would be sent as a Counselor “of the same sort” as Jesus (exclamation point, exclamation point).

With those definitions in mind, we can see that the Holy Spirit is carrying on the same empowering work in our lives today that Jesus did when He was on earth with His disciples. The Holy Spirit is **teaching** us and **guiding** us into the truth (just like Jesus did). He is **taking what He heard** in the heavenlies and giving it to us (just like Jesus declared he himself was doing). He is **telling us what is yet to come** (just like Jesus did). He is directly present in our lives to **advocate** for us, **comfort** us, and **counsel** us (just like Jesus was for His disciples).

I am particularly taken with this idea that the Holy Spirit is taking what He heard in heaven and clueing us into that nature of those conversations (“taking what is mine and making it known to you”). Jesus has thereby

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assured us that we get the inside scoop on God's plans and purposes for our lives. As such we are being treated as true heirs rather than ignorant servants.

In the person of the Holy Spirit we have a divine Teacher, Counselor, Advocate, and Comforter that leads us in the ways of truth and reveals the plans of heaven to us. If knowledge is power then we are empowered indeed.

REFLECTION: Re-read John 14:15-18 and John 16:5-14, and then reflect on the questions below.

In order to be taught we have to be able to hear the Teacher. With all of the spiritual and mental "noise" that the world throws at you, what methods can you use to be able to hear what God wants to tell you? _____

Reflect on John 14:17 where Jesus says of the Holy Spirit, "The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him for he lives with you and will be in you." Why do you think the world is so blind to the existence and presence of the Holy Spirit? Can you think of a time when you were just absolutely sure that the Holy Spirit was present and working through you?

CLOSING PRAYER: *Lord, your promise is that the Holy Spirit will teach me in all truth, and will be my Comforter and Counselor. I receive that promise and declare Yes and Amen! Holy Spirit, I open my heart and my mind to your presence, and earnestly desire to hear the truth. I invite you into every aspect of my life with joy and expectation. In the precious Name of Jesus, Amen.*

DAY 32

Today is Thursday, November 16. In the last three Devotionals we established that we are empowered because:

- The Holy Spirit dwells in us as believers.
- His power is poured out on us.
- The Holy Spirit walks beside us as Counselor, Advocate, Teacher, and Comforter.

He leads us in the ways of truth and reveals the plans of heaven to us. This is true for every believer, not just a chosen few.

As always please take a moment to push aside all the busy thoughts that crowd your mind, and get ready to press into God's plan for empowerment in your life.

OPENING PRAYER: *Lord God, thank you again for being faithful and true in your promises to me. I receive with joy the gift of truth from Your very throne in heaven. Thank you for the presence in my life of the Holy Spirit, whom I now ask to teach me in Your ways. I cast aside all preconceptions, and open my ears to your voice. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

TODAY'S READING: Romans 12:1–8

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. **2** Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

4 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, **5** so in Christ we, though many, form one body,

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and each member belongs to all the others. **6** We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; **7** if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; **8** if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

DEVOTIONAL: The New Testament contains at least three distinctive lists of gifting that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (collectively the “Godhead”) have given to empower us. The gifts listed in Romans 12:6-8 are often referred to as the Motivational Gifts, given by God the Father. That is, they are inherent tendencies that differ by believer, and were put into you at your creation by the Creator.

There are seven gifts listed (prophesy, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, showing mercy). You will find that very few people are totally defined by just one of these. Instead, most of us will have a combination of these motivations, with one or two typically being dominant.

These gifts are a foundational part of you, and help drive you to take action. I once saw an interview with a believer who had looked upon the miserable condition of his city’s street people and who then started an effective outreach and feeding/shelter ministry. When asked “When did you first hear God’s call to do this?” he simply responded “Sometimes the need is the call.” That was a classic motivational gift response.

REFLECTION: Please reread Romans 12:1-8, and then reflect on the questions below. Take some notes on your thoughts and be ready to share with your small group this week.

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Prayerfully consider the list of gifts, and ask God to reveal your motivational gift(s) to you. It may help to consider these non-exclusive examples:

- Do you desire to speak forthrightly about the things of God without compromise, since people need to lovingly hear the truth to be set free? (Prophetic motivation).
 - Are you driven by the desire to meet people's physical perceived needs? (Serving)
 - Do you see a lack of knowledge in others regarding the truth of Jesus, and want to explain the depth and richness of His sacrifice? (Teaching)
 - Do you like to lovingly encouraging others on to the greater things of God? (Encouraging/exhortation)
 - Do you find it easy to support people and ministries with contributions of food, goods, and funds? (Giving)
 - Do people around you naturally follow your vision or direction? (Leadership)
 - Does your heart ache when you see another in misery? (Mercy)
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-
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The opening phrase of verse 3 (“For by the grace given to me I say to every one of you...”) implies that verses 1 – 2 are an important opening or preamble to 3 – 8. Why do you think Paul started out with verses 1 and 2? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *Lord, thank you that you knit me together in my mother's womb, and that by your declaration I am fearfully and wonderfully made. I declare by faith that you have created me to be part of your body, and that the gifts you have given me are not mine but are yours. I pray that you will help me to use these gifts for the advancement of your kingdom. In the Name of Jesus, Amen.*

DAY 33

Today is Friday, November 17. In this week's previous four Devotionals we established that we are empowered by:

- The Holy Spirit dwelling in us as believers.
- His power poured out on us.
- The Holy Spirit walking beside us as Counselor, Advocate, Teacher, and Comforter. He leads us in the ways of truth and reveals the plans of heaven to us. This is true for every believer, not just a chosen few.
- The gifts that God the Father has woven into our creation. These gifts help motivate us to take action towards our calling.

Now is the time to clear your mind of all cares and preconceived notion, and open your heart to hear the truth that the Holy Spirit has for you. It is the Holy Spirit (and not the writer of this Devotional) that teaches you the deep things of God.

OPENING PRAYER: *Lord God, I come to you now asking for your grace so that I may have wisdom and understanding regarding your will for my life. Holy Spirit, I pray that you pour out your anointing on me such that I may be a faithful, fruitful servant. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

TODAY'S READING: 1 Corinthians 12:1–10

1 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. **2** You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. **3** Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. **4** There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. **5** There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. **6** There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

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7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. **8** To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, **9** to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, **10** to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. **11** All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

DEVOTIONAL: These verses contain what are commonly called the Gifts of the Spirit. Verses 1 through 4 establish several principles regarding the nature of the Holy Spirit and of these empowering gifts:

- We are not swept away by Him or His gifts, not “lead astray” like the pagans. As stated in one study guide, “The Holy Spirit empowers, He doesn’t overpower.”
- Everything He does is to glorify Jesus and bring people under Jesus’ lordship.
- The Holy Spirit is not at cross purposes with Jesus or the Father. Every manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit will be in harmony with the truth about Jesus Christ.

Now look again at verses 7 and 11:

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Paul identifies these gifts as manifestations of the Spirit. They are not a magnification of a person’s natural abilities, but are observable evidence of the Holy Spirit’s

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Spirit's presence. They are gifted to believers according to the Spirit's determination, and are given for the common good by Him.

Week 5 - Empowered

Later in the same letter (1 Cor 14:1), Paul encourages us to "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." The word translated desire is the Greek word *zēloute*, which means "To be zealous for, to burn with desire, to pursue ardently, to desire eagerly or intensely". I encourage each of you to press into the Holy Spirit with that level of intensity, asking for the gifting that He has for you for the benefit of all.

REFLECTION: Please reread 1 Corinthians 12:1–10, and then reflect on the following questions.

Have you ever personally experienced a gift of the Spirit, or been around when one "shows up" in another person? If so, what were the one or two things that you found to be the most memorable about that experience? _____

Is there anything that keeps you from asking the Holy Spirit for a manifestation of His gifts in your life? If so, what is it? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *Holy Spirit, I know that you dwell within me and that your power is poured out over me. I am not only open to but am also eager that you manifest your gifts in my life as you have determined. This desire is so that I may serve the common good of the body of Christ, and be a more effective witness of Jesus to a world that needs to know Him. Yes and Amen*

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Today is Saturday, November 18, and this is our last Devotional on empowerment. In the previous five Devotionals we established that we are empowered because:

- The Holy Spirit dwells in us as believers.
- His power is poured out on us.
- The Holy Spirit walks beside us as Counselor, Advocate, Teacher, and Comforter. He leads us in the ways of truth and reveals the plans of heaven to us. This is true for every believer, not just a chosen few.
- God the Father has woven gifts into our creation gifts that help motivate us to take action towards our calling.
- The Holy Spirit gives us supernatural gifts, which Paul identifies as “manifestations of the Spirit”. They are not a magnification of a person’s natural abilities, but are observable evidence of the Holy Spirit’s presence. They are gifted to believers according to the Spirit’s determination, and are given for the common good by Him.

Are you focused on God? Ready to hear from the Teacher? If so then Hallelujah! If not, then please rest here until your mind is clear and you are ready to go on.

OPENING PRAYER: *Precious and Almighty God, here I am boldly seeking entry into your most Holy of Holies. I desire with all my heart to hear what you have to say to me this day. Grace me with your presence and speak to me with your soft still voice. In Jesus Name, Amen.*

TODAY’S READING: 1 Peter 2:4-9

4 As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— **5** you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **6** For in Scripture it says:

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*“See, I lay a stone in Zion,
a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who trusts in him
will never be put to shame.”*

7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,

*“The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,”*

8 and,

*“A stone that causes people to stumble
and a rock that makes them fall.”*

They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. **10** Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

DEVOTIONAL: In Old Testament Israel, only members of the tribe of Levi could become priests. Only the priest could offer up the animal sacrifices to God, and then only at certain times of the year and only after ritual purification. Individual believers at that time could not enter the Holy of Holies to approach God. The individual believer was represented before God by the intercession of the priests.

Today we have a great High Priest, Jesus Christ, who will serve in that role for the rest of eternity. We also have a new priesthood: Every believer in Christ. That means you and me. Our priesthood is distinct from the Levitical priesthood:

- Animal sacrifices are no longer needed, since Jesus offered up the perfect atoning sacrifice once and for all. Instead, we offer up spiritual sacrifices of

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praise, worship, thanksgiving, good works, love, ministry to others and obedience. We also offer up our bodies as “living sacrifices” (Romans 12:1). All of these are “acceptable to God through Jesus”.

- Through our great High Priest and by the Spirit who dwells within us, we now have access to the Father at any time and in any place. We no longer need to wait for the right time of year, we can just boldly enter in prayer.
- Just as Jesus stands interceding for all of us, we too are called to stand and intercede for those that don't know him, as well as for Kings and Rulers.

I have tried to write some pointed conclusion to these truths, tried to write words that would help you understand just how special the relationship is that God has created for us. However, the power and the promise of verses 9 and 10 stand as their own conclusion:

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

REFLECTION: Please reread 1 Peter 2:4-9 and reflect on the following:

Verse 9 declares that you are God's special possession. What does that mean to you? _____

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There are several promises contained in the above scripture. Consider those promises being applied to you personally: You are a royal priest, you have been built into a spiritual house, the sacrifices you offer are acceptable through Jesus, you are chosen, you are part of a holy people, you are God's special possession, you have received mercy, you have been called out of darkness into light. How might fully believing these promises help to empower you for His purposes? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *Lord God, You have named us as your chosen people and your special possession. We stand in awe that you have called us to be your priests under our great High Priest. We dedicate our lives to declaring the praises of Jesus, who has taken us from darkness into his wonderful light. All praises be to You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

DAY 35

Today is Sunday, November 19 and on this day of rest we will return to our main text for our “40 days for fullness” experiment. This coming week we will also turn our attention to the topic of “the body of Christ” as it is used in scripture to describe the whole church.

Our time will be spent looking to grow in our understanding of the importance of community in the christian life, as well as increasing our appreciation for those who the Spirit has placed around us in the Body of Christ. From the beginning, God said, “it is not good for man to be alone.” and this week, we are embracing the truth that we are all much better off together.

Before we read our scripture for today, take a moment to quiet your heart in the presence of God.

OPENING PRAYER: *Father, I am so grateful that you have called me your own. Thank you that you are even more excited to meet with me today than I could ever be. May I be drawn into the reality of your constant work in the lives of people around me, and my unique calling and place in the body of Christ, as your Holy Spirit empowers me to commune with Jesus Christ, your son. Amen.*

TODAY’S READING: Ephesians 3:14-21 NIV

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. **16** I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, **18** may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, **19** and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more

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20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Week 6 - The Body

DEVOTIONAL: As we enter the final week of our 40 days for Fullness, I am reminded that the One we are asking to make this time fruitful for growth in our spiritual lives is the same One Paul describes as “able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine...” What good thing does God want to give to you, or do in your life that you aren’t even aware of yet?

I am convinced that our questions are too basic and our expectations are too small when compared to the incredible glory of our God. What would it be like this week, if the Spirit opened your mind, just a little more, to comprehend God’s vast love? What if He increased your imagination or your ability to dream a little bigger?

I have no doubt that the Father would love to blow us all away this week as He does those things in your life that you’d have never even thought to ask for. The kinds of things that only He could dream up. Let’s enter this week together, with high expectations for what God may do and how he may reveal himself to us as we continue to seek his face.

REREAD: Ephesians 3:14-21

REFLECTIONS: Today, because it is a day of rest, in place of our typical reflection questions, we are going to set a timer for 4 and a half minutes and just sit quietly in the Lord’s presence, meditating on the words of these verses on the next page.

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“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34, 35

You might spend these four and a half minutes considering the following:

- **Is there anything you need to let go of in order to embrace this new command?**
- **How has Jesus loved his followers? Consequently, how is He commanding us to love one another?**
- **Which attribute does Jesus mean to be most prominent in the lives of His followers?**

Take four and a half minutes in silence to try to connect to the realities these verse shares with us. (Set a 4 1/2 minute timer and reflect)

CLOSING PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, Gracious God, thank you for meeting with me and speaking to me today. I long to be transformed by your love. Help me to love the body of Christ this week and may your kingdom come and your will be done in my life. In Jesus name, Amen.*

DAY 36

Today is Monday, November 20th and this week we are reading scriptures around the idea of “The Body of Christ”. Together our hope is to grow in our ability to listen and understand what God has for us.

Before we get into today’s reading let’s take a moment to quiet our minds before God and connect with Him agreeing with the posture of being still and knowing He is God.

OPENING PRAYER: *God, we come before you knowing that you have us, in no matter the season we are in, there you are with us. What a comfort today and always, we love you!*

TODAY’S READING: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

12 The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. **13** Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. **14** Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. **15** If the foot says, “I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,” that does not make it any less a part of the body. **16** And if the ear says, “I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,” would that make it any less a part of the body?

17 If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? **18** But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. **19** How strange a body would be if it had only one part! **20** Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. **21** The eye can never say to the hand, “I don’t need you.” The head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you.” **22** In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary.

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23 And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, **24** while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. **25** This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. **26** If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. **27** All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

DEVOTIONAL: We, you and I together, are the body. Now, depending on your perspective this may be a good thing or possibly, if you're really being honest this a source of frustration for you. To be a "body" that works we need to understand the value of each part. Realizing that without a specific person and their unique gifting we aren't a full picture of the God we serve.

Not one is better than the other. Verse 19 says "How strange would it be if a body had only one part!" The bible has humor and I love it! It would be incredibly odd if we were just one big eye. Humor aside, it seems obvious the point being made here, yet if we are truthful, maybe we longed to be like someone in our spaces. "If only we were more like this or that THEN we would be important."

On the other hand, you might be feeling pretty good about your position when it comes to your role in the body. This isn't just about an ear being an ear.. In the last few verses you see this idea of unity being brought forth. We must be able to sit in the same spaces with those not exactly like us for their perspective is valuable. What good is an ear if it can't hear? God, thank you for being the designer, the best in the business. That You have created purpose in all you

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have called each of us into. Let's re-read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 once more.

REREAD: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

REFLECTIONS: Take some time to reflect/take notes on these questions.

Have you ever assigned "values" within the Body of Christ depending on the part? If so, what was the circumstance? _____

How do we start to value each other's differences? Where is it needed most? _____

Please take a moment to be still and reflect on your time with the Lord today. Is there anything else I sense God is specifically speaking to me through the scriptures today? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *God, would you help us to understand what it means to be a part of your body. Give us understanding for one another. Allow us to keep watch and take note when one part isn't being themselves. You created this idea of the body, that we might be unified. Allow us to sit in spaces of gratitude over those we are walking alongside. Those that are good at the things we are not. To call forth and honor those that are doing exactly what you've called them to in the quiet spaces. We thank you for your perfect plans, we are forever grateful that they are better than any one of ours. We love you, Amen.*

DAY 37

Today is Tuesday, November 21 and it is day 37, if you can believe it, in our 40 days together! Yesterday we began looking at the idea of “The Body of Christ”. Noting that each of us has a unique role within the body.

Let’s quiet ourselves with God in advance, asking him to prepare our hearts and minds today before we start reading.

OPENING PRAYER: *Thank you God for always hearing us, help us to keep our ears open to what you have to say. Would you move in the way that only you can today? We are so eager to be with you. Amen.*

TODAY’S READING: Romans 15:1-9

1 We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. **2** We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. **3** For even Christ didn’t live to please himself. As the Scriptures say, “The insults of those who insult you, O God, have fallen on me.” **4** Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us. And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God’s promises to be fulfilled.

5 May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. **6** Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. **7** Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory. **8** Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. **9** He also came so that the Gentiles might give glory to God for his mercies to them.

DAY 37

DEVOTIONAL: Jew and gentile. Christ came for both, not one or the other. Sometimes I think we have been fooled into thinking that Christ came for us, which is true, but that he came only for us. We may look around and see those that have it and those that don't. And yet we read that Christ came for all. Not some. Not just us, but for everyone.

God desires us to be together not just in a physical sense. He calls us to "live in complete harmony with each other." When you look up the word harmony some of the first references you will find pertain to music. This concept that a combination of musical notes produce something new that turns into sounds to be enjoyed. Now that is a beautiful picture of the body of Christ working well together.

Imagine our voices coming together as one, permeating beyond the walls of any building. That the whole world would see the glory of our God. Revealed out of differences coming together. So those on the outside might know they too have a place here.

Father, thank you for accepting each of us into your family. May we see that together we are better. This was the big idea, that when unified we would echo what it means to be accepted fully. In case God might want to say something more through these verses, let's read them again.

REREAD: Romans 15:1-9

REFLECTION: How might it be easier to do what please you? In what ways can we look out for each other? _____

DAY 37

Do you find it easy to live in harmony? Please explain. _____

Please take a moment to be still and reflect on your time with the Lord today. Is there anything else I sense God is specifically speaking to me through the scriptures today? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *God, we start by saying thank you for the sacrifice of your son that made all of this possible. We are forever grateful that you chose us for more. That you didn't give up on us, that you found a way to cover everything we would ever need. Help us to see the cost of what it took. May we this week come together to praise you for all that you've done. Jew and gentile. Thank you for loving us first. Amen.*

DAY 38

Today is Wednesday, November 22 and it is day 38! We are in our third day of looking to scripture to find out more on “The Body of Christ”. Yesterday we focused on harmony within the body, that our joyous noise as one moves further than on an individual voice on its own.

Take a moment with me to quiet yourself. If we miss God today, we have really missed all of it. Our time has to start with him at the forefront. Let’s be still.

OPENING PRAYER: *You God are not like any other. The very fact that you came to a lowly place to be with us, it’s significant and we thank you. That act of becoming human came with a deep sense of understanding, we can trust that you get what we are going through because you lived it. What other God, the answer: none. Thank you Father, Amen.*

TODAY’S READING: Colossians 3:12-16

12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. **13** Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. **15** And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

16 Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. **17** And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

DAY 38

DEVOTIONAL: Have you ever been told you must do something? There are plenty of things we could reference, maybe at your job, in your marriage or even just laws of the road. Like stop signs, they mean you **MUST** stop, not maybe if you're feeling up to it. It's not a suggestion. For the safety of the road it is essential that people stop at stop signs.

The same is true for the body of Christ, there is no secret code. Colossians 3 say it plain as day what we need to do since we are these "holy people he [God] loves". It looks like tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Making allowances for each other's faults, and forgiving anyone who offends you. Guess what, the fault part is in there because we too will fail at this. This verse is not for someone else, it is for all of us.

Verse 16 talks about counseling each other with all the wisdom God gives. This is the secret sauce if you will, we need to help one another. Stop pointing the finger. On occasion you might be the teacher, other times you might be the student. It takes all of us working together for the betterment of the whole body.

Help us lord to work towards being holy people, not in our own strength and ways but through your wisdom and through those willing to share it with us. Together let's read Colossians once more noting if the Holy Spirit is speaking something to you personally.

REREAD: Colossians 3:12-16

REFLECTIONS: Take some time to reflect/take notes on these questions and be ready to share with your small group this week.

DAY 38

Which of the listed attributes do you struggle with most? Which do you find comes really easy? (ex. *tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness*) _____

Recall a time that you shared God's wisdom with someone. Recall a time that you were on the receiving end. _____

Please take a moment to be still and reflect on your time with the Lord today. Is there anything else I sense God is specifically speaking to me through the scriptures today? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *God, I appreciate where in your word you are clear. There is no miscommunication or deep dive study we have to undergo to find exactly what you are saying. Yet, we are human and everything is easier said than done. Help each of us to know where we are operating in deficit. May we forgive just like you have done for us. Help us to take feedback and to give it lovingly when needed. You're the very best, amen.*

DAY 39

Happy Thanksgiving, today is Thursday November 23rd, and you guessed it, we are still looking at “The Body of Christ”. In Colossians yesterday we read what it looks like to build each other up.

Let’s ask God to still our minds now as we prepare to hear what he has to say today.

OPENING PRAYER: *Father would you help us today to know what you’re calling us into. That your truth about us would speak louder than any other thoughts. Amen.*

TODAY’S READING: Ephesians 2:11-18

11 Don’t forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called “uncircumcised heathens” by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts.

12 In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. **13** But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ. **14** For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.

15 He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. **16** Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

DAY 39

17 He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. **18** Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

DEVOTIONAL: Memory is a really awesome tool we have been given. Although if any of you are like me, mom brain gets the best of my memory quite often. We are people that can easily forget stuff. That's why I live and die by my schedule on my calendar.

In today's reading are being urged to not forget where we were once. For some it's more recent and others it is almost another lifetime. Either way, we get comfortable and forget that we haven't always been who we are now. Once we no longer can relate with others, we lose our ability to empathize, relate to and understand one another. It gets really hard to see someone where they are at.

Approaching scripture can feel like a punch to the gut sometimes. I truly believe that we are reading these reminders not to shame us to change but to notice that when we walk through this life like God intended, there is a sweetness that is only achieved in his ways. We must not forget what God has done for us, otherwise we miss what it means to be one under Christ.

God we need your help to remember, shake us and move us to that place. We don't want to miss anything else you might have to say to us individually, let's re-read Ephesians together.

REREAD: Ephesians 2:11-18

REFLECTIONS: Take some time to reflect/take notes on these questions and be ready to share with your small group this week.

DAY 39

What is your God story? Share your testimony.

How do you recall things God has done? What would it look like to share more or write it down so you don't forget? _____

Please take a moment to be still and reflect on your time with the Lord today. Is there anything else I sense God is specifically speaking to me through the scriptures today? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *God, each one of us, your children, has a story. Thank you for saving us and yet would you help us to remember things we've forgotten. We recognize the blessings aren't countable, they outnumber even our best efforts of memory. But we want to give you praise for all of it. Remind us of your goodness and give us grace to see us as not other than those still on the journey of finding you. Encourage us to share. We thank you forever and ever. Amen.*

DAY 40

Today is Friday, November 24 and Day 40 is here. You may have thought this is it, but surprise! We have one more day tomorrow. What a treat that you get to hear from me once more! Yesterday it was our memory we were reminded to lean on to give us perspective, the call to not forget where we once were. All because we have been looking at this idea of “The Body of Christ”.

Let’s be still before God. We will dive into today’s verses soon enough.

OPENING PRAYER: *God, we want to be challenged today. We long to find out more about you today. It is a privilege to be in this place. We love you and are so excited to hear what you want to say. Amen.*

TODAY’S READING: Romans 12:3-16

3 Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don’t think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. **4** Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, **5** so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

6 In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. **7** If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. **8** If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

9 Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. **10** Love each other with genuine affection, and take

DAY 40

11 Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. **12** Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. **13** When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality. **14** Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. **15** Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. **16** Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

DEVOTIONAL: In this life, we belong to many things such as different families, groups, and even teams. But our passage phrases it like this, "we belong to each other", it didn't say we belong to the church like a membership. We all know Renewal is not formal enough for that! To belong is to have a home, a rightful place, and a place to fit in. What value it is to be that for each other. "We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other."

God made each of us special. Unique. One and only. Unrepeated. Unlike anyone else. Why? So that together we are a full picture of him. A full healthy, properly functioning body. God calls us to use the special thing about us to glorify him. To show others a new attribute of God. We get to experience Christ fully through people moving and working in their God given abilities.

We can't fake it. Don't miss that part. What good are we doing if we are pretending to love. It all becomes for nothing. The world will tell you, "Fake it 'til you make it" but our heavenly father calls each of us to a different standard. One that isn't afraid to be humble and say, "Yeah I don't know everything!" Acknowledging our deep need for others to fill in the gaps of our insufficiencies.

God thank you that your plan is sufficient, that you call

DAY 40

each of us to something unique. You're so good. Holy spirit would you speak to each of us one on one through this re-reading of Romans now.

REREAD: Romans 12:3-16

REFLECTIONS: Do you find it easy to identify what you are good at? Explain. _____

How might God be calling you to use your giftings for the betterment of the body? _____

Please take a moment to be still and reflect on your time with the Lord today. Is there anything else I sense God is specifically speaking to me through the scriptures today? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *Father, thank you that you don't have a ranking system. You love each of us and have gifted us for the greater good of the body. Each with a purpose from you. We ask for you to show us how to appreciate others well. Take away pride that might get in the way. Give others confidence in your given abilities to work and move in them. Thank you lord, we love you. Amen.*

DAY 41

Today is Saturday, November 25th and let's celebrate! It is our last day together on this six week journey seeking the Fullness of God. It seems fitting to leave us on the topic of "the Body of Christ".

Before we get into today's reading let's take a moment to quiet our minds before God and connect with our Heavenly Father with the frame of mind to be still and know He is God.

OPENING PRAYER: *Lord, we thank you for what it means to be together. Thank you for showing us what it means to walk with you. Would you help us to refocus today? That it would be more about what you are doing in us than us trying to figure it out on our own. We love you, amen.*

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 4:4-16

4 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. **2** Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. **3** Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. **4** For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. **5** There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.

7 However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ. **8** That is why the Scriptures say, "When he ascended to the heights, he led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to his people." **9** Notice that it says "he ascended." This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. **10** And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.

DAY 41

11 Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. **12** Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. **13** This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. **15** Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. **16** He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

DEVOTIONAL: What does it look like to make every effort to be united? Have we done that? And why is it so important? We have been called to ONE glorious hope for the future. Not many, but one. Our God is about unifying things, bringing it all back to himself. If we, the body of Christ, are not united we haze up the picture of Christ we are called to represent.

Each one of us is like a piece to the puzzle of who God is. To see the whole puzzle we need each one in its right place. Working together for the hope of what is to come.

At times, we might feel like we've learned all the lessons, we know all the things. It may be that we are comfortable and secure in who we are. Yet Christ calls us to grow, "growing in every way more and more like Christ". It is a contagious thing, when we never stop in our pursuit of learning to be more like Jesus.

DAY 41

If we can grasp that we are better together, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts of philosophy. I believe we will be more in line with what God is calling each of us into in this next season.

Father, we want to know more about you, about what you're calling us into, and how we can better glorify you. Let's re-read ephesians calling on the holy spirit to reveal anything else that needs to be highlighted to us.

REREAD: Ephesians 4:4-16

REFLECTIONS: Take some time to reflect/take notes on these questions

How do you begin to unify something? What makes it easy? How might it feel impossible? _____

What ways is God calling you to grow in this season? How might he be calling you to help someone else grow? _____

DAY 41

Please take a moment to be still and reflect on your time with the Lord today. Is there anything else I sense God is specifically speaking to me through the scriptures today? _____

CLOSING PRAYER: *God, thank you for this time. These last 40+ days have been so special. Help us to remember all the things you've spoken over us. Each of us has a place, a perfectly unique space in your body. Give us wisdom on where you are calling us in to and maybe out of. We need you if any of this is going to work. You first. Father, we love you and are so grateful to have been first loved by you. To know you is unlike anything else. We want to share it, help us. Amen.*