



Let's Go!



September 2026

21 Days of Prayer & Fasting

To Know God and Make Him Known

Strategic Prayer points for 2026

- Thank God for the blessing and protection that He has promised to you and your family throughout the remainder of 2026
- Thank God for His goodness and provision over HCC during this year
- Pray for your family by name and their situations
- Pray and repent for the sins of our nation
- Pray for our teachers and students as they navigate the school year
- Pray for our Police Officers and First Responders
- Pray for the Pastors and teachers here at HCC *
- Pray for the leadership of HCC – our Board *
- Pray for the Children's ministries of HCC that we would reach and attract more families
- Pray for the Youth ministries of HCC, that we would continue to have greater impact on the youth of Jupiter
- Pray for our Home and Foreign missionaries *
- Pray for Marriages and Families of HCC
- Pray for our elected officials and judges, national, statewide and local
- Pray for the Nation of Israel
- Pray for a mighty revival in our church and in our region and that we would be effective and making true disciples of Jesus
- Pray for the vision and the mission of our church – To Know God and Make Him Known – To Connect – Grow – Equip – Serve and Go
- Pray that we would continue to see mighty breakthroughs as people are healed, delivered and set free
- Take time to Pray in the Holy Spirit

* HCC Pastors and Teachers

- Pastor Marvin and Dawn Nemitz
- Pastor Kevin and Janine Murray
- Pastor Madie Wubker
- Kathy Monti

* HCC Board Members

- Greg & Dale Key
- Nelson & Diana Colon
- Andy & Kammi Hooper
- Buddy & Cheri McKenney
- Jim & Mona Dowda

* HCC Supported Missions

- Doug & Susan Sayers—Latin America
- Kevin & Sandy Barner—Estonia
- Tom & Phyllis Benigas—Belgium
- Nathan & Brooke Kleindl—South Pacific
- Joe Lortie—US—Chi-Alpha
- Rock of Israel—Jewish Ministries
- Al Force—Youth Missions—Copenhagen, Denmark
- Keith Turcotte—US—Motorcycle Ministries
- Hope International—Kurt Holthus
- Prayer Stations—Nick & Rozanne Savoca
- First Care Family Resources

Let's Go is a 21-day devotional intended to encourage and inspire you to follow Jesus' Great Commission to "go everywhere in the world, and tell the good news to everyone" (Mark 16:15).

When we think about "going," it's easy to immediately start thinking about packing up everything we own and heading out to a foreign country to live as a missionary. And while that is *part* of it, that's not *all* of it.

Going is simply reaching beyond ourselves—stepping out in faith as God leads. It's about stepping out and taking our faith beyond the four walls of our church buildings and homes. It's about sharing the message of Jesus' good news in our neighborhoods, our workplaces, our schools, our cities, our nation and around the world. It's about obeying God's call and partnering with Him to redeem our culture—our world—from darkness and sin.

Over the next 21 days, you'll read stories of men and women who obeyed Jesus' call to go. You'll see how God used their willingness to go to transform lives around the world. For some, it was as simple as giving a hug. For others, it involved leaving their family, friends and home to minister in another nation. The single common thread throughout all of these true stories about real people is that each person heard God, believed Him and obeyed His call to step out and go. Our prayer is that through these stories you will be inspired, challenged and, ultimately, motivated to go.

Before you begin each day, we encourage you to ask the Lord to let your spiritual eyes and ears be open to whatever He wants to say to you and show you. Ask Him to break your heart for the things that break His. And then, be willing to trust Him, step out and go.

Ready? Set? Let's Go!

Day 1. How to Reach People Who Aren't like You with the Love of Jesus

"The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." –1 Samuel 16:7

No Enemies in Flesh and Blood

What do you do when you're trying *not* to surround yourself with like-minded believers?

We've all heard how important it is to surround yourself with people who encourage you, challenge you, and sharpen you in your faith—and this is so important! But we find ourselves facing a problem when we *only* surround ourselves with these kinds of people. How can we ever introduce someone to the saving grace of Jesus if everyone around us already knows Him?

A while ago, pastor and preacher Joakim Lundqvist decided to get creative in his efforts to meet people who might not know Jesus: he books a new hairdresser every time he needs a haircut. It's a risky move—most of us hang on tight when we find a good hair stylist—but he decided a good conversation about Jesus is worth a half-decent haircut now and then. Hair grows back, after all.

Recently, he went to another new hairdresser in town—a girl in her mid-twenties *completely* covered in tattoos. He decided to strike up a conversation.

"So," he said. "Where do you go to get a decent tattoo around here?"

She talked for 15 minutes about tattoos before she put her hand over her chest, signaling to some ink mostly hidden beneath her shirt. "But I'm going to remove the one I have here," she said. "Or I'll just cover it with a big, black brushstroke."

"What's the tattoo?" Joakim asked.

"It's the face of the devil," she replied. "I did it when I was 18, but I'm not into that anymore."

Love or Judgment?

He breathed a silent prayer. "Would you mind if I ask you why you were into it when you were 18?"

Tears began to flow as she shared her story growing up around Christians who were a hundred times quicker to judge and point fingers than to listen and love. It left her heartbroken, sad, and angry. In her pain, she decided to express her disgust at them, so she tattooed their main nemesis' face across her chest.

When she realized the man sitting in her hairdresser chair was a pastor, she grew quiet. Joakim broke the silence in a way that surprised her. He asked her for forgiveness on behalf of *all* Christians—for any moment they had not lived as they taught and not loved as Jesus loved. The conversation opened again but this time it was deeper—and more broken.

Joakim began to tell her about the One who doesn't need to cover our trauma with ink but instead washes it away and makes all things new. He invited her to go to church because there she would find broken people just like her who needed God's healing touch.

An Invitation

As his appointment was ending, she told him she would go to church that weekend.

But afterward, Joakim had a thought: *How easy it would have been for me to be just like all those Christians she had known and judged my tattooed hairdresser based on her appearance—especially the devil tattoo? And if I had, our conversation would have never become reality.*

There are no enemies, only people who need Jesus. May we never forget that.

What does this mean for me?

The Bible often reminds us how important it is to surround ourselves with iron-sharpening-iron people (Proverbs 27:17), but we also find direct instructions to go into all the world and preach the good news of the gospel (Mark 16:15)! Take a moment to honestly assess the people in your life—can you think of anyone who doesn't know the life-changing love of Jesus? If you can, be intentional to reach out to them this week and show them love in action! If you can't, then prayerfully consider what “going into all the world” might look like for you to meet someone new and share Jesus' love. Perhaps it's time to find a new hairdresser.

Day 2. How a Couple Fights Food Insecurity with a New Restaurant Idea

We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps. –Proverbs 16:9

Good Taste

When Jeff Williams was a kid, he was forced to be creative with food. His father was a warehouse manager for a major supermarket company, and when his union would call for a strike, the family would go long stretches without any income. There wasn't much money to put food on the table, and Jeff's parents often went without meals.

Jeff describes those times with an interesting term: "food insecurity," which is defined as, "lacking reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food." It's more common than you may think—roughly 90 percent of homes that experience food insecurity have at least one working adult, and most of them don't qualify for government assistance.

Even though his family often went without, Jeff had a passion for food. It sparked when he landed a job in a restaurant as a teenager. He was a server, busboy, dishwasher, cook, host—if you can name a job in a restaurant, he did it. As an adult, Jeff branched away from the food industry and found his way into the world of information technology (IT). He started his own IT business and he met his wife, Julie. But even with a successful business, he found himself thinking about food and toyed with the idea of opening his own restaurant.

Transformational Idea

Then one day, shortly after he and Julie got married, God spoke to him about food. "I felt like God told me I would feed people," he says. "I had always wanted to open a restaurant, and this felt like confirmation that I was to leave IT and work with food." He even thought, *What if we opened a restaurant with a menu that had no set prices?* People who couldn't afford a meal could still get one. "Most people thought I was crazy," he shares. "There wasn't anyone else doing it." However, Jeff and Julie's Connect Group, which was devoted to business leaders, seemed excited about it.

After some prayer, they decided to move forward with the idea and put together a plan for Taste Community Restaurant.

Jeff had a particular vision in mind for the place: pay what you can. If someone comes in and doesn't have money for food, they get the same good food, service, and atmosphere as a guest who can pay a little extra for their meal. That way, everyone can get a high-quality dining experience with the feeling of dignity and quality.

The first meal was a Thanksgiving lunch in 2017, and it was a hit.

Discovering True Success

But the real success came just a month after opening when a homeless man came in. He had been a pastor but for some reason he wasn't anymore. He was an older gentleman and appeared to be a little frail. He sat down, had a meal, and asked to see Jeff and Julie. They came to his table, and he said eating at their restaurant was the first time he had felt God's presence and felt truly loved in a long time. Even though he hadn't prayed in 10 years, he asked if he could pray for them. "That day, I knew it was a success," says Jeff, "because as he prayed, I realized his life wasn't the only one changed. *My life was changed.*"

Maybe God has put a dream in your heart and it seems crazy and outlandish. But as we begin submitting those dreams to the Lord and asking Him to direct our steps, it's incredible to watch the journey unfold. Just last year, Jeff and Julie opened a second location. They never gave up on the dream God gave Jeff—no matter how crazy it sounded.

What dream has God given you? Is it so wild that it could never work? Then commit to trusting God, leaning not on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5–6), and watching God begin to transform your dreams into reality. When a wild dream is from the Lord, *He* will make sure it happens.

What does this mean for me?

What dreams are stirring in your heart today? Take a moment to write them out (especially the crazy ones!) and begin to pray over this list. Ask God to uproot any dreams that aren't from Him and solidify the ones that are. Ask Him to direct your steps as you chase after your God-given dreams and watch as He transforms your dreams into reality.

Day 3. George Müller and Prayers that Kept 10,000 Orphans Fed

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus. –
Philippians 4:19 (NIV)

From Prayer to Provision

A ray of sun filtered in through the holes in the curtains, stretching across the wooden floorboards until it glowed on the face of a sleeping infant. Inside the orphanage, this signaled the morning routine had begun. Caretakers shuffled around, dressing the littlest and monitoring the older kids as they straightened their bed sheets and fluffed their pillows.

At breakfast, there was an unusual delay. The orphanage director was nowhere in sight; finally, he entered the room. Without an explanation, George simply said: “Children, it is time to give thanks to God for our food.”

But you would never guess the shocking truth.

The kitchen was empty. No milk. No porridge. No potatoes. Not a grain in sight. The staff didn’t know what to do. Yet, despite the grim news, George continued his custom of walking out in front of the children in the dining hall to bless the meal.

He closed his eyes, lifted his hands, and prayed, “Dear Father, we thank You for what You are going to give us to eat. Amen.”

After a chorus of amens from the children, the room went quiet. Suddenly, a knock echoed from the other side of the hall. Someone was at the door.

Unexpected Provision

George opened it to find the local baker. “Mr. Müller, I’m sorry to disturb you, but I couldn’t sleep last night,” he said. “Somehow, I felt you didn’t have food for breakfast, and the Lord wanted me to send you some. So, I got up at two o’clock in the morning and baked bread for you.”

George was astonished, even though he had come to expect miracles like this.

As soon as he began handing out the loaves, there was another surprising knock! It was the milkman. “Mr. Müller, I hate to disturb you this early, but my milk cart just broke down outside your place,” he said. “All the milk will spoil before I’m able to get the engine fixed. Is there any chance you could use some extra milk?”

This wasn’t the first or the last miracle George Müller experienced. He opened his first orphan home in Bristol, England, in 1836, housing 26 children. Eventually, he expanded to five orphan houses, and over the course of 60 years he cared for more than 10,000 orphans!

Unbelievable Faith

There was a rule George always kept. He never asked people for money. He trusted in God as his sole Provider.

On one occasion, he prayed for money to renovate an orphan house but never said a word about it to anyone. Days later, a private donor sent a check with the exact amount down to the penny. God consistently answered his prayers and moved others to action on his behalf.

Can you imagine Müller living like this in our world today? Often, a life of faith requires us to live in the gray space between our prayer and God's answer, experiencing the discomfort of lack until *just the right time*.

It's easy to make excuses for why we're not able to step into what God is calling us to do. Maybe we don't feel equipped. Or maybe we feel under-resourced or uncertain about how to begin. The gap between what we have and what we need can seem too great, causing us to hesitate or never start at all. Yet, George Müller's life is proof that God always provides for the mission He calls us to do. George didn't wait until he had all the resources—he simply stepped forward in obedience, trusting his Great Provider would supply *exactly* what was needed at *exactly* the right time.

Müller's story challenges us to live by faith in whatever work God has placed before us. When we move in obedient faith, God meets us there—not always early, but never late.

What does this mean for me?

Is there something God has called you to do but you're not sure where to start? Take a moment to write it down. Remember that God is our Provider and never gives us a vision without His provision—He is often just waiting on us to take a leap of faith. What is one small, practical step you can take today to get you just a little bit closer to what God is asking you to do?

Day 4. What the Benjamins Gained After Saying Goodbye to a Foster Child

The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

—2 Peter 3:9

Trust His Process

Austin and Hannah Benjamin always wanted a big family, and they knew early on that adoption would be a significant part of it. In fact, on their first date, Hannah told Austin if he wasn't interested in adoption, their relationship wasn't going to work. Several years later, after welcoming two biological children into the world, they were finally ready to begin the adoption process. But to their surprise, they both felt a pull for something different.

"The plan was to adopt, but the Lord put it on our hearts to pursue fostering," Austin recalls.

As their excitement for this new idea grew, so did a feeling they couldn't shake. "The goal for foster care is reunification with the biological parents," says Austin. "And so, there's a possibility of being heartbroken." But regardless of the likely losses ahead, Hannah and Austin leaned in and trusted God's call.

New Additions

Enter Cyrus—a sweet baby boy who was the answer to Hannah's lifelong prayers. "Having him physically in our arms and getting to love on a prayer that I cried over—it was just pure bliss," says Hannah.

But one day, they received a call. *The* call. Cyrus was going home to live with his biological aunt. In most cases, reunification is a joyful moment, but for the Benjamins, it brought the reality of deep loss. The day they gave him back, they faced a long walk from the front door to the car, where, after too short of a notice, they would say goodbye to Cyrus. However, the Benjamins' call to foster remained strong.

A Growing Family

They received another call about a little girl named Monae, and this time, it led to adoption—just as they welcomed their newest biological daughter Nora into their home.

One week after Nora was born and one month before Monae's adoption day, Hannah ran into a child protective services case worker she knew. Cyrus needed a home again, and this time it would be permanent. In a matter of five months, Austin and Hannah's family went from two kids to five kids.

Within those months, they experienced more loss and heartache than they ever thought possible; they also experienced God's goodness deeper than ever before. "God is just good," says Hannah. "He's good, even when we don't feel like it, because we don't always know what He's doing in the background."

God's Bigger Plan

Just like Austin and Hannah's story, there are times when the doors seem to open one after the other, we are confident God is leading us, and then the last door slams in our face. It's bewildering! It can feel like we missed God's will in that situation completely. But the truth is, God is with us every step of the way—even as we stand there in the middle of the story, picking up the pieces of our dreams.

It can be scary to trust God with our deep desires. We're afraid if we don't hold onto them tightly, it might lead to heartache. But the truth is, when we give God our desires and dreams, we can trust He knows what to do with them.

What God Asks of Us

God doesn't change our journeys on a whim—He cares about our desires. But He also asks us to trust Him. He is perfect and sees the bigger picture—that *all people* come to know and experience Him. Giving Jesus our dreams and desires can sometimes lead to a more complicated journey than we would like, but we can also trust that He is weaving in so much more goodness and faithfulness for us and others if we let Him take charge. And, best of all, He will fulfill our desires better than we ever could have imagined!

Even if the road seems long and the end results look different than what you initially wanted, are you willing to have faith in His promises? To choose to walk in obedience, accept the changes to your desires, and willingly welcome the outcome, no matter how difficult or great? Let's have the radical trust that one day we'll look back and see that His ways are *better* than ours when we give them to Him!

What does this mean for me? Have you given God the deepest desires of your heart? He already knows them, but He wants us to trust in Him and abide in His faithfulness (Psalm 37:4). What does God want you to do with your desires today? Maybe He wants you to lay them down, trust Him with them, or walk faithfully in His plan. As you go through today, remember that even when we don't see His plan, He *is* moving and wants to change our lives and those around us for the better.

Day 5. The Unsung Heroes in the Story of Elisha and the Widow

“Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.” —Luke 6:38

Give What You Have

The knock came abruptly and with urgency. “Do you have any empty jars you can spare?” the widow asked, her sons huddled close beside her. Her plea was desperate.

Her neighbor hesitated. *Jars?* he thought. *Why would she need jars?* With famine always a threat during this time and scarcity a constant worry, giving away an empty jar seemed foolish. He had been storing oil and wheat—carefully rationing it—but as he surveyed his neighbor’s eyes, compassion stirred within him. Reluctantly, he gathered his empty jars and handed them over.

Hope for a Miracle

After her husband’s death, the widow was left with a crushing debt she could not repay. Now, the creditor was threatening to take her sons as slaves. Without them, she would be destitute. The only hope she had was that the prophet Elisha’s instructions would lead to a miracle. He had given her a simple command: “Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars.”

So, house after house, she went—asking family, friends, and neighbors for jars, clinging to the hope of a miracle. After collecting the jars, something amazing happened. The widow took the only thing she had left—a small flask of olive oil—and began to pour, just as the prophet Elisha had instructed. Jar after jar, the oil flowed until each was filled to the brim. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, the oil stopped—exactly when no more jars were left. With the money she made from selling the jars of oil, she paid off her debts and saved her sons from slavery.

God Provides

The widow’s story in 2 Kings 4:1–7 is a beautiful picture of God’s faithfulness to provide. But we often overlook part of this story—the role of those who gave away their jars. The miracle extended only as far as the number of jars the widow collected. What if her neighbors had refused? What if no one had given her a jar? The oil would have stopped long before she had enough to save her sons.

We see this pattern throughout Scripture—God often partners with ordinary people to accomplish the extraordinary. A boy handed over his meager lunch of five loaves and two fish, which Jesus used to feed thousands. A servant mentioned a shepherd boy named David who played the lyre, and that boy became a king.

The Role We Play

In the widow's case, it was her family and friends—those who gave what they had, no matter how small—who played a part in God's miracle. God gives us the same invitation to partner with Him today. The prayers we pray for others, the money we tithe and give to the Church, or the jars we give to a neighbor in distress may feel like insignificant acts. But in God's hands, they become part of something far greater. What seems small to us is multiplied in God's kingdom. Even though we may never witness the outcome, Jesus reminds us that what we give will be returned to us in full. We should give with cheerful hearts, knowing God will supply all our needs!

So, what jars do you have to give? What does this mean for me?

Take a moment to ask the Holy Spirit, "What is it You want me to give?" Maybe it is something small, or perhaps it is something that requires more sacrifice. This week, be sensitive to what God is telling you to do and be obedient to His voice. When He asks you to pray for someone, give something away, or go into your community and serve, know that He can multiply whatever you give!

Day 6. He Dreamed of Being a Firefighter. Then the L.A. Wildfires Came.

“See, the Lord your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, told you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” –Deuteronomy 1:21

Be Where You Are

It was Daniel’s dream to be a firefighter, but God had another plan for his life. Setting up retirement plans for businesses wasn’t as exciting as putting out burning buildings, but it allowed Daniel and his wife, Heather, the flexibility to go wherever God led them. Their freedom and willingness to serve made them the right couple to start a ministry supporting foster kids and foster families all over Southern California.

The Fowlers led the ministry—Child Hope Services—for ten years in California, but as the state’s non-Christian culture and cost of living climbed, Daniel and Heather discerned that their vision for their family needed to change. Even though they loved their relatives and community, they felt Texas offered their family hope and new opportunities. So, they decided to move to Southlake.

Heather and the kids desperately missed California, but Daniel knew plugging into a church would calm their homesickness. He encouraged his family to “be where your feet are.”

Finding a New Home

On their second visit to a Texas Church, the pastor spoke about foster care and adoption—something their family knew a lot about. The Fowlers dove right in and quickly became an integral part of that church’s community. Little did they know that their new church would need them to return to their home state where something devastating was happening.

Crisis in California

Wildfires blazed across California, and their churches leadership asked for the Fowlers’ advice on how the church could practically meet the needs. The leaders didn’t want to just write a check. They wanted to go—fill a truck with essentials and drive to California! The Fowlers said, “We’ve driven this trip so many times. Let us do it!” Within a week, Heather and Daniel left for their home state in a U-Haul truck packed with work gloves, PPE gear, diapers, toilet paper, paper towels, socks, snack packs, canned goods, and one full-sized generator.

A Dream Realized

Daniel would finally get to fight fire in a different way—by delivering essentials to the Dream Center, a major hub aiding families impacted by the devastating Los Angeles fires. The Fowlers’ trip back represented a visible thread—a connection between their two homes: California and Texas. They were gaining friends, not losing them.

“To have our church’s hearts connect to the place we love was so special for us,” says Heather. Being ready to just go, the Fowlers had activated an entire church. It was the tangible hands of Jesus helping California residents in crisis.

Just like the ones we admire, we have opportunities. We can trust God, bravely walk by faith, not fear, and just GO! Where is God calling you today?

What does this mean for me? Listen closely at Church. You will hear people talking about needs and where to serve. Maybe the church nursery could use another helper. Maybe the local food pantry needs restocking. Ask around. Search for where you can serve. Plug into your church and community so you can enjoy being the hands of Jesus for others. Say “yes” to the next opportunity you hear about and see how it goes. You may just find a ministry you love!

Day 7. The True Story of Saint Patrick

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” –Matthew 5:43–44

Loving Our Enemy

Kidnapped by raiding pirates at the age of 16 and carried away from his family in Britain, Patrick was taken to Ireland and sold as a slave to an uncivilized, barbaric Irish chieftain. Assigned the menial and mundane task of caring for his master’s sheep, Patrick was forced to endure months of solitude out in the wild hills of Ireland with nothing but sheep to keep him company. Patrick turned to the only place he could for help—God.

Much like David the shepherd boy had done so many years before, Patrick spent his days and weeks of isolation pouring out his heart to God.

Spirit-Led Escape

This continued for seven years until one night, God spoke to Patrick in a dream, telling him his prayers had been heard, and he should get up and go to a boat which was waiting to take him home. Although he was nowhere near the sea and had no idea which direction he should go, Patrick set out in faith, following God’s direction. He walked for more than 200 miles—never once getting stopped or questioned—until he came to the sea where a boat was anchored in the bay.

When he returned home, he tried to settle back into his old life, but Patrick couldn’t forget the people who had held him captive those seven years.

A Troubling Vision

One night as Patrick was sleeping, he had a vision of an Irish man begging him to return to Ireland because they were lost in darkness and desperately needed God’s truth. Though his parents begged him to stay in Britain, Patrick chose to obey, following God’s call to go back to Ireland and bring the gospel to a people lost in darkness.

Patrick Returns

Patrick had every reason to stay in the comfort of his home, surrounded by his family. But placing his life and freedom in God’s hands, he went back to Ireland to proclaim the message of God’s love and forgiveness to those who had never heard it—to the people who were once his enemies. Because of Patrick’s obedience to the Lord, an entire nation was evangelized, and the course of history was changed.

Although it's never easy, Jesus' instructions to "love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" aren't a polite suggestion or request. They're a command—one the Holy Spirit will help us fulfill.

Your "enemy" may be your neighbor, a difficult co-worker, or even a once-close friend who betrayed you. Regardless of who it is, ask the Lord to show you how you can actively demonstrate His love to them today. Then, ask for His strength to love them well and go out and follow His leading.

What does this mean for me?

Who is God asking you to love when it feels the hardest? Maybe someone has wronged you, broken your trust, or hurt you deeply. Jesus calls us to pray for those who persecute us. Who is the person the Lord is asking you to pray for today? Take a moment and ask Him to bring someone to mind. It doesn't have to be an enemy—it might be a friend who misunderstood you or even the driver who cut you off this morning. Regardless of who it is, commit to praying for them each day this week. Prayer invites the Holy Spirit to soften and transform our hearts, allowing us to love as Jesus loves.

Day 8. How to Encourage Others Despite Our Own Difficulties

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. —Ephesians 3:20–21

Look Outside Yourself

“Mr. Hoover, you cannot work while you’re on dialysis,” she said emphatically. But the well-meaning nurse didn’t know how Jared Hoover was wired. He’s never allowed hurdles like this—big or small—to slow down whatever mission he was on. At age fifty-five, he had a heart attack while delivering a sermon and continued preaching for another ten minutes. So now with kidney failure presenting another challenge, Jared was determined to continue ministering to people. The thought of stopping never even crossed his mind.

Time is an Opportunity

That’s how Jared and his wife, Linda, approached every assignment they’ve been given. For decades, they poured their hearts into pastoring struggling churches in California until they flourished. They loved each congregation, but Jared and Linda moved from California to Texas to be closer to family and to help improve Jared’s health. Linda became a professor at The Kings University, and Jared became a student again—in his sixties. Most men would retire if they were battling anemia and kidney failure, but retirement wasn’t in Jared’s plans. In fact, Jared is even more keenly aware that every remaining moment of his life is an opportunity to reach people, so he decided to bring his ministry to the clinic.

All the nurses and technicians have heard the gospel from Jared, and they’ve been moved by his perspective on life. “Jared, no one talks like you,” said the kidney transplant coordinator. “Will you speak at our conference?”

Of course, he accepted the invitation, despite his pain. “The devil wants us to think we’re alone in our suffering,” says Jared. “Everyone’s struggling with something—marriage, money, relationships; my problem just happens to be my health right now. Remembering this truth—that everyone is hurting—helps me focus on encouraging others.”

Hope Despite Suffering

For most, it’s easy to become so fixated on our own problems and stress that we can’t see the pain of those around us. In John 16:33, Jesus says, “Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

Everyone is dealing with difficulties, but because of Jesus' sacrifice and the Holy Spirit living within us, we as believers have hope! There is a world full of people out there who are hopeless and lost, and every day brings with it the opportunity to encourage someone who is struggling. We simply need to get God's perspective to look beyond our own difficulties and give us compassion for a hurting world.

Easier said than done. So now what?

Hope for Those Around Us

The Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 3:16–19! Ask the Father to strengthen you “with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Ask Him to reveal His love for you, and He will give you power to love people like He does.

This is the key: When we understand God's love for us, we can begin to love others in the same way!

We all have challenges and difficulties. But when we ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen us, we begin to look beyond our own suffering and start looking for ways we can encourage others with the love of God.

What does this mean for me?

What is weighing heavy on your mind today? Lay your concerns at the feet of Jesus in prayer. Then practice setting aside your problems for an hour in the day and focusing on reaching out to someone who's going through a difficulty. Having an “others mindset” is good medicine. Call a struggling friend. Pray with a coworker. Visit someone in the hospital. Take someone to lunch. Soon, before you know it, you'll find yourself ministering most when you're struggling. Let's look outside ourselves and love others well!

Day 9. Small Acts of Kindness and Why God Regards Them as Significant

Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you. –James 1:27

Nothing is Too Small

Two men rushed through the street, trying to get a message to Peter. “Come quickly!” they said. Without hesitation, Peter rose and followed them to Joppa. Arriving at a house, he entered the upstairs room where several widows stood clutching garments, their faces filled with sorrow. “She made this for me,” one said to Peter. “And this one for me,” another said. Tabitha, the reason they were gathered, was dead. She’d been more than a seamstress; she was their friend. She gave her all to these widows whose lives most failed to see.

Quickly, Peter asked everyone to leave the room. Kneeling beside her still body, he prayed. “Tabitha, get up.” And she did.

News Travels Fast

Tabitha opened her eyes, took Peter’s hand, and rose. News of her resurrection spread throughout the community, and many believed in the Lord.

But Tabitha’s impact didn’t begin with a miracle. It started with a needle and thread.

Tabitha’s story, found in Acts 9:36–42, is one of quiet, faithful ministry. Many women followed Jesus; however, Tabitha was the only woman the Bible explicitly calls a *disciple*. Of course, being raised from the dead is an amazing part of her testimony, but why did Tabitha’s life make such an impact on those around her?

Who Was Tabitha?

Tabitha lived out her faith by following Jesus’ command to love others as He loved her. Using her skills, she served widows—some of the most vulnerable people of her time. With what was at her disposal, she became the hands and feet of Jesus to those in need. She expressed her faith through action. Rather than waiting for a larger platform or more noticeable calling, she faithfully did what she could right where she was. As a result, her kindness left such a profound impact that the entire community grieved her passing.

Ministry does not have to be on a large scale to impact people’s lives. Jesus tells us to feed the hungry, give drinks to the thirsty, clothe the naked, and care for the sick (Matthew 25:35–40). He says what we do to the least of His children, we also do to Him. While Tabitha’s actions seem small, the Lord regarded them as significant. In fact, they were so significant we still read about her life today!

What Can You Do?

What about you? What skills can you use to minister to those around you?

You don't need a huge ministry to change lives, nor do you need a platform or a viral message. Ministry happens in the everyday moments—through the meals you cook, the words you speak, and the kindness you extend..

No act of love is too small, and no gift is insignificant in the hands of God. Tabitha didn't just sew garments—she expressed the love of Christ with every stitch.

What does this mean for me?

Take a moment to reflect on the gifts God has given you. Is there something you enjoy doing you never considered using for the Lord? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to care for those in need—whether in your community, church, or neighborhood. Write down any ideas that come to mind, then pray for guidance on how to put them into action. This week, take a step of faith and use your gifts to serve others.

Day 10. How long should you wait for God to answer prayer?

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, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. —Ephesians 3:20–21

Radical Obedience

If you spend any time with Bruce and Mary Calderon—even just a few minutes—you might receive a prophetic word, a prayer, or simply a word of encouragement from either of them. That’s because they don’t see ministry as something only pastors do on the weekend—they see it as a day-to-day action, and it involves saying yes to God with a great deal of trust.

“I didn’t grow up with my father,” Bruce recalls. “I grew up in a gang-infested area, and I had started to get involved on the street but God pulled me out. When I think back to what He saved me from—what could have been—I’m just so taken aback. Why would I not serve where the Lord places me?”

Opportunity to Trust Him

Several years ago, God presented Bruce and Mary with a unique opportunity to trust Him.

They had just moved into a new home in Fort Worth. The move itself didn’t take long because they only had a few pieces of furniture—they had felt prompted to give the rest away. “We just had a little love seat, a TV, and two barstools at our kitchen island,” says Bruce. “And we had our bed and our clothes.” They could have gone out and purchased the décor they wanted for their house but their decision to wait was intentional. In fact, it was an act of radical trust that started when they hosted a pastor and his wife from Guatemala.

“The pastor’s wife gave us a prophetic word about our home,” says Bruce. “God was asking us to not worry about decorating the house. If we believed in supernatural faith, God was going to provide the furniture and ambience we wanted for the entire house.” So, Bruce and Mary began trusting God to provide the comforts of home.

They waited a long time—two entire years went by—but they continued to pray. Then one day, something happened. “Some friends told us they wanted to help,” says Bruce. Expecting to only receive a few pieces of furniture, they were met with something completely different. The friends paid to have a company decorate and furnish Bruce and Mary’s entire home with brand-new furniture. “It was amazing, I was blown away—the Lord didn’t forget about us. Now we have a home decorated in a way we never could have done in our lifetime!”

Beyond Our Comfort Zone

Trusting God with everything—even things like furnishing a home—takes courage, and when we do, He often uses our obedience for the betterment of ourselves *and* others.

God may ask us to do things well beyond our comfort zone or things that just don't seem to make any sense. The good news is, He never asks us to trust Him without reason. The Lord has a plan to better the world around us and bring people closer to Him, and He wants to use *us* to do it! "We recognize that we're a vessel," Mary says. "We're just here to serve people and speak into them, because we know it can change the way they think, the way they feel, the way they see themselves and God."

Obedience that relies on God brings kingdom change, no matter what the situation looks like! Will you put your radical trust in Him today?

What does this mean for me?

What's an area in your life where you're feeling a tug to trust God? What could radical trust in God look like? Is it with your finances, prayer requests, loved ones, or something else? Think of a time you trusted in Him and He delivered on His promises—was it worth it? Take a moment to ask God what *He's* asking you to do, and remember He is *with you*!

Day 11. A North Texas Business Owner's Secret to Successful Evangelism

Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. —1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

Jump on a Call with God

Pablo Lovati might be the hardest working evangelist you've never heard of. He's not a preacher by trade—in fact, he doesn't preach at all. He owns a construction company in North Texas, and he spends hours alone on the road driving between job sites. Sure, there are work phone calls and problems to solve but there's still a lot of time to fill. And that's when he does his best work.

"I just jump on a call with God," he says. "I drive a lot, so I have a lot of time to pray through my list." His list is made up of the names of people Pablo prays for each day to come to faith in Jesus. A couple of years ago at church, he heard Pastor Joakim Lundqvist share a story about a teenage girl who prayed for bullies at her school. Rather than retaliate, this girl began to pray for her bullies, and they were saved, sparking a revival at her school.

The List Begins

Pablo was struck by this story and decided to start praying for a few people, so he began a list with two names on it. "One of them was my best friend, and I've known him for years," he says. "He's been really skeptical about faith and Jesus, and right after I started praying for him, out of nowhere he told me he believes there is a God."

In the years since that moment, Pablo says he continues to pray and lead by example. And he has seen an incredible amount of development in his best friend and others on the list. In fact, the list has grown to more than fifty names! But one name in particular stands out.

"My friend Gohan told me one day that he doesn't feel like God really wants him," says Pablo. "I explained to Gohan God's beautiful grace, and he came to church with me." Gohan gave his life to Jesus and was baptized soon after. "He's the first person I've been able to cross off the list," says Pablo. But with the amount of driving and praying Pablo does, Gohan won't be the last.

"Just Pray a Lot"

Reaching people with the gospel doesn't have to be a full-time job. In fact, in Pablo's case, it looks like the simple act of prayer for the people in his life. When Pablo hands you his business card, at the top you'll see the name of his business, "Proper Construction." But printed at the bottom is his own personal motto: "Just pray a lot."

"It doesn't have to be formal," he says. "It doesn't have to be done in a certain perfect environment. Just pray as much as you can."

Day 12. Corrie ten Boom and the Fleas That Saved Her

You, LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light. —Psalm 18:28 (NIV)

A Light in Dark Places

A large group huddled around the single lightbulb at the back of the room. A soft, whispered hymn rose from the edge of the gathering, and one by one, voices joined the quiet chorus. As the song faded, the sisters opened the Word of God. The small, worn Bible, miraculously smuggled through multiple checkpoints, was a source of life to the women in the barracks. Though gatherings like these were strictly forbidden, not a single guard came to break up the service. Even in the deepest darkness, light still found a way through.

During the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, Corrie ten Boom and her family risked their lives to hide Jewish people from persecution until their secret was discovered. Corrie and her sister, Betsie, were arrested and sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp, a place of unimaginable suffering.

Life in Ravensbrück

The conditions were abhorrent, yet the sisters clung to their faith and continued to minister to those around them. But they didn't just *share* the Word—they allowed it to *transform* their hearts in spite of their circumstances. When they were transferred to Barrack 28, an overcrowded and dilapidated shelter, they were crammed into a bed meant for far fewer people. As they settled into their new reality, Betsie turned to 1 Thessalonians 5:14–18, reading aloud: *“Comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for yourselves and for all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”*

Lying in a bed infested with bugs, they did the unthinkable—they thanked God for it all, even the fleas. Despite their suffering, the sisters poured out what little they had. A hidden vial of liquid vitamins helped sustain dozens of women, miraculously never running dry. Twice a day, they held worship services, somehow evading the ever-watchful eyes of the guards. Even in their frailty, they spoke of a future beyond the camp—of a place where survivors could heal and be restored. Though their bodies weakened, their faith grew stronger.

Giving When You Lack

When life is comfortable, helping others feels easy and requires little sacrifice. But what about when life is hard? In our struggles, it's easy to turn inward, to focus on our own pain, our own needs. We cry out to God, but our prayers often become more about what we lack than how we can serve. So how do we give when we feel we have nothing left?

The ten Boom sisters' story gives us insight into the answer: they did not let their suffering define them. Rather than fixating on their hardships, they looked outward, seeing every challenge as an opportunity to minister. Instead of lamenting their overcrowded barracks, they saw it as a chance to share Christ with even more women. They didn't just read the Bible—they let it transform their minds, shaping how they saw their situation. Time and again, they risked everything to protect the Bible they secretly carried on a string around their neck, knowing it was the key to reaching those in desperate need.

God's Word is a Light

Their story reminds us that serving others does not require abundance. It does not demand ideal circumstances. Often, people see Christ most clearly when we walk with them through grief, hardship, or loss. Even when we feel empty, we still have something to give—our prayers, our time, our presence. But one thing is never in short supply: the Word of God. It brings light to the darkest places, hope to the hopeless, and transformation to the hearts that receive it. Most importantly, it reveals the good news of Christ Jesus, who gave everything so we could be saved.

One day, Betsie discovered why the prison guards never inspected their barracks during the worship services. The guards, disgusted by the infestation, refused to step inside. The very thing that had nearly broken them—the fleas—became the thing that protected them as they shared Jesus with those in desperate need.

What does this mean for me?

Honestly consider your circumstances—are you in a place of joy or sorrow? Abundance or lack? How does the story of Corrie and Betsie ten Boom challenge the way you see serving others, no matter where you find yourself? Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you can be the light of Christ to someone this week.

Day 13. She almost had an abortion. Now she helps women choose life.

Jesus replied, "But even more blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice." –Luke 11:28 (NLT)

Just Say "Yes"

Growing up in churches and religious schools with strict expectations, Amy couldn't wait to graduate from high school and break free from all the rules and constant shame she felt every time she messed up. As soon as she graduated, she began living her own way and eventually found herself single and pregnant at the age of 19. Scared with no one to reach out to, Amy felt alone and confused—so much so that she contemplated getting an abortion even though she knew it wasn't the right choice.

Amy went to an abortion clinic, and the sonogram technician told her that since she was almost seven weeks pregnant, her options were keeping the baby, giving it up for adoption, or having an abortion. Not knowing what to do, Amy went home, still scared and lonely. Then, out of the blue, her phone rang. It was Sacha, an old friend from high school who had gone through a pregnancy during their senior year. Amy told Sacha about her situation and the choices she was wrestling with. Encouraging and uplifting her, Sacha stayed on the phone until she was sure Amy knew that this pregnancy wasn't the end. Sacha told Amy that it was just the beginning; God would be faithful to turn everything for good, and her baby was going to be a tremendous blessing.

A Gift from God

Amy chose to keep her baby and soon after, married the love of her life. She gave birth to a baby boy and decided to name him Jess, which means "gift from God."

While at a women's conference, Amy heard Christine Caine talk about seeking God to find His calling for your life. On the last morning of the conference, God gave Amy a vision: She saw glimpses of her day at the abortion clinic, full of sadness and loneliness, but then the vision shifted to her full and happy life with her beautiful children and husband. It ended with her helping another single, pregnant woman and throwing a baby shower for her. Afterward, Amy spoke to her friend, Salina, who had been with her at the conference, and found out she had *also* received a word during the conference about helping "mommies and babies"!

The Beginning of Embrace Grace

Six months later, after several meetings and some training, Amy and Salina started an outreach for single, pregnant women called "Embrace Grace." This group ministers to young women by encouraging them and teaching them how God's grace covers *all*; they simply need to receive His gift.

Since the group began, they've witnessed many miracles and lives transformed. And it all began because Amy's friend Sacha was sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading to pick up the phone and make a simple call.

Sacha and Amy were both where God wanted them to be ... in the right place, at the right time. More importantly, they were sensitive to hear, believe, and obey the Holy Spirit. Because Sacha was willing to obey the Holy Spirit's prompting to call her friend, not only was Amy's life transformed, but ultimately, so was her family's. And because of Amy's obedience to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, the lives of every young woman who has and will come to the "Embrace Grace" support group has been transformed by God's grace, acceptance, and love.

Are you—like Sacha and Amy—tuned in to the Holy Spirit's voice and sensitive to His leading? Ask the Holy Spirit today to show you specific ways to reach out and show His love to someone around you.

What does this mean for me?

Pause for a moment and look around—you are exactly where God has placed you, in this moment, for a purpose. Right now, you have the opportunity to reflect the love of Jesus to someone who needs it. What could that look like for you? Maybe it's offering a meal to a person in need, reaching out to a friend God has placed on your heart, or finally inviting your neighbor to church. Whatever the Lord is prompting you to do (even if it feels small), be obedient to His voice today. You never know what God has planned for the other side of your obedience!

Day 14. What does it mean to “let go” of our identity?

Then the LORD asked him, “What is that in your hand?” “A shepherd’s staff,” Moses replied. “Throw it down on the ground,” the LORD told him. —Exodus 4:2–3

What’s in your hand?

It was just another ordinary day. For Moses, it was pretty much the same routine it had been for the past 40 years: Wake up. Take care of sheep. Go to bed. Do it all again the next day. At 80 years old, his life was pretty much over. Whatever dreams he may have once had were now long gone. But all of that changed in one encounter with a burning bush and a question from God Himself.

Imagine how Moses felt when God told him He had seen the agony of His people in Egypt and heard their cries for deliverance, and He was sending Moses to lead them out! For 40 years, he had led nothing but sheep. Is it any wonder that Moses responded with, “What if they won’t believe me or listen to me? What if they say, ‘The Lord never appeared to you?’”

Do you know how God chose to answer Moses’ question? With a seemingly unrelated question of His own: *“What’s in your hand?”*

Moses’ Identity

Moses must have wondered why God would ask him a question to which He obviously knew the answer, but he simply replied, “A shepherd’s staff.” And then God commanded, “Throw it on the ground, Moses.” So, Moses threw it on the ground, and it turned into a snake! Naturally, Moses turned and ran; that is, until he was stopped in his tracks by God’s command to pick up the snake by its tail. Moses cautiously reached out his hand and picked up the snake, and it immediately became his staff again.

We don’t know how long Moses had been using that particular staff, but odds are it was quite a while. He had likely grown familiar with the staff’s little nicks and grooves, and the passage of time had probably weathered the wood to the point that it was now smooth and completely at home in his hand. His staff represented so much more than just a walking stick. First, it represented his *identity*. Just as a stethoscope represents a doctor or a socket wrench represents a mechanic, Moses’ staff was the most recognizable symbol of his occupation as a shepherd. Secondly, it was a symbol of his *income*. In those days, people didn’t have bank accounts, credit cards, or hedge funds ... they had cattle, goats, and sheep. And as caretaker of his father-in-law’s flocks of sheep, Moses’ income—his money and possessions—was inextricably linked to his position. The third thing the staff symbolized was Moses’ *influence*. As a shepherd, he was well aware of the influence and authority his staff commanded when he needed to move sheep from Point A to Point B.

Lay It Down

So, in essence, when God asked Moses, “What’s in your hand?” and told him to “throw it on the ground,” He was saying, “Are you going to lay down your identity? Surrender your income? Let go of your influence? Because if you do, I’ll take something that seems dead to you, and I’ll make it come alive. I’ll make a miracle out of it. It may seem like an insignificant stick to you, but if you surrender it to My hands, I’ll do things you could never imagine.”

The question God asked Moses so many years ago still resonates just as strongly today: *What’s in your hand?* Your talent, background, education, freedom, health, contacts, opportunities, mind, passions, wealth, ideas, creativity ... *what’s in your hand?*

The first step to going out lies in giving in. Before we can “go,” God wants us to “let go” ... to totally, completely, unconditionally, and absolutely surrender to Him each day.

So ask yourself today, “What’s in my hand?”

What does this mean for me?

Surrendering something so God can use it may feel like a paradox, yet it is the key to unlocking its true purpose. When we cling too tightly to our gifts, talents, or resources, we risk believing they exist solely for us rather than to bless others. But God invites us to live with open hearts, trusting that what we entrust to Him will be used to bless and serve others in ways beyond what we could imagine or accomplish on our own. Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit if there is something you’re holding onto too tightly? Then, with faith, ask God to help you release it and allow Him to use you for His purposes.

Day 15. Why We Should Have Compassion on Everyone—including Our Enemies

“So, which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

—Luke 10:36–37

Who’s My Neighbor

One day, a lawyer came up to Jesus asking, “Who is my neighbor?” and Jesus responded with: “There once was a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho” Can you imagine the lawyer’s frustration? All he wanted was a simple answer, and Jesus started telling a story. But it was *much* more than just a story. There was purpose, depth, and detail in this story that Jesus specifically included to expose all the excuses we use to keep from loving and connecting with the people around us.

Everyone listening to Jesus that day knew the road from Jerusalem to Jericho wound 18 miles through the mountains and descended about 3,300 feet. And it *definitely* wasn’t a path you wanted to take after dark because it was a notoriously popular hideout for bandits.

Attacked by Bandits

Sure enough, the man was attacked by robbers, stripped naked, beaten unconscious, and thrown into a ditch to die. Eventually, a priest came riding by. When this priest saw the man covered in dust and blood lying by the side of the road, he moved to the other side of the road to avoid him and passed on by. The priest was followed by a Levite—another spiritual leader. Seeing that the man had been beaten up by bandits and fearing for his own life, he hurried by as quickly as possible.

Now, this is where Jesus did something gutsy: He introduced a Samaritan as the hero of the story. And here’s why it was so revolutionary: The Jews didn’t just dislike the Samaritans; they *despised* them.

Jesus Talks About Compassion

Well aware of this, Jesus’ purpose behind making a Samaritan the hero of His story was both deliberate and significant. When the Samaritan came upon the wounded Jewish man, he was *moved with compassion*. He cleaned the man’s wounds and gave him first aid. Then, placing him on his own donkey, the Samaritan took the man into the next town (which was most likely a *Jewish* town), where he booked him a room at an inn and *paid for it*.

So, what’s the major difference between the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan? It all comes down to one word: *compassion*. When he saw the wounded man, the Samaritan picked him up and brought him to a place of healing.

Who's My Neighbor?

Ask yourself today, “Who’s my neighbor?” It’s those who’ve been robbed by the thugs and bandits of the world—fear, despair, grief, pain, poverty, disease, hate, hopelessness, misery—then beaten up and left for dead. They’re around every corner we turn—from *all* walks of life. No one is exempt. No one is left untouched.

Do we keep our distance? Or will we allow our hearts to be moved with compassion? Will we stop what we’re doing—even if it’s something good or spiritual—and kneel beside those who are hurting? Will we help carry them to a place where they can find life, hope, and healing?

Ask God to soften your heart to those around you. Ask Him to stir up love and compassion for them and their needs. Ask Him to give you the courage and wisdom to walk with them and offer them hope and life.

What does this mean for me?

Supporting those who are hurting requires time, energy, and authenticity. But who better to bring hope and light into difficult situations than those who know Jesus? Is there someone in your life who is sick, struggling, or feeling hopeless? How can you offer them encouragement today? Maybe it’s providing a warm meal, sending a heartfelt card or text message, helping with household tasks, or offering transportation to an appointment. There are many ways to actively care for those in need, and along with our actions, we can also pray. Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to bring someone specific to mind. How can you show them the love of Jesus this week?

Day 16. The Anointed Ministry of Having People Over for Dinner

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” –Matthew 28:19–20 (NIV)

It’s Just a Meal

Born and raised in a strong Christian home, Micah spent most of her life involved in church until she moved away at the age of 18. Over the next seven years, she drifted away from church because she just couldn’t find one that felt like “home.” Shortly after she turned 25, Micah experienced some life circumstances that caused her to realize she desperately needed a radical change in her life, and her hunger for God began to intensify.

She visited a few churches near her home, but she felt isolated and alone when she went. One Sunday morning, Micah decided to check out a local church that some of her friends had recommended. Micah found an empty seat near the front and patiently waited for the service to start. Mike and Karen Maddox, along with their three kids, sat down in the seats next to her and quickly struck up a conversation with her.

A Simple Invitation

The service began, and Micah found herself drawn in and engaged by the worship and message. When the invitation came at the end, Micah slipped out of her seat, made her way down to the front, and waited for someone to pray with her. To her surprise, Karen came down to the front as well and asked Micah if she could pray with her. After they finished praying, Karen turned to Micah and asked, “If you don’t have any plans after church, why don’t you come over to our house and have lunch with us?” Micah gladly accepted the offer and went over to the Maddox’s’ home that afternoon. Mike and Karen made Micah feel like part of the family.

Dependent on God

Although she thoroughly enjoyed the service and her time with the Maddox family, Micah didn’t go back to church until she lost her job nine months later. That experience completely rocked her world, and Micah realized *only* God could help her now. The next Sunday, she went back to the church where she first met the Maddox’s. At that service, Micah made the decision to relinquish control of her life to God and depend solely on Him.

Micah quickly became a member and joined the small group hosted by the Maddox’s. The group prayed for Micah’s job situation, and soon, she got a job as a graphic designer at the church.

After being a recipient of the Maddox's' example of kindness and hospitality, Micah has since opened her own home to host a group for young single ladies—all because of one family's sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading to extend kindness and a lunch invitation to a young woman.

How Difficult Can it Be?

God is calling each of us to “go.” And “going” doesn’t just mean packing up everything you own and moving overseas to minister to tribes in the jungle. In fact, one of the most effective ways to minister is simply going out of your way to invite people over for dinner. Everyone has to eat at some point in time, right?

How hard is it to walk up to someone and say: “Hey, would you want to come over to my house and have dinner with my family after church?” or “Let me buy you coffee this week!”? It’s really that easy, and it’s always worth it!

God wants us to reach others through our relationships with them. What better place to start than around the dinner table?

What does this mean for me?

Who is God placing on your heart to invite to the table? Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to bring someone to mind. Is it a neighbor, a coworker, a classmate, a fellow parent from your child’s school or sports team? The opportunities to extend friendship are endless! This week, invite that person to share a meal. Approach the conversation with a heart that listens, eager to know them and their story. Jesus is our Friend, and as His followers, we have the beautiful privilege of reflecting His love by being a friend to others.

Day 17. The Reckless Faith of China's Greatest Missionary

"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me will find it." – Matthew 16:25 NIV

No Such Thing as Sacrifice

Rain pounded against the ship's deck as waves battered the hull. Hudson stood alone, watching the English shoreline disappear on the horizon.

At just 21 years old, he had left behind his family, his country, and any hope of an ordinary life. He sailed to China with no organization backing him, no promised salary, and no guarantee of survival—only the calling God had given him.

Hudson's call hadn't come with a blinding light or booming voice. It came quietly, one afternoon in his bedroom, after months of wrestling with God. In full surrender, he laid down his ambition, comforts, and even relationships, and in the stillness, he heard God say, "Go for Me to China."

Hudson Chose to Go

Three years later, he boarded the *Dumfries* with a one-way ticket to Shanghai. After a grueling five-month voyage, he arrived to the sounds of riots and cannon fire. The Taiping Rebellion—one of the bloodiest conflicts in history—had begun.

As a foreigner in a war-torn region, he was an outcast treated with suspicion. Locals called him a *yáng guǐ zi*—a derogatory term meaning "foreign devil." At every turn he fought for his life, yet he never wavered in his mission. He later wrote, *"It makes no matter where [God] places me, or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me; for in the easiest position, He must give me His grace, and in the most difficult His grace is sufficient."*

Learning the Culture

Hudson soon met Maria Jane Dryer, the daughter of a well-known missionary with the London Missionary Society, and the two bonded over their radical commitment to reaching the Chinese by whatever means possible. After marrying, they doubled down on their commitment, moving further inland, trading western clothes for traditional robes, mastering Mandarin, and taking up the austere diet of the locals.

Though illegal and dangerous, Hudson made covert trips into inland provinces, determined to preach the gospel where it had never been heard. When China's borders officially opened after the Convention of Peking in 1860, he was ready. He founded the China Inland Mission (CIM), gathered a team of 16 missionaries, and journeyed up the Yangtze River—farther than any missionary had gone before.

By 1881, CIM workers were present in all 18 provinces, paving the way for future evangelism efforts in China and influencing missional strategy around the world for generations to come.

Difficult Conditions

But the fruit of Hudson's labor was not without sacrifice. Harsh living conditions led to the death of four of Hudson and Maria's eight children—three of them in infancy and one at age eight. In 1870, just weeks after their youngest son passed, Maria contracted cholera and died, leaving Hudson with a newborn baby girl who also tragically passed away a few days later.

Hudson experienced indescribable grief and hardship. Yet, despite it all, he never quit; he never lost faith.

By the end of his life, the China Inland Mission had sent more than 800 missionaries to the regions other organizations avoided. Taylor had reached people and tribes that had never heard the name of Jesus. Like the Apostle Paul, he was pressed and crushed, persecuted and struck down, enduring storms, sickness, and the deaths of those closest to him. Still, when asked near the end of his life about all he had given up, Hudson said something astounding:

"I never made a sacrifice."

How could a man who gave so much say that?

Give Everything to Jesus

Because when he saw the infinite worth of Christ, surrender didn't feel like loss. It felt like worship. Jesus said, "Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 16:25). A few chapters later, Jesus explains, "Everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much in return and will inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:29).

The world teaches us to cling tightly to what we have. Jesus invites us to give everything to Him. Hudson understood that invitation—and he responded with a life of radical surrender. While we may not all be asked to move to the other side of the world or give up loved ones, we will all be asked to surrender *something* to the Lord. When the time comes, how can we respond like Hudson Taylor? He didn't live cautiously. He didn't tiptoe around God's call. He opened his hands and said, "Lord, take it all."

What does this mean for me?

What is God asking you to lay down so you can step fully into the mission He's given you? What would it look like to stop asking, "Is it worth it" and start saying, "You're worth it"? Take a moment to write down something specific and ask God for grace to move forward in His will for your life.

Day 18. L.A.'s Biggest Outreach Started with a Teenager's Dream

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither 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. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." —Matthew 5:14–16

A Church That Never Sleeps

When Matthew Barnett was 16 years old, he was sitting on the hood of his car, and God gave him a vision of one day going to inner-city Los Angeles and starting a church that would be open 24/7/365—a church that never sleeps. He figured it probably wouldn't happen until he was at least 40 years old. Little did he know just how quickly God would move.

A Dream Becomes Reality

Four years later, his father, a pastor, came to him and asked if he'd be interested in going to Los Angeles for a year to pastor a small church in the inner city. His dad had tried asking 10 other pastors, but they had all turned down the opportunity. It wasn't an ideal situation—the church only had 18 people and was meeting in a tiny building far off the beaten path—but Matthew eagerly accepted the position.

Having grown up in Phoenix, Matthew's first encounter with inner-city L.A. was a complete culture shock. But as he began to really look around, the people immediately captured his heart. He saw kids who didn't have anything or anyone—no fathers, no mentors, no hope. He felt God speak to him at that moment, telling him, *"If you reach the people that nobody wants, then I'll send you the people that everybody wants."*

Changing Los Angeles

With all the gangs, violence, and brokenness surrounding them, Matthew and his dad decided to get busy helping the people rebuild their lives. They began by simply providing food and clothing. Then they bought 16 old houses in the neighborhood and turned them into recovery homes. Within one year, they were reaching almost 500 people each week. And within four years, the impact was so profound that prostitution and gang violence in inner-city L.A. dropped 73 percent, homicides dropped 28 percent, and instances of rape dropped 53 percent. And the impact didn't stop there.

What began as a God-given dream in a young 16-year-old boy's heart has grown into a truly miraculous reality: the Dream Center. And by the time Matthew turned 40, the Dream Center had become a nation-wide network reaching thousands of hurting people and offering them hope 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. It's a church that never sleeps.

Be the Church

As the Church, we are called to be Christ's hands and feet in the world. He lives in us and longs to act through us—regardless of how old we are or equipped we feel. And the best way to demonstrate His presence in a broken world is through our *deeds* rather than our *words*. Jesus said that the world would know us by our love for one another. We must make the decision to partner with Jesus in drawing people to His heart by going *outside* our church buildings, living out His love, and *being* a Church that shines light in the night—a Church that never sleeps.

What does this mean for me?

Where is God inviting you to show His love in action? Maybe it's in places beyond what feels familiar—spaces you've never considered before. His love often calls us to step beyond comfort and meet the needs of those who are hurting. Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit, "How can I be Your hands and feet this week?" Then, commit to following where He leads, because your obedience can make an eternal impact!

Day 19. How to Step Out in Faith When God's Call Doesn't Make Sense

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. –Hebrews 11:7

By Faith

It was completely unexpected. Never in a million years could he have dreamed that *God* would show up that day and tell him to start building a big boat because a flood was coming. It had never even rained before! But Noah believed God, and *by faith*, he began to build an ark. His neighbors and family mocked him day after day after day. But then one day, the animals came, they boarded the boat, and it started to rain. And Noah and his family were saved.

According to Hebrews 11, when God told Noah to build, he obeyed *by faith*. Earlier in that same chapter of Hebrews, the Bible defines faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.” Noah placed his hope in God and faithfully believed His promise, and God saved him and his family.

Ordinary Becomes Extraordinary

Noah was just an *ordinary* man, but because of his faith, God called him to do something *extraordinary*.

As believers, we serve that same God, and He is calling each of us to step out in faith and follow Him wherever He leads. Stop for a moment and consider this: Is God calling you to go and do something that doesn't make much sense? He may be calling you to serve Him by ministering to people in a different country. He may be calling you to give up your comfortable salary and go to a different job. He may be calling you to do something for Him that everyone else thinks is crazy but you know is right. If so, step out *by faith* and trust Him to help you accomplish what He is calling you to do!

What does this mean for me?

Has God been stirring something in your heart that doesn't seem to make sense? Maybe it's an idea that feels too bold or a nudge you've been pushing aside because it feels impossible. Sometimes, the things God calls us to do can seem overwhelming—whether it's fear of what others might think or doubts about whether we're capable. Take a moment and bring those thoughts before Him. Ask the Holy Spirit, “What are You speaking to me?” Listen closely, and trust that His plans are always good. Faith often requires obedience, even when the path feels uncertain—but God is always faithful to lead and provide.

Day 20. What happens when the baptism of the Holy Spirit purifies us?

Then I heard the Lord's voice, saying, "Whom can I send? Who will go for Us?" So, I said, "Here I am. Send me!" –Isaiah 6:8

Changed by the Spirit

Ever feel inadequate? Like you just don't quite measure up to everyone else?

Isaiah could certainly relate. When Uzziah (the king of Israel) died, Isaiah's world was suddenly thrown into a tailspin. He'd grown up around the king's court, so the news of Uzziah's death left him feeling lost, confused, uncertain, and hopeless. But at this low point in Isaiah's life, God appeared to him.

Encounter with God

Isaiah writes, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted" (Isaiah Chapter 6).

Face to face with a holy God, Isaiah is overcome with a tremendous sense of his own inadequacy and unworthiness. He cries out: "Oh, no! I will be destroyed. I am not pure, and I live among people who are not pure."

Isaiah's response is perfectly understandable. It's all too easy to feel like we don't measure up when we compare ourselves to those around us—how much more so when standing in front of *God!*

Purified by an Angel

But watch what happens to Isaiah next: God sends an angel to pick up a live burning coal and place it on Isaiah's lips, declaring: "Look, your guilt is taken away because this hot coal has touched your lips. Your sin is taken away." While he's still standing there, Isaiah hears God ask a question: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Without hesitation, he jumps up and cries: "Here I am! Send me!"

Why does Isaiah's attitude change? What causes him to change from declaring, "I am impure!" to saying, "Here I am! Send me!"?

It's simple. *He was cleansed by the fire of God.*

Empowered Disciples

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples found themselves in a situation similar to Isaiah's. Before leaving, Jesus told them: "You will be My witnesses—in Jerusalem, in all of Judea, in Samaria, and in every part of the world" (Acts 1:8).

But now, Jesus—their Master, the one who had spoken those words—was gone. Their future was uncertain, and they likely felt highly inadequate.

Ten days later, however, everything changed. Those 120 men and women came out of the Upper Room filled with courage and boldly went out into the streets of Jerusalem proclaiming the message of Jesus to everyone they met (read the full story in Acts 2).

Why? What changed?

The Holy Spirit Purifies

It's simple. *The fire of God had fallen upon them, and they were filled with His Holy Spirit.* All their fears, doubts, weaknesses, and insecurities suddenly became meaningless in light of God's all-sufficient power in their lives. And God used those 120 men and women to ignite a fire that continues to blaze today.

Can you imagine what would have happened had Isaiah or the disciples ignored God's purifying work in their lives? Don't let your past and present mistakes or circumstances hold you back and keep you from answering God's call! It's not about *you* and *your* abilities, strengths, or qualifications; it's about *Him*. He has redeemed you. In His eyes, you are clean and fully equipped for His good work.

Today, God is asking, "Whom shall I send? Who will go?" Will you answer and say, "Here I am! Send me!"?

What does this mean for me?

What's keeping you from doing what God has called you to do? Maybe it's the weight of past mistakes, feelings of inadequacy, or fear of what's ahead. These insecurities can quietly hold us back from saying "yes" to God's plans. But His truth has the power to overcome every barrier.

Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal what might be standing in your way. Write down whatever comes to mind, then search Scripture for promises that speak truth directly to those struggles.

No matter what's holding you back, remember this: You are made new by Christ, empowered by His Spirit, and fully equipped to do what He's calling you to do.

Day 21. Drugs, Prison, and a Second Chance: How God Rebuilt Their Lives

“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. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast.” —Psalm 139:7–10

Recovery Isn’t Always a Straight Line

Scott rocked side to side in the back of the SUV as it sped toward the police station. The drugs he had taken earlier were wearing off, and he could feel the cold handcuffs pressing into his wrists. Just a year earlier, he’d been attending a group at Church, worshiping alongside others, staying sober, and feeling hopeful about a new life. A lot can happen in a year.

Scott was first introduced to drugs as a teenager, which led to years of substance abuse, crime, and homelessness. But everything began to change when he met Tabitha.

Drug Deal Connection

They crossed paths during a drug deal—he was buying, she was selling—but found themselves in an unexpected conversation that stirred something in both of them. For the first time, they felt an overwhelming desire to get clean. Scott knew some people who might be able to help. So, with nothing but a credit card Scott had stolen from his mom, they drove to Dallas for a fresh start.

Out of the blue, they found themselves at the church where Dr. Kenneth Ulmer was preaching from Jeremiah 29:11: *“I know the plans I have for you ... plans to prosper you, plans to give you hope and a future.”* Both Scott and Tabitha felt like God was speaking directly to them. It marked the beginning of their healing and their connection to the Gateway community.

But recovery isn’t always a straight line.

From Relapse to Rock Bottom

Over time, they stopped showing up to their accountability group, stopped going to church, and began spiraling. One of Scott’s lowest moments came when his kids woke up in a Walmart parking lot asking why they couldn’t go home—every dollar went to drugs, leading to a sudden eviction from their house.

It took a drug bust for God to get Scott and Tabitha’s attention again. There, handcuffed in the back of a bounty hunter’s SUV, Scott felt the Lord speak to him clearer than ever before: *I am going to heal you and restore you, and I’m going to use what I do in your life to show others what I’ll do for them.*

Standing in the county jail awaiting sentencing, Scott surrendered his life fully and committed to follow God's call no matter what the future held.

Freedom Behind Bars

Just weeks into his sentence, Scott was invited to a service hosted by the very church where he first encountered God. Scott consistently attended those services throughout his prison sentence, and when he got out, he and Tabitha began building a new life with some huge plans.

Today Scott and Tabitha have a window-washing company, a roofing company, and, most recently, a nonprofit organization called Driven: Re-entry, which helps formerly incarcerated people transition back into society. Within the past year, they've opened two transitional living houses, have seen an astounding zero recidivism rate, and are actively expanding their operations to reach even more people.

No One is Too Far Gone

Scott's life is a living testimony that no one is too far gone for the grace of God. And his story reminds us that evangelism isn't just about preaching—it's about showing up. It's about listening, loving, and being present with those who are outcast and on the fringe of society. What would happen if we all said yes to God's call to reach the "least of these" (Matthew 25:40)?

Let's go!