

God calls His people to pray. We know this. We understand this. But, do we really pray? Passionately. Fervently. Hopefully. David Platt has said, “The primary purpose in prayer is not to get something, but to know someone.” Prayer begins with an earnest desire to pursue God. As a church, we must pursue the Father.

These thirty days, October 15-November 13, I am calling God’s people at Thomasville First Baptist Church to fervently pursue the Lord together. We will all utilize the same devotions. Through prayer, God not only hears us, but desires to speak to us. We must all set aside a time each day to spend time with the Lord.

“To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing”

-Martin Luther

This guide is adapted from a 40 Days of Prayer publication from the Summit Church in Raleigh, N.C. – they have graciously allowed us to borrow their devotions to use for this guide. Each day the guide will encourage you to read, reflect, and pray Scripture back to God. Each devotion is divided into three sections: Scripture, a meditation from the Scripture, and an instruction to pray the Scripture back to God.

If you are not in the daily habit of spending time with the Lord, I pray this guide will help you develop this important spiritual discipline. If you already spend daily time with the Lord, I pray this will encourage and strengthen your faith.

“One of the greatest attacks of the enemy is to make you busy, to make you hurried, to make you noisy, to make you distracted, to fill the people of God and the church of God with so much noise and activity that there is no room for prayer. There is no room for being alone with god. There is no room for silence. There is no room for meditation”.

-Paul Washer

Also, as a means of seeking the Lord we are setting aside two days to fast: Monday, October 30 and Monday, November 13. This will be a 24 hour fast. For example, you would skip two meals, so you would eat Sunday dinner and not eat again until Monday dinner. Fasting is about breaking the routines that define us. John Piper writes, “The people of God are often called to go without the ordinary means of life. Fasting is a brief, voluntary experience of this deprivation. When we experience this willingly, the Lord reveals what is

in our hearts.” If for medical reasons you are unable to fast from food, consider fasting from social media, television, or something else.

I believe God will use these thirty days to draw us as a church to Him. Praise God for what He is doing in our midst!

Grace and Peace,



PASTOR PAUL

Day 1

READ

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. - Ephesians 2:1-9

REFLECT

Paul uses some strong language here to make an important point. From the opening verse, it's not like we were merely wandering or drowning or dying without Christ. We were dead. Let that sink in for a moment. We were dead. We were lifeless, decaying corpses with absolutely nothing to offer. All of us were mutinous, hedonistic pagans, deserving nothing more than God's eternal wrath. What would your life look like if that were the end of the story? I'll tell you that it wouldn't look like much, because you would be dead. But then, we read, 'But God, being rich in mercy' intervened because He loves us so much. After this verse notice who is doing all the work. God made us alive with Christ; God raised us up with Him; God seated us with Him in the heavenly places. Our entire salvation is initiated, accomplished and sealed by God in Jesus. How could we ever boast? The only thing we bring to the equation is our death.

PRAY

As you pray today, praise God that He intervened in your life and did all the work for you to pass from death to life. Thank Him because you don't have to earn your way to Him. He earned your way for you through Christ.

Day 2

READ

And the disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." - Mark 10:24-27

REFLECT

If you have time, read Mark 10:13-31 for the full context. In this passage, Mark gives us a single picture of who God is and who we are. As you read, allow your emotions to rise (as Jesus welcomes the children), fall (as the young man walks away), and fear (as you wonder the same things as the disciples). Then allow yourself to be struck, maybe even insulted, by how Jesus addresses His disciples, "Children (v. 24)." These grown men, who left their successful businesses to follow Jesus, were called "Children" when they wanted to know if God would reward, or at least honor, their sacrifices. Jesus calls them "children" not to insult them or put them in their place, but to remind them of the words He spoke in verse 15 - God cares for them as a Father cares for his children, not as an employer cares for his employees. In this relationship sacrifice means something entirely different. Rewards are not compensation for performance, but the celebration of becoming more like the Father.

PRAY

Pray that God would help you see your life in the way Jesus was teaching His disciples. Ask Him to help you grow in your spiritual maturity.

Day 3

READ

... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. - Romans 3:23-26

REFLECT

The truth is that all of us are guilty: It is impossible for us to please God because of the sin we commit every single day. Our sins, even those we perceive as small, are offensive to His utterly Holy nature. But the unbelievable good news of the gospel is this: God has chosen in His great mercy to sacrifice His Son Christ Jesus as propitiation (or payment) for our sins. This gift of grace justifies us before God, and is only received by faith. Because of the depth of your need, nothing about who you are or what you have done can save you... no good works or remarkable talents, no merit of your own. In His infinite, sovereign grace, God has provided salvation through the death of His Son. You do not possess this salvation because you deserved or earned it. It is yours only because of His love. Therefore, being made alive now in His love, you can do nothing to change the reality of your standing in Christ.

PRAY

This reality should provoke a response: one characterized by grateful, humble worship. Recognize before Him that you owe Him everything, that you are nothing without His grace, and that He is your only Savior. Thank Him for the grace He showed to you in bringing you back from the dead, ascribe to Him the worship due to His name for this great work, and take joy in the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

Day 4

READ

*For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong[...] so that no man may boast before God.
-1 Corinthians 1:26-29*

REFLECT

Our culture propels us to be ambitious, independent, and self-reliant while God chooses those who will abandon self in order for Him to be glorified. His plans for us are beyond our imagination, but often counter-intuitive to our self-driven minds. In a culture that tells us to “take care of number one,” God promises that the “first shall be last.” When we honestly examine our motives for “doing things for God” we might find that He may not be using us because the motivation of our heart is our own glory and not His. While He said, “store up treasures in heaven” many of us have opted out and gone ahead and taken full reward for everything here on earth. We crave recognition. We long for appreciation. God asks that we relinquish our craving for approval of men. He wants us to recognize that He chose us and “nothing we can do will make Him love me more.”

PRAY

Today, pray that God would strip away your pride, and make you more concerned about HIS kingdom than yours. Ask Him to replace the desires of your heart with the desires of His heart, and to keep you from the lie that you need to work to achieve His approval.

Day 5

READ

... and I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say To Not My People, "You are my people;" and he shall say, "You are my God." - Hosea 2:23b

REFLECT

This verse is taken from the story of a man named Hosea who was told by the Lord to marry a harlot as a picture of God's own relationship to His people. These people ran after other gods and played the harlot just as we do. Yet, He loves us enough to come after us and give mercy where there should be no mercy and claim us as His own.

Are you striving? Have you messed up? Do you think you have to work to be loved? Remember your name was once No Mercy but it has been changed to Mercy, and it was once said of you, 'You are not my people,' but now because of the everlasting love of Christ, there is mercy and belonging.

There is nothing, nothing, nothing, that you can do or have done to separate you from the love that is in Christ Jesus. So rest beloved.

PRAY

As you pray, remember who you were and thank God for who you are now in Christ. By faith, declare your identity in Christ. It is the kindness of the Lord that leads us to repentance.

Day 6

READ

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. - Psalm 13:5

REFLECT

Some seasons of our lives are full of never ending trials and sorrow. Rather than using our circumstances to shape our thoughts of God's love, we are to trust in God's promises and rejoice in His salvation. It is a joyful thing to go from the depths of uncertainty to the heights of assurance in His unfailing love. In faith, we draw near to God because His love never fails. We, like the writer of Psalm 13, must cry out to the Lord in our anxiety and distress.

Have you ever asked the Lord, "How long?" Do you express the fullness of your soul to your Maker? Do you ever fear that He has forgotten you or despair that He has hid His face from you? In the midst of great pain, we are all prone to question Christ's love for us.

PRAY

Reflect for a moment on what or whom you trust in during the trials and heartaches of life. If the answer is not Christ, then take a moment to repent of putting your trust in the wrong things.

Rejoice in Him. Spend time thanking God for His salvation through Christ. Thank Him for His ultimate expression of love on the cross by which He now sees the righteousness of Christ instead of your sins.

Day 7

READ

Woe to them, for they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, for they rebelled against me! I want to redeem them, but they speak lies against me! - Hosea 7:13

REFLECT

When we refuse to follow God's commands, the consequences are tough. But did you know our refusal to obey God's commands is tough on God too? What does God feel when we do the wrong thing? Now, imagine how He feels when we consistently choose to do the wrong thing. When we disobey God's commands (for whatever reason), we sin, and God is grieved.

This verse from the book of Hosea is part of an extended cry of pain from God: "Woe!"

Why is God grieved? God is grieved because of His great love for us. His desire is redemption to right the things that are wrong with this world, to right our relationship with Him, and to right our relationships with others. God says, "I want to redeem..." And He did it through His Son Jesus! Through His great mercy and love. God sent His Son to live, to die, and to rise again! God did redeem us through His Son Jesus!

PRAY

Today, think about God's great love for you. Consider that although rebellious and willful, God loves you. Allow the love of God to overwhelm you. Confess to the Lord your sin. Thank God for His love, for His Son, the Savior.

Day 8

READ

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor His anger forever; He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on His children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him; for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust. - Psalm 103:8-14

REFLECT

A quiet morning at our home was interrupted by a loud and desperate scream coming from the back yard, where our two year old was playing. Instinctively, his mother raced out the door and saw him hanging on to a monkey bar nearly ten feet off the ground. He was in danger and he knew it. He had gotten himself into this predicament but there was no way he could hang on.

Fortunately, his mother was able to rescue him. This is how God has described His response to us - "as a father has compassion on his children." God sent a Savior because He knows you; the depth of your sin and your utter inability to save yourself. Compassion reigns.

PRAY

As you pray today, confess (agree with God about) your sin. Pray Psalm 103:8-14 and recall the grace of God that comes to you because God knows you need a Savior. Rejoice in His salvation.

Day 9

READ

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

- Matthew 6:25-33

REFLECT

Worrying is something that I have struggled with all my life. I used to worry about making the varsity team; getting good grades; college acceptance letters, job offers, girlfriends, and wedding plans. Now I worry about the economy, politics, children, retirement, and ministry. It is clear from this passage that worrying is unfruitful and it robs us of our joy, yet I still find myself stressing out about things that are completely insignificant, especially in light of eternity. But, in the moment, those worries do not seem insignificant at all. In the heat of the moment, they seem overwhelmingly large.

When we worry about our finite problems and circumstances, we cannot help but lose sight of the infinite, almighty God who loves us and has promised never to leave us or forsake us. That is why Jesus told us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

PRAY

Today praise God that He is better than anything life can give or death can take away, and rest in the fact that He is all you need. And as you pray, lift your burdens and concerns up to God. Ask Him to teach you how to trust Him for your joy through the reading of scripture and through the encouragement from others.

Day 10

READ

O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in God. Selah But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the LORD, and He answered me from His holy hill. Selah I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me. I will not be afraid of many thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around. Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people! Selah - Psalm 3 :1-8

REFLECT

For the back story on this Psalm you can read 2 Samuel 13-17. In short David had been a great king but terrible father. His family was in disarray, and he is now running for his life from his usurping son Absalom. Imagine that, as David writes this Psalm, he is waking from sleep after hiding through the night in a cave and praying through his circumstances. David rehearses what people must be saying about him. David is reminded of God's protection and is surprised by God's mercy to hear his prayers after his failings. David recognizes that even the sleep that he just received is a gift from God - usually people don't sleep well when they're on the run for their lives. As David realizes God's care and provision even in these dark times, his perspective changes on his circumstances. David begins to rest in, and even celebrate that God is all he needs for everlasting joy.

PRAY

Use David's journey and prayer as a template (the Psalms are meant to give us words to speak to God) to express those areas of insecurity or failure that cause you to doubt whether God is all you need for everlasting joy. Use Psalm 3 to voice your prayer to God today.

Day 11

READ

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in Him." - Lamentations 3:21-24

REFLECT

Read all of Lamentations 3. The author of this book is clearly in distress, experiencing the hopelessness and desperation that the storms of life can often bring. He cries out to God with sincerity in the midst of his brokenness, honestly expressing his darkest emotions and fears to the Lord. When your life looks like this, do your prayers reflect it? Are you a person who prays with the honesty of Lamentations 3?

Yet the author knows that in the midst of horrific tragedy or adversity, the truths about God never change. He is eternal. He is full of unending steadfast love and mercy. He is faithful. He is enough. When circumstances change, God does not. Despite feeling crushed, the author of Lamentations trusts that God is ultimately his only need and the only One able to fill it. We can take great encouragement from this: Remembering and believing in the attributes of God causes us to have hope.

PRAY

As you pray today, openly express your thoughts and emotions to God. He promises to draw near to you as you draw near to Him (James 4:8). Then, place your hope in the things unseen, the eternal promises and attributes of God, which never change. Truly, He is good to those who seek Him (see verse 25 and Hebrews 11:6). Believe that the Lord is your portion, and take hope.

Day 12

READ

If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-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 14:15-17

REFLECT

In His final hours when Jesus was explaining the coming of the Holy Spirit to His disciples, He said, "He is now with you and will be in you...I will come to you." It is an assurance we possess but too often don't acknowledge the actual Spirit of Christ within us. Christ in us is THE life-changing force. We can do nothing without the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit lives in each believer acting as Helper and Comforter. This news ought to fill us with great hope and joy! Our "life is but a vapor" (James 4:14) but our joy is eternal and can never be measured by earthly standards.

PRAY

Ask Jesus to make you completely reliant on the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to teach you that there is nothing that you can do in your own power, but the power of the Holy Spirit working in you is unlimited. Ask the Holy Spirit to work mightily through you, to sustain you, and to be your joy!

Day 13

READ

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete. - 1 John 1:1-4

REFLECT

I have found that the idol of approval is never satisfied. I try, oh so hard, to do everything I can to make myself likeable in one circle of friends, only to find that I've alienated myself in another. I seek to fit in by keeping up with the latest trends, but once I'm out of sync, I'm too far behind to catch up again. The idol of approval whispers, "You'll never be good enough. You should've tried harder." It taunts, "If only you looked like her or performed like him." It's never enough.

In 1 John 1:1-4, the writer is brimming with exuberant joy as he seeks to describe what it was like to see and hear and touch the Savior. He reminds us that the Word of Life, manifested to us in Jesus, is right here for us to enjoy as well. What an amazing truth! God is with us, present in us, all of the time. Our relationship with Him is absolutely secure. We don't have to figure out what makes Him happy; we don't have to perform in order to appease Him. Jesus paid the debt for us and we can rest in His perfect and complete love. John wrote these things "to make our joy complete."

PRAY

Pray that you would be convinced that Jesus is enough, that God approves of you because of what Christ has done. And pray that His approval would bring you great joy today.

Day 14

READ

Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.
- Psalm 90:14

REFLECT

Satisfy me! This is the cry of all humanity. Yet most of us are discontent and troubled. Here, on behalf of the Israelites who have been condemned to wander in the desert for 40 years, Moses pleads with God for spiritual fulfillment. He knows that God's mercy and presence, even in the midst of their suffering, will not just satisfy them but fill them with joy and gladness! There is a plea in this passage for God to come to them early in the "day" of their fleeting life that they may be able to joyfully sing for the remainder of their lives. When the Lord refreshes us with His presence, we are satisfied in a manner that can be taken away by no man. Take a moment and reflect on where you search for satisfaction? To whom do you plead for fulfillment of your wishes, expectations, or needs?

PRAY

Today, repent for finding your satisfaction in anything other than the love of God. Praise Jesus for His constant and complete love. He not only satisfied the debt of our sin, but He also satisfies the emptiness of our hearts. Ask Him to satisfy you early in your day with His perfect love. Pray that in all situations you will remember the love of Christ.

Day 15

READ

*Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
- Psalm 139:7-8*

REFLECT

These verses sound almost scary. It's almost as if God is looming over us, inspecting our every step, and making sure we're not out of line. It's like He has a clipboard checking off all the things we do right, but also marking all the things we do wrong. How terrifying!! But that is not the focus of this prayer.

The psalmist is not scared of God. He is overjoyed by the presence of the Lord. The pervasive presence of God is a comfort and a joy.

A few verses later, the poet describes God as the guide and the source of strength in the storms of life. God's presence is the foundation for joy in life. Nothing else will satisfy. Nothing else will give us eternal joy that will spring up from the depth of our hearts. Only God can provide true joy that lasts.

PRAY

Go back, read and pray over Psalm 139 in its entirety. In His presence, discover real and everlasting joy.

Day 16

READ

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." - Matthew 18:23-35

REFLECT

When Jesus walked the earth a talent was the equivalent to roughly 20 years wages and a denarius was about one day's worth of wages. So in this story, the man who was forgiven of his \$200,000 debt goes ballistic on a guy who merely owes him a few bucks. It is easy to see the hypocrisy in this story. But it is more difficult to see the hypocrisy in our own lives.

Just in case this isn't clear, the man who was forgiven of the infinite debt represents us. Our debt (our sin) was infinitely horrible because it was opposed to an infinitely holy God. There is no way we could have repaid this debt on our own. Remember, we were still sinners when Christ died for us. How, when we have been forgiven of so much, could we not forgive those who sin against us?

PRAY

Today ask God to remind you of the severity of your sin against Him. As you are mindful of this debt, thank Him for the forgiveness that was brought to you through Christ. Pray for opportunities to forgive and restore others to Christ today.

Day 17

READ

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. - Psalm 51:10-13

REFLECT

Too often when we read the Bible, we miss the fact that it records the life of real people, in real circumstances, who most often did not know they were living Scripture. Chances are this was the case for David as he wrote out his repentance to God for his sin with Bathsheba. David was talking to God, not knowingly writing one of the world's most famous poems. Notice what he says in verse 13 - [paraphrased and embellished] "I, the High King of Israel, will share how God's grace has transformed my huge mess of a life. I will share with everyone, even those who are my 'subjects,' even those who have sinned against Your law, and should only enter my courts for judgment. I will lay down my position as 'king' for the greater position of being 'God's messenger of grace' so that others may know You like I have known you, God."

Those words are even more striking when they are spoken by a supreme ruler of a nation who reigns over that nation's most prosperous era to date. David, a man after God's own heart, penned those words under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, because they represent the fruit of all genuine repentance.

PRAY

Pray that God would allow you to be quick at confessing sin and eager to share with others what God has done in your life. Thank God that even though you have failed Him, He has redeemed you for His glory.

Day 18

READ

We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. -1 John 4:19-21

REFLECT

The love we have been shown in Christ is transformative; it calls us to a higher standard. Because Christ loved sacrificially, we must love sacrificially. Because Christ loved without condition, we should love without condition. Because Christ poured Himself out for us, we should pour ourselves out for others. His love should flow out of us without restraint, until it is undeniable that we belong to Him. We are His disciples, and His love, both received by us and poured through us, will mark us as His ambassadors to a world in need of love.

PRAY

As you pray today, begin by thanking God for His astounding, unending, perfect love. Then, with all confidence, ask God for the grace to let His love flow out of you. Ask for the ability to model His forgiveness, mercy, and grace to everyone in your sphere of influence. Ask Him to transform your heart into one that eagerly pours out for others and shows the face of Christ to a broken and dying world. In prayer, forgive any brother or sister who has hurt you with the forgiveness of Jesus, and commit to reconciling those relationships. Ask God to use you as a force for rebuilding His kingdom on earth, and commit to striving for that in your neighborhood, city, school, and the world.

Day 19

PRAY

The life I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave His life for me. I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. - Galatians 2:20

REFLECT

In my enthusiasm to “be like Christ” I memorized a portion of Galatians 2:20. For a year, I recited it when my eyes opened in the morning, randomly throughout my day and as I climbed into bed at night. Progress to be Christ-like seemed slow but I was determined. Then one morning in my quiet-time reading through Galatians, I hit the verse that was always on my lips. To my shock, I had not completely memorized the verse! I had left out what was most important. I had been saturating my life with the outcome I desired, “no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me” but consciously or unconsciously, I had left out the key, the “how” by which this happens. The phrase I never memorized was, “I have been crucified with Christ.” How typical! I thought I could make things happen.

Years later, I still recite that verse often-but with a new gravity. Paul was presenting the core message - to abandon self. To give up, not to get. I earnestly desire to “be to others” a reflection of Christ, but He will not be visible until I have surrendered the last remnants of myself.

PRAY

Ask God to cause you to surrender every piece of your heart to Him. Ask Him to show you what it means to incarnate Him to a world that is dying without Christ. Ask Him to work mightily through you to draw people to Himself!

Day 20

READ

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.
- 1 John 2:2

REFLECT

The blood of Christ paid the penalty for our sin. We've been forgiven, set free from slavery to sin. With this freedom comes responsibility to extend His grace to others. It's hard to forgive, isn't it? Sometimes it feels so good to hold a grudge or to withhold forgiveness – especially if the offending party doesn't deserve to be forgiven. I've been there, I know.

It helps me to forgive when I remember that I'm a sinner, saved by grace. I'm reminded that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. He calls us to walk in the light, and reminds us that when we do sin (which we will), He's there to forgive us. God has forgiven us, even though we did nothing to deserve it. In the same way, let's pray we can be a living, breathing picture of the gospel by forgiving those who sin against us, even when they don't deserve it.

PRAY

Pray that God would open your eyes to those around you who need to hear from you the good news of Christ's offer of forgiveness. Pray that you will act in a way that demonstrates that grace to them.

Day 21

READ

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

- John 13:34, 35

REFLECT

These are the words of Jesus during a private meeting with His disciples prior to His crucifixion on the cross. In the same meeting, before proclaiming these words, Jesus had completed the task of a domestic slave by washing His disciples' feet. No one has the rank or status of Jesus, yet He humbled himself to the position of a slave and then endured the punishment deserving of a criminal through His death on the cross! In His farewell speech to His closest friends, He is fully aware of their upcoming opposition and persecution.

In our world, people are viewed as a commodity rather than a person to serve. Our Savior has commanded that we show the world His love through serving others. Christ's example shows us that love is not something we must receive from others before we are able to give it. Remember that He loves us before we love Him.

PRAY

Today, rejoice in Christ's love for you. Pray for the humility to love others as He has loved you. Ask Him for opportunities to express the self-sacrificial love of Christ and pray that both Thomasville First Baptist and all Christian churches would be unified and reflective of Christ's love for us.

Day 22

READ

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. - Colossians 3:12-14

REFLECT

These verses describe perfectly how God has dealt with us. In humility, Jesus came to show us the compassion and kindness of God. In love, God has forgiven all our sin. And because of that, we can respond to others with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness. But that is often not our reflexive response to people.

Who frustrates you the most? Who do you know that you secretly hope gets what they deserve? Who (or what group of people) do you look at and think their problems are all their own fault? Who have you given up on? Who have you been unable to forgive?

PRAY

Today, call out to God for these people. Ask God to fill you with love and compassion for each person. And pray that He would use you to demonstrate His compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness to them.

Day 23

READ

Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at His feet, saying to Him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in His spirit and greatly troubled. And He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to Him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept. So the Jews said, 'See how He loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not He who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?' Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to Him, 'Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.' When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out.' The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.' - John 11:32-44

REFLECT

It's amazing to me that Jesus knew exactly how this story would end. He knew before Lazarus came out of the tomb that God would raise him from the dead. He knew that all He had to do was speak, and Lazarus would spring to life, even though his body had been rotting for four days. In the midst of this confidence He also empathized with Mary and Martha's pain. He felt their sadness so much so that He Himself wept violently. He did not gloss over their pain or provide for them some trite quip like, 'everything happens for a reason...' No, He wept with them. He endured pain with them. Then, when the time was right, He spoke. And when Jesus speaks, new life arises. When Jesus speaks, those who are bound are set free.

PRAY

Today, pray with complete confidence that God is able to raise condemned souls to life. Intercede on behalf of a friend, believing in God's promises that healing, restoration, and life will come through the power of Christ.

Day 24

READ

In that day, you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. - John 16:23-24

REFLECT

Church, how boldly do we believe God can do the impossible? If we truly measure His compassion in our lives today by the cross and measure His power in us by the reality of the resurrection, this should cause us to be bold in prayer and in faith. We can boldly believe because God, in His great compassion, has already overcome sin and death on our behalf. Furthermore, we have the power of the risen Christ dwelling inside us, and this gives us the confidence to believe on behalf of a world who does not yet know Him.

PRAY

In your prayers today, first humbly acknowledge God's sovereign will and plan; He is in control of all things, and He is to be trusted in all things. Then, believing that He is God, who constantly works for His glory and our good, pray boldly for those areas in your life that need a miracle: addictions, poor health, lost family and friends, financial ruin, marital problems. Boldly pray and believe that God cares more about these circumstances than you ever could and that He is waiting to absolutely pour His compassion and grace and healing over them. Stand in faith that God can use the same power He used to raise Christ from the dead to redeem even the darkest circumstance in your life. As an adopted child of the King, you can boldly approach His throne of grace. Ask in Christ's name (remembering His character and trusting His desires for you) and you will receive. Wait expectantly for answered prayer, especially in forms you don't expect. Be richly blessed!

Day 25

READ

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After He said this, He showed them His hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. - Mathew 20:19-20

REFLECT

The cross is good news for Christians, not just because Jesus died - but because He rose again! In that moment everything changed. Man's relationship with God was restored! It returned to the relationship God had originally intended. We've become "the dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit" (Eph 2:22). He has "poured out His Spirit" (Prov 1:23) as He promised "without limit" (John 3:34).

What is this new relationship with God that Christ has provided for us? We have not just been inspired; we are indwelt with the Spirit of the Living God. We are the new tabernacle - God's dwelling place on earth. Oh, that we would never forget the power of the cross and the transformation it brought to mankind.

PRAY

Thank Jesus for His sacrifice on your behalf! Ask Him to cause you to believe that He really is as powerful, as loving, and as willing to save as He says He is. Ask Him to cause you to live your life with an audacious faith that gives God chances to show His power.

Day 26

READ

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though He die, yet shall He live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" - John 11:25-26

REFLECT

Context is everything. Mary and Martha sent word to the Lord that their brother was dying. The brother they loved and more importantly the one they believed Jesus loved. They thought He would come immediately... but He waited two days.

Have you ever waited for the compassion of the Lord and wondered where He was? Oh friend, He is never late. Our Savior shows up to display His wondrous power and glory even at our tombs. Lazarus came out of the grave by the power of His word, but before He did, Jesus asked Martha, "Do you believe?"

Jesus has said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Remember who He is and measure this life through the lens of eternity, knowing there is no grave that He is not more powerful than, no death He cannot remove the sting from and no grief that He has not entered into. Oh, your Savior is risen and alive!

PRAY

So as you pray, come to Him and ask boldly, knowing that you are a beloved child of God. Wait on Him patiently, trusting in His sovereign timing and see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, knowing He will resurrect all good things in the end.

Day 27

READ

I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

- Philippians 3:10, 11

REFLECT

Christ is moved with compassion toward us. The culmination of this deep emotion is witnessed through the offering of His life for ours on the cross. Stop for a moment and allow yourself to ponder His tenderness toward you. Through His suffering, He has alleviated the emptiness of our daily sufferings. Do you want to know Christ, fellowship with Him in His sufferings, and become like Him? Often, as Christians, we anticipate the peace of Christ yet we are surprised by distress! Our sufferings or losses in this world set us apart, burn away our sin and self-reliance, and transform us into capable vessels for His glory.

Our life is eternal. When God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, we were given victory over sin and death. We will receive the blessings of eternal life that He has promised! This should fill our lives with hope and joy!

PRAY

Do you truly desire to know Christ and be like Him? Pray today that the compassion of Christ will open your heart to realize all the good things of this world are empty and void compared to gaining something far more precious and powerful - Christ. Ask God to use the suffering in your life to draw others to Himself. Pray specifically for the salvation of lost co-workers, friends, and family.

Day 28

READ

"Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"
- Matthew 7:9-11

REFLECT

My two year old daughter has often asked me if she could eat something that would be harmful to her. For some reason, at the time, it seemed like a delightful idea to her. For example, she asked me recently if she could eat a slug that she found on the sidewalk. I said, "No." She began pitching a fit. So I changed my mind and said, "Aww, go ahead baby. Eat it. You'll be fine." Just kidding! I didn't do that. I said "No" again, and asked her little simple minded, upset, sinful self to TRUST ME. I have asked God for many slugs, and He has been so faithful to always say "No."

PRAY

God is powerful enough to give you anything and everything, but loving enough not to. The cross and the resurrection forever tell us that He is compassionate and He is strong. Trust that today. As you pray for specific requests, trust that Your Father hears each one of them, is strong enough to answer them, and is loving enough to answer them PROPERLY. Make your request and don't pitch a fit. He loves you.

Day 29

READ

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. - 1 John 3:1

REFLECT

Family life is a beautiful thing when all is working properly. But too often in our world, families are in a place of hurt and pain rather than healing and support. We are orphans without hope in a hurting world. By sending Christ Jesus into the world, God brought us into a family that transcends all other families. His family is not like ours. In Christ we call God "Father." In Christ we call other believers who are of different genders, ethnicities, nationalities, and languages "brother" and "sister." In God's family we find the forgiveness and compassion that we often find missing in our own homes. Notice John's excitement. He can't hold it in: God's great love, the cross, and the resurrection enable us to be called "God's children"...and THAT IS WHAT WE ARE!!

We were orphans without a home. In Christ's cross, we found forgiveness. In Christ's resurrection, we found the love, support, and the power to live. Ultimately, we found a family.

PRAY

Today, thank God for His compassion. Pray for those you know and some you do not know who have yet to experience His love. Also, pray for widows and orphans today, that God would place them in families. Pray for the abused and neglected, that God would use the you to care for them.

Day 30

READ

He who did not spare His Own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? - Romans 8:32

REFLECT

I love the logic of this verse. It flies in the face of how I think so many times and it exposes my failure to really grasp the gospel. Think about this, God did not spare His Own Son. He did not withhold that which was most precious to Him. He offered Jesus up to be crucified in my place. And in that sacrifice my outrageous debt was paid in full. Why on earth would He then withhold anything from me? Not only did He give Jesus up for me but He also raised Him from the dead for me. His resurrection brings me life. So, why would I think that God would refuse to exercise His power on my behalf in any other area? God has already demonstrated His compassion for us in the cross of Jesus and He has put on display His great power in the resurrection.

PRAY

Today, you can pray boldly. If God says “no,” it isn’t because of a deficit of love or a lack of power, it must be because He has a better plan. So ask whatever is on your heart, for yourself and for others. Ask for great things and ask with confidence in His love and His power.