



SUMMER 2017

The background of the cover is a photograph of a person's hands clasped in prayer over an open Bible. The image is in a warm, golden-brown color palette. The title "PRAYER MATTERS" is overlaid in large, bold, yellow, all-caps sans-serif font.

PRAYER MATTERS

A GUIDE TO 40 DAYS OF PRAYER

PRAY WITH US STARTING JUNE 11

Prayer is one of the greatest responsibilities and privileges of a Christian believer. Question 116 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks “Why do Christians need to pray?” The Answer: “Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us. And also because God gives his grace & Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts & thanking God for them.”

Prayer expresses our dependence and thankfulness to God our Father. It brings glory to God when we cry out to him in prayer. The action of prayer is necessary and of vital importance to our spiritual life, and we want to foster the practice in our corporate life as a church and our lives as families and individuals.

Beginning on Sunday, June 11, Pastor Troy will be preaching though a mini-series on prayer based on the Gospel of Luke. We have developed this guide to coincide with and reinforce that series. Over the next 40 days, we have a noble and timely opportunity to join with one another to praise and thank our great God and directly pray for many aspects of the ministry here at LVBC.

Thank you to all of the church Elders, staff, and members who contributed to this prayer guide! May the Holy Spirit bless your efforts to help unite our church family in prayer!

We are expecting the Lord to do mighty things in these days as a result of your praying. Please join us in steadfastly lifting up these needs and concerns before the one *“who is able to do far more abundantly than all 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!”*

Soli deo gloria!

Day 1 - A Heart Of Prayer

Luke 11:1-13

“Now Jesus was praying in a certain place and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” And he said to them, “When you pray...”

After seeing Jesus model dedicated times of prayer to the Father, the disciples were hungry to learn how to emulate this practice in their own lives. Jesus taught his disciples how to pray by giving them a model prayer, and—more importantly—by exhibiting long, dedicated times of prayer in his own life.

Jesus presumed that his disciples would pray: *“When you pray”*, not *“if you pray...”* We often acknowledge that prayer is important in the life of a believer, but too frequently we fail to devote personal time to such practice. At its core, prayer is simply communication with our heavenly Father. And he longs and desires for his children to speak with him!

The topic of prayer encompasses many aspects, but detailed analysis or explanation lies outside the scope of this guide. The thrust of this guide is for us as a church family to be individually and corporately seeking the Father’s face for various issues. In this guide we will focus on certain aspects of prayer relating to Praise & Adoration for who God is, Thanksgiving for what he has done, and Supplication for certain areas integral to our corporate body.

Our desire for this guide is that it will help direct you in times of prayer over the next several weeks. Over the next 40 days, our Elders, Staff, and various church members will help lead you to pray for certain aspects of our life in the body of Christ. Each day, there will be a scripture reference, along with a short note of encouragement or exhortation, and then several items for you to be praying about.

We hope that you will use this guide to pray individually, as a family, or with your D-Group or Small Group. If you don't have a dedicated time of prayer already, let this guide help you establish one over the next few weeks.

In Luke 11, Jesus, through the use of parables, teaches us to be diligent and persistent in prayer. It is because God is a good Father who delights to interact and speak with his children. God's benevolence is great, and his mercy is overflowing. If we could sum up Jesus' attitude toward prayer, it may be straightforwardly, "Seek and Ask."

As fragile humans and dependent children, we are in desperate need of God's sustenance, his mercy, and his grace. God's kindness is overflowing, and Jesus instructs us to seek God's face and ask for those things that we need.

Throughout this guide, you will find that we are praying for many things directly related to our life as a corporate body. We hope you will join us as we collectively seek and ask for God to work in and through our church family. Below are several things that you can be praying for today as we begin this journey together. As elders and staff, we are praying that God will unite us together as a people who seek the face of our Father God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to see the Jesus Christ lifted up among us for the world to see. *Soli deo Gloria.*

- *Pray that God will grant you a hunger to make prayer a regular element to your daily life.*
- *Pray that you and your family will make time to pray with and for each other regularly and often.*
- *Ask that your prayers would be infused with biblical ambitions, honesty, humility, and a desire for God's will to be done, not our own.*
- *Ask that our church family be united together in a common accord.*

J. Wade Casey

Day 2 - Praise & Adoration

Matthew 6:9, 16:15-17

“But who do you say that I am?...Blessed are you for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”

God, our Father, revealed to Peter the answer to Jesus' question. Peter responded in praise, saying, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Praising God is saying back to him who he is and what he is to us. God desires that we know him and so he reveals himself to us in his Word. God desires intimacy with us and he is grieved when we ignore him. So he invites us to come into his presence with praise and adoration and singing and thanksgiving that we may “know the Lord, he is God!” (Ps 100).

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name.”

Jesus gives us instruction to begin worship of our Father. He reveals that God is Abba, *our* Father. Jesus prays in Aramaic, the common language of the people. God is truly *our* Father. He is Father to each of us in this body and to all believers worldwide.

- *We praise you, our Father, that you desire us to know you!*
- *We praise you for revealing who you are in your Word.*
- *Father, help us to cultivate the habit of praise, both individually and corporately, growing in knowledge of you and in intimacy with you.*
- *Thank you that we can start praising by simply saying, “Our Father!”*
- *Thank you that a word of praise will usher us into your presence.*
- *Help us to pay attention to your Word, taking note of all you reveal to us about who you are so that we may praise you rightly.*
- *Help us rehearse and remember who you are by speaking your glories to one another. Graciously fill our lives with praise.*
- *And, dear Father, give us the great joy of fulfilling our high calling, “To glorify You and enjoy You forever!”*

Susan Moore

Day 3 - Thanksgiving

Ephesians 1:1-14

“Blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing...chose us in him...In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ...In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses...the riches of his grace, which he has lavished upon us...sealed with the promised Holy Spirit...the guarantee of our inheritance...”

As you come before the Lord with your petitions, do you ever ask him for things you already possess? I do. I often forget what I have already been given in Christ. Let us spend our time in thanksgiving, not only thanking him for answering our petitions and intercessions, but also thanking him for what he has already done for us in Christ.

Thank you, dear Father, for blessing us with every spiritual blessing, for choosing and adopting us as your children, for redeeming us and forgiving us through the blood of Christ, for sealing us with your Holy Spirit, the guarantee of our inheritance.

Thank you, our Father, for bringing us together, as a local body of believers and for giving each of us gifts that will bless each other, our community, and the world.

Thank you for these days of corporate prayer in which we will pray in one accord for various vital church-wide ministries and concerns. Thank you that you will draw our hearts closer to you and to each other.

Thank you that Christ is our life!

- *Pray that we will be aware and take note of the great blessings we already possess in Christ.*
- *Pray that we will remember to thank our Father often for what we already have in Christ.*
- *Pray that we will lovingly remind each other of our possessions and our position in Christ, and in so doing, encourage and strengthen one another.*

Susan Moore

Day 4—A Time of Confession

Nehemiah 1:4-11

“Confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father’s house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules...”

Toward the end of the Israelite exile, Nehemiah prayed for God to give him favor before the King of Persia in order that Nehemiah might be able to return to restore Jerusalem. In that prayer, he explicitly confesses to God that he and the entire nation have sinned against the Lord by not keeping his commandments.

Nehemiah records a great prayer to emulate. Embedded in his prayer is an open admission of both his personal sin and the corporate sin of the nation. Confession of sin is not something that takes God off guard. Confession is admitting before God our failures, asking forgiveness, and turning away from that sin.

Confession should become an integral part to all of times of prayer. It is acknowledging that we have fallen from God’s standard and we need his forgiveness and reconciliation to make restitution. And it is through Jesus that he is able to forgive and restore his children to a relationship with himself.

So let us seek the face of our loving, forgiving Father by confessing our sin, agreeing with him over its evil, and walking away from it.

- *Ask God to reveal any obvious failures or hidden faults that may reside in your life and confess those to him.*
- *Confess corporate sins that might be found in our church body (disunity, divisiveness, ungodliness, immorality, etc...).*
- *Ask God to forgive you (and the church body!) through the power of Christ. Rejoice that God is faithful and just to forgive us of that sin! (1 John 1-2).*

Day 5—Unity

John 17:22-24

“The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”

In John 17 we have the longest recorded prayer of Jesus in the Bible. The prayer, voiced to the Father in the presence of his disciples, on their behalf, certainly impacted them profoundly. One of the key components of the Lord’s “High-priestly prayer” is the unity of the church. Notice three aspects of Christian unity Jesus identifies. The unity of the church is...

Glory-purposed. Jesus prays for the unity of his church because of the overarching purpose of glory, “The glory that you have given me...” Why? God is all about his glory! And this is not a temporary glory Jesus is speaking of, but an eternal glory. Later in verse 24, Jesus describes this glory as that which has existed from before “the foundation of the world.” And it will continue on throughout eternity. A unified church displays the eternal glory of Christ.

Grace-imparted. Real unity is only experienced by the free grace of Jesus. We cannot manufacture or manipulate unity. Jesus was given eternal glory from the Father, and he has imparted, by grace, glory to his disciples: “I have given to them...” What is the purpose of that grace-imparted glory? It’s given for the purpose of unity. So as you pray today for the unity of your church, know that Jesus delights in answering that prayer for unity.

Gospel-centered. Jesus states the reason for which he prayed for unity among his people – “so that the world may know that you sent me...” A local church that is walking together in unity, committed to one another in covenant relationship together makes the gospel we proclaim believable to the world. A watching world will believe that Jesus was sent by God to be the Savior when they look at the church who is dwelling together in committed, covenant unity.

- *Praise God for the opportunity to be a people who exist to display His glory.*
- *Repent to the Lord of attitudes or actions that would fracture unity.*
- *Ask Jesus to impart unity to his people.*
- *Yield to the Spirit’s work through his church to communicate the truth of Jesus to a watching world.*

Troy Walliser

Day 6 - Community

Acts 2:42-47

“Now all the believers were together and held all things in common.”

The idea of community is so pivotal, but its practice is increasingly becoming digitalized as many do their “fellowshipping” through social networking. Yet community, according to Scripture, is about being interconnected with the body of Christ. We should be so steeped in one another's lives that when one of us mourns the other one mourns, and when one of us rejoices the other rejoices. We find this idea in Acts 2:42-47. The early church didn't have identical political opinions or singular tastes, but they had everything in common. This had less to do with uniformity and more to do with unification. Believers shared their lives, shared their dinner tables, and shared their resources with one another whenever a need arose.

It is imperative for us to remember that Christian community is the primary way we fight the loneliness that, ironically, is so common today in a culture inundated with social networking sites. We must take a page from the playbook of the early church and prioritize community with other believers, recognizing that this is where we will find spiritual growth, emotional healing, and even physical sustenance.

Our church family is precious to our Heavenly Father. Let us persevere to pray for unity as we seek his will collectively and individually in our daily devotion to Him.

- *Pray for one another specifically by name.*
- *Repent of any selfishness that resides in your heart that hinders this type of community.*
- *Pray for the development of volitional, selfless love (agape) and for specific good deeds towards one another.*
- *Ask that the Lord would cultivate relationships among our church family that mimics the community found in the early church.*

Joe Galloway

Day 7—Elders

1 Peter 5:1-5

“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”

Elders have the responsibility to watch over, care, and lead the church. In Hebrews 13:17, the Bible is clear that elders will be held accountable for how they lead by saying, “As they watch over souls as though who must give account.” They are to serve willingly and eagerly not for the money or reputation, in order to lead the church by example and not abuse or take advantage of their authority, but serve sacrificially and humbly.

The two main areas of service are preaching and praying (Acts 6). The elders are responsible for accurately handling the word of truth, teaching the one true gospel of Jesus Christ, and to guard the flock from false teaching. Also their lives should be filled with seeking God through prayer for strength and wisdom to fulfill their calling. Another area of service is counseling. Many situations arise that require biblical answers to hard questions. These situations can happen at any hour of the day or night. The elder needs wisdom from the Lord during these times. They can range from death and sickness, troubled marriages, disputes among the flock, and family issues.

As you pray for your elders today:

- *Pray for the elders to lead with and exemplify humility, so that the congregation will trust their leadership.*
 - *For wisdom and discernment as decisions are made about the directions and vision of the church.*
 - *For wisdom and discernment in counseling specific situations.*
 - *For their personal prayer life and study of the word.*
- For men willing to accept the call from God to serve as elders.*

Darrell Smith

Day 8— Church Staff

Colossians 3:23

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.”

Nona and Lindsey work in the church office, carrying out many different tasks. Being the first people that someone will talk to makes their job very important. Dealing with benevolence calls, ordering supplies, working with graphic designs, keeping track of finances, and assisting our pastors and the rest of the staff, are just a few of their responsibilities.

Christina and Chad minister to our youth. They are diligently teaching on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings, spending time with them, planning camps for them, leading them on mission trips, and most importantly striving to disciple them while in the midst of all these activities.

Tiffany leads our children’s ministry, which covers nursery through fifth grade. This requires the help of many volunteers she has organized to teach Sunday mornings, Wednesday nights, and staff the nursery. This is a vital ministry to the parents and children who attend LVBC.

As you pray today:

- *Pray for Nona and Lindsey to be encouraged in their work before the Lord and for his blessing on the work of their hands.*
- *Pray for Christina and Chad as they work with the students in this difficult culture. For the Lord to give them wisdom and discernment and for the parents to be involved and give support.*
- *Pray for Tiffany as she serves the children and plans for the many activities. That the Lord would send many workers to show the love of Christ to the children.*

Darrell Smith

Day 9—Discipleship Relationships

Matthew 28:18-20

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, ... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

As Dawson Trotman points out in his famous sermon *Born to Reproduce*, the familiar words of the Great Commission are much like the first command given to Adam and Eve in the garden to “be fruitful and multiply.” God commanded our first parents to reproduce, or multiply. He told them, “I want more like you.”

To quote Trotman, “In the physical realm when your children have children, you become a grandparent. Your parents are then great-grandparents, and theirs are great-great-grandparents. ***And so it should be in the spiritual... Every person who is born into God’s family is to multiply.***”

Discipleship takes on many forms in the life of our church. It could be in intentional discipleship groups or one-on-one discipleship relationships. It could be the encouragement or accountability we receive over a cup of coffee or a warm piece of molten lava cake. Regardless of the form it takes in your life, we are all called to “make disciple or multiply.” May we be intentional about sowing gospel seeds into others the way others have sown into us.

- *Thank God for the person who initially shared the gospel with you.*
- *Thank God for the people that he has used to grow you spiritually.*
- *Pray for those already in discipleship relationships.*
- *Ask God who he has for you to disciple either formally or informally.*
- *Praise him for the promise he gives that he will be with us as we seek to be faithful to the Great Commission.*

Nick Burrows

Day 10—Small Groups

Ephesians 2:19-22

“In Jesus you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

As believers, we are called out of the world to form a new community. And it is in this new community that God himself will make his dwelling place. This new community is built of individuals from all walks of life, and this unity is birthed from diversity solely by our common identity in Christ.

Nowhere in our church life is this community more evident than in our small groups. Small groups are communities that encourage one another towards Christian maturity through consistent spiritual care by sharing life, studying scripture, and serving others together.

Even in a church of our size, it is hard to know many people intimately. If you are not involved in a small group, you are missing out on a large portion of church life. These groups provide the opportunity for you to give and receive personal care for a dedicated group of members.

Would you pray for our small group communities? Would you consider pressing into these communities in a greater way?

- *Pray for small group leaders that they would be faithful to lead and shepherd these communities well.*
- *Pray for God’s Spirit to build trust and communication among the members of our small groups.*
- *Pray that the groups can open Scripture together and build up one another in Christian maturity.*
- *Pray that the groups would be attractive and inviting to those outside the faith so they can be a witness for the gospel.*

Day 11—Intergeneration Relationships

Psalm 145:4

“One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare you mighty acts.”

Intergenerational relationships are woven throughout the bible. From commands from God to share with the coming generations about who he is, to the ministry of Christ, or Paul’s relationship with Timothy, these relationships are an integral part of the Christian and church life. We are not meant to live the Christian life alone; we are to train up those in the faith who come behind us and learn from those who came before.

Jesus modeled this throughout his life through his teachings and the inclusion of young men, women, and children in his ministry. Paul also pressed upon these relationships in his writings to the churches and his discipleship of Timothy. Yes, many scriptural passages directly addresses the nuclear family, but scripture also references the church as the family of God, the body of Christ, and as a community of believers that share life together.

There are many advantages to intergenerational relationships besides learning the history of the church. Our children benefit from seeing the faith of others lived out through their marriages, singleness, trials, steadfast faith, and dependence on Christ. They experience things they may not see at home. Mothers can learn from mothers that have come before them. Singles learn how to be steadfast in their faith; they gain a family, and become spiritual children and parents to those in the church.

- *Ask the Lord to orient your heart to be outward focused instead of inward.*
- *Ask the Lord to bring godly parents, children, singles, elders and teens into your life and the life of your family.*
- *Ask the Lord to reveal and grow intergenerational relationships in your life and the life of the church.*
- *Ask the Lord for the courage to seek out intergenerational relationships in your life.*

Kimberly Casey

Day 12—Parents & Family

Deuteronomy 6:5-9

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on your doorframes on your houses and on your gates.”

Do you know what comes to mind when I think about “bind them to your foreheads?” Cheese Heads... you know... the big slice of cheese that Green Bay Packer fans wear to the games. Not only do they wear them to the games, but you see them on the streets and hanging in people’s homes. Do you think the child of the man who wears that every Sunday from September to January will be a Packers fan?

The point is this, we are all making disciples of our children. The question is, what are you discipling them toward? As a parent, or guardian, you are shaping how your children see and interact with the world. You are communicating through your words, actions, and lifestyle what is important and is not important. You are establishing what your life (and their life) is going to be centered on. Whether that is a sports team or the gospel, you are setting the pace for the rest of their lives.

May we walk to the beat of the gospel drum in our homes. From the moment we wake in the morning until we lay our heads at night, let’s weave gospel threads throughout our children’s lives.

- *Pray for parents in our church to be fans of Jesus Christ above all.*
- *Pray that you and other parents would formally disciple our children.*
- *Pray our children would come to know Jesus at an early age as gospel seeds take root.*
- *Pray for children in our community without believing parents.*

Nick Burrows

Day 13—Students

Psalm 71:5-8

“For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth. Upon you I have leaned from before my birth.”

These verses are obviously written by a man who is enthralled with his Lord. All the glory—from all his days—is given straight to God. The focus is not on the things he accomplished, but on praising the Creator. When scripture says, “all the day” that means all of the day. May we be a people who have the praise of God continually on our lips all the day!

The Lord is our hope. He is the one we trust. As believers, the marking of our lives should be different. When we look back, we see the works of the Lord and what he has done. When we reflect presently, we lean on God to direct our paths. When we look to the future, we pray that we can glorify him and ask for his will to be done and not our own.

The influences on a life between the years of 12-18 are vital. May we not take for granted the souls in our church under that age range. These are the years when students are forming what they believe, who they are, and where their identity is found. God places many desires and plans for our lives in us while we are yet teenagers. However, Satan battles for those exactly things: what students believe, who they are, and where their identity is found.

We must be in prayer for the next generation. We must be pouring the Gospel into their lives. Please be in prayer for our youth:

- *Pray that they would have a firm foundation in God’s Word.*
- *Pray that they would not simply claim they are Christians, but that they may have a deep relationship with the Lord.*
- *Pray that they would seek the face of God before all others and recognize that he is continually with them as a strong refuge. May they surrender to the Lord and may he direct their path so that their mouths can be filled with his glory, day in and day out.*

Christina Wilson

Day 14—Children

Mark 10:13-16

“And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.”

Jesus consistently showed a great love for children throughout his earthly ministry. There are multiple examples where Jesus used children to teach his followers valuable lessons about child-like faith.

Even though Jesus was a very busy man, he stopped to recognize the unfair situation before his eyes. The disciples were scolding people for pushing children to the front of the crowds to be seen and touched by Jesus. He could have kept going on with his busy life; instead he stopped what he was doing and made time for the children. When we take time to get down on a child’s level—putting down the cell phone, iPad, Pinterest board, work, etc....in order to most effectively teach them the Word of God, we model Jesus’ behavior.

Jesus points out “the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these.” Why did he say this? Because children are so quick to believe. They trust and hope easily, often times without question. As a new mom I see how dependent my daughter is on me. When I hold her in my arms, she isn’t worried I’m going to drop her. She relaxes and leans on me because she trusts me. This is how we are to lean in to the Lord—with the kind of faith that calmly rests on Him.

In the last part of this passage we see Jesus taking the children in his arms, placing his hands on them, and blessing them. When was the last time you blessed the children in your life? Don’t wait; do it today!

- *Pray that children in our church and community will come to know Jesus at the earliest possible age, and fall deeply in love with him and his ways.*
- *Pray their little eyes will be careful what they see and ears will be careful what they hear.*
- *Pray for the physical, mental, and emotional needs of children in our community. Ask God to place his mighty hand of protection over children in our society that readily accepts abortion and is increasingly abusive to children.*

Tiffany Morrison

Day 15—Deacons

1 Timothy 3:8-13

“They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.”

The only passage that mentions the qualifications for deacon is in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. In this passage, Paul gives an official, but not exhaustive list of the requirements for deacons.

Seen in the New Testament, the role of deacon is mainly to be a servant. The church needs deacons to provide logistic and material support so that the elders can focus on the Word of God and prayer.

The New Testament does not provide much information concerning the role of deacons. The requirements given in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 focus on the deacons’ character and family life (sound in faith and life, married to a godly wife, manages children and household well).

Based on the pattern in Acts 6, it seems best to view deacons as servants who do whatever is necessary to allow the elders to accomplish their God-given calling of shepherding and teaching the church. Some duties that deacons could be responsible for might include facilities, benevolence, ushers, and logistics.

Would you pray for our deacons and ask God to lift them up as they strive to serve our church family?

- *Pray for our deacons to be filled with the Spirit and operate in wisdom as they carry out their responsibilities.*
- *Pray that they walk worthy of respect with sincere hearts.*
- *Pray that God bless their homes with peace and respect and that they keep hold of the truth.*

Joe Galloway

Day 16—Worship in Music

Acts 16:25

“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.”

Paul and Silas were on mission heading to a place of prayer when a slave girl with a fortune-telling, demonic spirit starts harassing them. Paul, annoyed, casts out the evil spirit. This makes the girl's master extremely upset because now they have lost their money ticket. They are brought before the authorities, accused of throwing the city into an uproar and going against Roman customs. They are stripped, severely beaten, and thrown into prison. At this point the two begin to pray and sing hymns to God. This was no corporate worship service, or even before a huge audience, although the other prisoners were listening. I believe they were singing in extreme pain and agony to encourage themselves and to reorient their hearts to God. I can only imagine how this must have moved the heart of God. The Bible says there was a violent earthquake that shook the very foundations of the prison and blew all the prison doors open. As the head jailer is about to kill himself, Paul reassures him, and he falls down begging to be saved. What a story!

Although most of us will never be in the circumstances Paul and Silas were in, we all have trials and hardships. If we choose to praise God in them, he will change our hearts, make us witnesses to those around us, and ultimately save others that are without hope. When we choose to praise him, and we come together in corporate worship, there is nothing we have to conjure up: it is a natural overflow of what is in our heart.

- *Ask God to help us exemplify him in our lives by worshipping him in all circumstances.*
- *Pray that our example of worshipping in spirit and in truth will compel others to do the same for his glory.*
- *Pray that we make time for private times of worship, so that when we come together, it is an overflow of what we already practice.*

April Hutson

Day 17 – Faithful Preaching

Ephesians 6:18-19

“Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel.”

Paul concludes the letter to the Ephesians with a personal prayer request. Understanding the weight of the call upon his life and the seriousness of the task before him, he asks that they pray for his faithfulness in preaching. His requests three particular areas of prayer that we can pray today for those who stand and proclaim, “Thus says the Lord!” Faithful preaching should be...

Inspired. Paul asked *“that words may be given to me...”* Preaching is speaking words. In my sermon preparation I write out almost word-for-word what I’ll be speaking. My prayer is that the words I type and speak will be God-inspired words. I do not hear an audible voice from which I transcribe the message from God to his people, but there is a very real sense that the words and thoughts which make up sermon are truths that are consistent with the heart of God. This inspiration happens through the diligent study and personal prayer of the preacher. This is the “what” of preaching.

Courageous. There is a certain level of courage necessary when preaching the Word. Preaching, by nature, can be offensive. One man speaking at you for an extended period of time making propositions about truth and error. Yet, God has commanded preaching to be central in His people’s worship of him (2 Tim 4:2). Boldness and courage are required. This is the “how” of preaching.

Purposeful. The point of preaching is to make known *“the mystery of the gospel.”* A mystery is something that was hidden and has now been revealed. The revelation of the gospel is that salvation is entirely based on the merit of Christ and in no way is accomplished through human effort. Thy mystery of the gospel is *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Col 1:27). Therefore, all faithful preaching must be “gospel-centered.” This is the “why” of preaching.

- *Praise God for the faithful preaching he has used in your life to bring you to salvation and form his nature in you.*
- *Repent of the desire to have your “ears tickled” (2 Tim 4:3) rather than challenged deeply.*
- *Ask Jesus to give inspiration, courage, and purpose to your pastors.*
- *Yield to the Spirit’s work through the faithful preaching you have heard.*

Day 18—New Members/Guests

1 Peter 4:9

“Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.”

If you look across the sanctuary each week during our Sunday morning gathering, there are multiple new faces sitting around the room. Every week, God is bringing new families to gather with us to worship our great God.

In his letter to the exiles, Peter exhorts them to be hospitable. Thinking about hospitality often conjures up pinned images on Pinterest: an elaborate menu served on pristine china in the middle of an immaculate house. Or if you are a man – your mind doesn’t rush anywhere at all. Hospitality is women’s work you think.

But hospitality is not decorating or entertaining reserved for the women of the church. It is literally to “pursue the love of strangers.” Hospitality is a posture of openness that invites others into our lives for the purpose of Christian fellowship, encouragement, and even evangelism. And this is equally applicable for men and women. Paul even lists hospitality as a requirement for church elders!

We boast about being a church family that loves to “Welcome Home!” those visiting with us. But are we really an open and welcoming congregation? Are you seeking to reach out and build relationships with those outside your family or inner-circle? Is your home and life open to gladly (not begrudgingly!) welcome new people? Oh, may we be a church that flourishes with hospitality!

- *Pray that we will be a church that is welcoming and inviting and loving to those who visit and join.*
- *Repent of actions or words that were unkind or unwelcoming to people outside of our inner-circle.*
- *Ask the Lord to bring new faces to our church each week—and that you will be the ones to invite them!*
- *Yield to the Spirit’s prompting to be hospitable to new families by having them over to your house for a meal or time of fellowship.*

Day 19—Mission Partners

Matthew 28:18-20

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

When you think of missions one has think of Matthew 28:18-20, the Great Commission. There are three points to remember when you read this passage.

1. An Authority (v18): You read through Matthew and it speaks of the authority of Jesus Christ over and over. Authority in teaching, healing, and forgiving sin. He had authority over Satan, and He delegated that authority to His apostles. Jesus has **all** authority.
2. An Activity (vv. 19-20a): "Make disciples." No matter where we are, we should be witnesses for Christ and try to win others to Him. "Teaching them"; it's not enough to try and win them but we have to teach them the Word of God.
3. An Ability (v20b): "I am with you always, even to the end of the age". Wow, what a promise! No matter where we go, no matter the circumstances, Jesus Christ is with us. Always!

There is much information in these few verses. I want to encourage you to read and meditate on what has been written. I also want to encourage you to participate in an upcoming mission trip, here locally, nationally or internationally. Remember - The Great Commission is not a great suggestion!

Here are a few specific things to pray about:

- *Our church leaders. For wisdom as they look at different ways to involve LVBC in the mission fields*
- *Our current missionaries that are in the field, for continued protection and provision and perseverance.*
- *Yourself. How can I serve on the mission field? How can I be a Mission Partner? How can I pray, give, and go?*

Rodney Ivey

Day 20—Workers for the Field

Acts 13:47

“I have made you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”

As believers, you would think one of the easiest things to do would be telling our friends about Jesus. Yet because we are sinners, and often reside in ourselves, we do not—because of the fear of losing those friends. You would also think we wouldn’t be afraid to accept God’s call to go to all the nations to spread the gospel. But because we live in a sinful world, we are often more concerned about ourselves or our busy schedules rather than the world around us living in such a helpless state.

Realizing we are human and we are sinners, it takes a power higher than any other to give us the strength to go into the nations. No matter how hard we try, in order to be a worker in the mission field, we can never gain enough strength and confidence on our own. In Acts 13:47, Christ says that he makes his followers a light. He is the one that will place us where he wants us, whether it be in your back yard talking over the fence to your neighbor, or across the world. All the ends of the Earth must be reached! So I encourage you to pray for him to make you that light. But do not expect some magical strength to come over you; expect more situations where you can be that light to people, and give him all the glory for it. Through it all, you must never stop praying for courage and strength that only he can give, in order that self-esteem might not have more power over you than Christ himself.

While you are reading this today, Sarah Smith and Ashley Walliser are in Panama, while Gabriel Rains is in Peru, seeking to spread and expand Christ’s Kingdom in a mostly Catholic and lost population. Please pray for these specific things for them and their team, as well as yourself:

- *For opportunities to arise for the gospel to be spread in daily life.*
- *For physical and emotional strength, that our own feelings do not get in the way of the gospel being spread.*
- *That God would continue preparing hearts of all the people we may come in contact with, that their ears will be opened to the love of Jesus Christ, and that anything that is not of him will be blocked out.*

Sarah Smith

Day 21—Neighborly Evangelism

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you: and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Is there anything that produces more anxiety than trying to witness to our neighbors? How do we lower our anxiety so that we allow a natural joy to flow from our lives?

Anxiety comes when we think we have to plant the seed of the gospel, water it, and nurture it to maturity. Even Paul did not put that kind of pressure on himself. Paul says, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.” (1 Cor. 3:6)

Everyone we meet needs the love, hope, and life Jesus offers. You can be a blessing by listening and reminding them of the Savior’s perfect grace and provision.

Will you allow him to care for others through you? Will you show people the awesome, unconditional, sacrificial love of Jesus? Your part is simple – be available for him to do his great works through you. He will certainly do the rest!

- *Pray: “Lord, use me to draw others to you!”*
- *Ask: “Help me proclaim your salvation and inspire others to know and love you more.”*
- *Pray: “Father, love others through me!”*

Wallace & Judy Ramey

Day 22—Sharing the Gospel

John 17:23

“I in them, and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

This is the secret to world recognition of Christianity – to become one as God and Christ are one. In this long discussion when the Son talks with the Father, what are his concerns? There are three: the glory of the Father, the well-being of believers, and the salvation of the world – that others will believe. God yearns for these things!

In John 15:27, Jesus says, “you also must testify.” God invites us to join him in what he is doing through our sharing the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit, touching and changing lives for his kingdom sake.

A need revealed by your neighbor is an open door to share the gospel or to pray for someone. Most everyone responds positively to a short two or three sentence prayer for Jesus to meet their needs. They need to know Jesus cares about what they are going through, and that he wants them to know he loves them and wants to make himself known to them.

Another way to share the gospel is our own testimony: what our life was like before coming to Christ and how our life is different now that Christ is in it!

- *Pray for, seek, and promote unity in the church so the world may know God.*
- *Pray for opportunities and the enablement to join God in what he is doing and where he is working.*
- *Pray that we would bring God glory as we share his gospel.*

Wallace and Judy Ramey

Day 23-Preparing for Persecution

Matthew 24:3-14

“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake.”

Are you willing to face persecution, death, and hate for Christ’s sake? As believers, we have no scriptural foundation for believing that we can forever escape being persecuted for Christ’s sake.

Persecution should come as no surprise to Christians; it is the normal condition of the disciple of Christ. The Bible says that all who “desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). In John 15:19, Jesus plainly said that we will be hated by the world: “If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

Let us commit to pray and prepare our hearts for persecution now so that we will not fail King Jesus when persecution comes.

- *Thank God that he is powerful to defeat our enemies. Not even persecution happens outside of his Sovereign plan. “Be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might” (Ephesians 6:10).*
- *Offer a prayer of praise that God is working all things out for our ultimate good (Romans 8:28), even if we do not see it yet.*
- *Pray that Jesus will return soon. He will be victorious over all sin and will vindicate us at his return (Revelation 6:9-11).*
- *Pray to the God of all comfort that he will show you practical ways that you can give support and comfort to one another in times of affliction and persecution (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).*

Josh Parham

Day 24—Government Leaders

1 Timothy 2:1-3

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayer, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”

Ah, July 4th—Independence Day. Nothing says patriotism like hot dogs, watermelon, and fireworks. In the midst of all the celebrating, have you ever thought to use this holiday as a reminder to pray for those who lead our nation?

In his letter, Paul instructs Timothy and the church at Ephesus to pray for *“all who are in high positions.”* Paul and Timothy lived under the harsh and autocratic rule of the Roman Empire, where it was often tough to live as a Christian. It must have been difficult for them to pray for those in authority when the government was often an enemy of the church.

We live in a vastly different political and civil environment today, but Pauls’ instructions remain pertinent in our life. We need to be praying for those civil authorities—on the local, state, and national levels.

But notice the reason Paul gives for these prayers: *“so that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life.”* Paul does not pray a patriotic prayer for national greatness, but asks the Lord implicitly for an environment in which the church would be able to flourish and grow.

- *Pray for wisdom and discernment that these governmental leaders would make decisions that lead to the greatest human flourishing:*
 - *Local —including the Mayor, City Council, and the School Board.*
 - *State —including the Governor and Legislature*
 - *Federal —including Congress, the Supreme Court, and the President*
- *Pray for a civil environment where the church can flourish and the gospel can go out unhindered.*
- *Pray for the conversion of these leaders so that they follow Christ.*

Day 25—LV Neighborhood

Romans 12:9-21

“Love one another with brotherly affection...live in harmony with one another...”

In Paul’s letter to the church in Rome, he highlights practical ways in which Christians can live among others. He not only focuses on how to treat fellow Christians, he also teaches how to treat our enemies. Like first-century Rome, Lookout Valley is full of believers and non-believers.

As a church body, we should always seek to “love one another with brotherly affection” (v10). Nothing shows the world Christ more than his people showing love to others. Affectionate love is the kind of love that families have for one other. We should treat one other better than ourselves. Also, we need to be mindful to encourage and uplift our fellow Christians in the community, sharing one another’s burdens and blessings. This will help all Christians in Lookout Valley grow in the Lord and magnify the name above all names—the name of Jesus.

Paul reinforces that we, as Christians, are to treat those who may slander or persecute us with love as well. He tells us to “repay no evil for evil” - not returning evil deeds done to us, but doing good. In doing so, we experience the love of God in our own hearts.

Our community is dear to us, so let’s take some time to reflect on family and friends that we have grown up with and have come to love dearly. Prayerfully ask God to reveal himself to those who may not know him and, more importantly, ask how he can use you to plant the seed.

- *Pray that God will use each of us to spread the good news to lost souls in our community.*
- *Pray for other Bible-believing churches in our community and ask that God be glorified and honored in their praise and worship of him, helping reach the lost in Lookout Valley.*
- *Ask how God can specifically use you and your family to be a light among the darkness in our community with humble hearts.*

Garrett Reagan

Day 26—LVES & Good News Club

Mark 10:13-15

He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

In this passage Jesus demonstrated his love for children and declared that little children can enter the kingdom of God. He further explained that all people must come to God with a child-like heart; one that is in total dependence, full trust, frank openness, and complete sincerity.

An International Bible Society survey indicates that 83% of all Christians make their commitment to Jesus between ages 4 and 14. Barna Research Group surveys demonstrate that American children ages 5 to 13 have a 32% probability of accepting Christ; ages 14 to 18, a 4% chance and adults 19+, a 6% probability. This data illustrates the importance of influencing children to consider making a decision to follow Christ.

Early conversion not only saves a soul eternally but points an entire life towards service to God. Evangelist D.L. Moody was once asked how his meeting went and he replied, "We had 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ conversions. Two children and one adult. The adult has only half his life left."

What a privilege and blessing our church has to conduct a Good News Club each week in Lookout Valley Elementary School where the children sing, play games, and most importantly learn about God and hear the Gospel. Many of these children do not attend any church services and are hearing Bible stories for the first time. The salvation message is clearly presented and numerous children have responded in faith. Praise God! Will you pray for the GNC and the 300 children that attend LVES?

- *Ask God to send many children (75!) to GNC next September.*
- *Ask God to prepare their hearts to receive Jesus as their Savior.*
- *Pray for the GNC workers that they would be conduits of Jesus' love.*

Diana Schubert

Day 27-LV Middle/High School

John 6:49-51

"Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."

Jesus is telling us what is of utmost importance. The Jewish audience he was speaking to were very familiar with the Old Testament and knew the history of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness. Jesus uses the illustration of bread to draw people to himself. He is offering this amazing bread that will sustain us for life. Surely the people were surprised to hear that it was not merely bread they would digest and need more of the next day, but it was the Lord himself.

As Christians, we should have a heart for those who are in need of the everlasting bread. There are so many students at LVHS/MS who are looking for fulfillment in any place they can find it. If they do not find that satisfaction in Jesus they will forever be hungry and looking for the next thing to make them feel "full". They want something that is going to last. Nothing will meet their needs until they turn to the One Savior. They need to be fed the Gospel!

- *Pray that students' hearts would be open to hearing the Gospel. We must pray with anticipation that they would come to faith in Jesus.*
- *Pray for the Christian students and teachers in our schools, that they would be lights for the kingdom. God can do exceedingly more than we can imagine with a willing heart and feet that move according to his Word!*
- *Pray that students with the roughest past would enter the doors of our church and encounter the life sustaining, fulfilling bread of Jesus Christ!*

Christina Wilson

Day 28—VBS 2017

Psalm 78:1-8

“We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.”

It's that time of the year again! Vacation Bible School is upon us! Our annual VBS is one of the highlights of our church year. In 2014, according to data collected through the Annual Church Profile and Church VBS Reports, Southern Baptist churches hosted 36,439 individual “schools.” A total of 2,593,547 children were enrolled! Over 73,000 of them made a profession of faith during that week of VBS!

Across the county and across the years, God has used VBS to impact millions of children with the good news of Jesus Christ. While we will not have 2.5 million children running through our halls this week (although it may feel like it some nights!), we have the incredible opportunity to share the gospel with many children from our community, many of whom have no formal church background and are without a relationship with Christ.

About 20% of our attenders have no formal church connection, and VBS serves as a great outreach tool to connect with these children and their families. In fact, over the past several years, we have had several families join our church as a result of VBS. Will you be in prayer this week for our workers and for these children?

- *Pray that the gospel will be taught clearly by workers who patiently show the love of Christ to these children.*
- *Pray for workers to have the endurance and patience to serve these children all week.*
- *Pray for God to open hearts and open minds to receive the gospel*
- *Pray that we can connect unchurched families with our church body through the relationships built during VBS.*

Day 29—Hunger for Gospel Truth

John 6:26-35

“For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”

Our nation knows little of wanting. Instant gratification is becoming increasingly ingrained in our culture, but these provisions pass as quickly as they are obtained. Rather than seeking the fleeting pleasures of this world, we must pursue the only thing that can truly satisfy.

Crowds often flocked to Jesus for superficial reasons: many wanted to be physically healed, witness a miracle, or as was the case in John 6, they came to be physically fed. Jesus was aware that the food these people sought would only temporarily gratify, but the Truth he came to proclaim would eternally satisfy. Jesus’ offering gives life! The gospel meets our greatest need, so why do we continue to look elsewhere for our fulfillment? We have the peace this world is seeking, so why are we not doing everything we can to reach them with it?

My prayer is that our church will be a people that craves the truth of the gospel, and that we will not simply store it up for ourselves, but bring it to a world which is starving without it.

- *Ask God for an insatiable desire for his Word and for a proper perspective concerning our vain pursuits.*
- *Pray that we may have opportunities to share this bread of life with our community and that they may understand its worth and cling to its provision.*
- *Pray for our world to be spiritually hungry and for faithful workers who will bring them the all-satisfying gospel.*

Chad Wilson

Day 30—Theological Maturity

John 8:30-38

“So Jesus said...”If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Does theology really matter? Isn't theology just responsible for divisions among Christian elites? Far from being an area of study reserved only for academics or pastors, theology is very important to every Christian.

In short, theology is the study of God, encompassing concepts such as his nature, the nature of reality, the human condition, the person of Christ and more. But our study of theology must extend beyond merely learning facts and information. As we seek to learn more about theology and God's wonderful truths and their relevance to our lives, we must do so with a sense of humility and awe, desiring "to know Christ" (Philippians 3:10).

We may not think of prayer as theology, but the foundation of prayer is theology. We pray because we know a loving and personal God exists and hears us. This is not a distant, indifferent God, but the all-powerful God of the universe who is active in his creation, wanting the best for us.

- *Pray that when the church gathers together on the Lord's Day that we will worship in both "spirit and truth" (John 4:24).*
- *Turn what you learn about God each week into a matter for meditation before God, leading to prayer and praise to God.*
- *Ponder carefully the sermons you hear. Let the truths about God from the Word give rise to worship and prayer in your heart.*
- *Pray that you (and the church!) may mature in your theology. In other words, that you may "grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).*

Josh Parham

Day 31 - Growth in Holiness

1 Peter 1:15-16

“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all that you do. For it is written, ‘be holy because I am holy.’”

We may not think of ourselves as holy people, but God commands us to be holy. Both in our individual and corporate lives as a church, God exhorts his people to live holy lives, as he is holy. But while he commands this of us, he does not leave us alone to live out this command. He gives us his Holy Spirit, and is faithful to accomplish the complete holiness of his people.

We are a work in progress. God is at work in our lives to allow us to grow in holiness. We are made holy in order to better carry on the work God has for us here on earth, and to be the light to the world. Holy people are to reflect the holy God.

We are to present ourselves as a holy sacrifice, and not to conform to this world. Be obedient in prayer and the studying of God’s Word, so that when the Lord returns, his work will have been completed.

- *Pray: God, give us the grace to do as you command, and command us to do what you will.*
- *Pray for your own sanctification: that God will grow you in holiness.*
- *Pray for the sanctification of one another in the church.*
- *Pray that we as a church would continue to seek God’s holy will for us*

Mike Sartin

Day 32 - Growth in Love

1 John 4:7-21

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.”

Love is essential to the Christian faith. The apostle John reminds us that the experience of God’s love is vital to our relationship with him. The phrase “for love is of God” means that God is the source of love, and Jesus Christ is the perfect, preeminent manifestation of this love. In his first epistle, John mentions this love over 20 times in chapter four alone, calling special attention for us to love one another since God so greatly loves us.

Jesus showed his own that to truly love, you must elevate others over self. By washing their feet, and then eventually dying for them, he reminded them that love is essential by telling them, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). The world should recognize Christians by their unconditional, self-sacrificial love for others.

How can we apply this love practically to our daily walk? First, recognize that we love because God first loved us. God *chooses* to save us, not because he has a moral or legal obligation to save, but because of his great love for us. Secondly, display this love towards others unconditionally. This type of brotherly love seeks nothing in return. This love does not mean being overly tolerant, but calls us to express a righteous love—a love that does not tolerate false doctrine and habitual sin. We even speak truth *in love*.

As a church body, we physically display and demonstrate Christ’s love towards others. Therefore, be mindful of those you encounter: let them see the Lord Jesus living through you by the love you extend towards them and others around you. After all, we are *called* to love one another, not asked.

- *Pray that the Holy Spirit moves within you to imitate the love that Jesus has for his people.*
- *Pray that your self-sacrificial love for others will show people Christ, since Christ showed us this love by being the propitiation for our sins.*
- *Reflect upon Jesus’ command to love one another in a new way today. Let someone know that you love them and that you are praying for them.*

Garrett Reagan

Day 33—Faithful Giving

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

“The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Most researchers show that only 7% of churchgoers in the U.S. are tithing 10% of their income. Conversely, John Wesley believed that a Christian’s standard of living should not rise with increasing income, but the standard of giving should increase. At the end of his life, he was living off of 30 pounds yet gave nearly 1400 pounds away (he gave 98%).

Do you feel guilty now? I know I did when I read that story. Be careful. God is not looking for us to establish a legalistic approach to our giving where we feel “compelled” to give. He is not looking for “sad givers” who give grudgingly, or “mad givers” who give because we have to; but we should be “glad givers” who cheerfully share what we have because we have experienced the grace of God. (Wiersbe)

As we consider our giving, may we never forget that God was unsparing in his giving: Paul tells us in Romans 8:32, “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

May we be known as a body of believers who follow God’s example of generous giving, as we sow bountifully into gospel ministry and into the lives of others.

- *Confess the times that you have given sparingly or reluctantly.*
- *Ask God to enlighten you to what generous giving should look like.*
- *Pray for opportunities to display generous giving in the community.*
- *Thank God for supplying the seed for which we can sow for His glory.*

Nick Burrows

Day 34—Developing Leaders

2 Timothy 2:2

“And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

The Lord has never left his people alone and without leadership. Moses leads the people out of the bondage of Egypt; Joshua goes before them to conquer the Promised Land; King David stands at the head of national Israel; elders and pastors shepherd and direct the church.

Paul leaves Timothy in Ephesus to build up the churches there by appointing elders (pastors) and other leaders to watch over the flock. This is why Paul’s instruction to Timothy in his second epistle is so important: the church needs to constantly disciple and raise up leaders to teach and shepherd the people of God.

Generations of leaders come and go quickly, so there is an ever-present need to develop younger leaders who have the theological maturity, compassion, humility, faithfulness, and courage to lead the people of God. This is no less important in our own body as in Paul’s day.

Will you pray for God to raise up younger leaders, especially young men, to serve as small group leaders, deacons, nursery volunteers, elders, and other leaders? Will you help encourage these younger leaders to be bold and faithful to shoulder these responsibilities? Raising up and discipling leaders is a church-wide activity—we all must be involved in training and equipping the next generation.

- *Pray that the Lord will raise up leaders who manifest godly virtues within our body to care for the flock in the coming years.*
- *Pray for wisdom for our current leaders who are identifying and discipling leaders even now.*
- *Ask the Lord that these developing leaders be mature, faithful, and kind examples to imitate.*

Day 35—Spirit of Forgiveness

Matthew 18:21-35

“Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

We rejoice in the heart of the gospel message that God shows us his steadfast love. And one way he displays this truth is by forgiving us of our sins. He is a God of forgiveness and how good it is to be told you are forgiven!

After Peter’s question, Jesus teaches a parable to beautifully illustrate his point that we are to forgive others. Jesus tells of a man who is quick to *accept* forgiveness from his master, but does not *practice* forgiveness towards his fellow servant. This type of attitude can exclude you from truly experiencing God’s wonderful gift of forgiveness, and hinder your walk with him. As this parable teaches, we are to forgive our brothers just as God has forgiven us.

Peter asked Jesus, “How often shall I forgive someone?” He wanted to know if there was a limit to forgiving someone. Jewish rabbis in the first century taught that forgiving someone three times was sufficient! Essentially, Jesus responds by telling him that there are *no limits* to forgiveness. No matter how many times someone sins against us we are to forgive them, and we do this to reflect God’s nature in forgiving his people.

As a congregation, we are certainly called to confront sin. However, we do so in love and with a forgiving heart. God works mightily in us if we establish an atmosphere of forgiveness in our church body. The apostle Paul reminds us, “as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive” (Col 3:13b). Following Jesus means expressing a spirit of true forgiveness.

- *Rejoice in the Lord that you are forgiven of your sins!*
- *Pray that God’s Spirit enables you to forgive others even if the pain is deep.*
- *Pray that we as a congregation are a forgiving people, following after the Lord’s own heart and that we live by His command to forgive others.*
- *Reflect on a difficult relationship today. Ask yourself if you have truly forgiven someone of the hurt they have caused you. Pray and ask the Lord to help you forgive from your heart.*

Garrett Reagan

Day 36—Attitude of Humility

Titus 3:2

“To speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.”

The life of a Christian should demonstrate this kind of attitude described by Paul in his letter to Titus and the church he pastored. A Christian's life, his relationship with God and his people, should be characterized by love, kindness, and respect to all. Most especially love.

We should do nothing for selfish reasons. For love does not work from selfish ambitions. Always try to lift others up higher than yourself. Be an encourager, motivate others, and guide one another to a greater and stronger relationship with God.

The greatest act of humility was Christ coming to earth to be human and to die on the cross. He came and experienced the same as any other person, yet was completely sinless. He voluntarily went to the cross for all mankind, so that the blood he shed would wash away our sin, and cleanse us from our unrighteous. And it is this attitude of humility that we are to emulate.

- *Pray that our concerns for others would be greater than our own.*
- *Pray that our love for one another would grow stronger.*
- *Pray that our church would show the attributes of God to all who come – especially his love and humility as we serve them.*

Mike Sartin

Day 37—Endure & Persevere

James 1:2-12

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

Scripture makes a number of statements that are rather counterintuitive to our culture and to our flesh. We understand that we are called to live radically different lives from the world around us, but considering trials to be *joyful* experiences is difficult to reconcile with our pain-adverse nature. Yet, when we endure difficulty, we not only take solace in our promised eternal future, but we also celebrate the work the Lord is doing in our lives through that set of circumstances.

This passage in James is not focused on the temporary, but on the permanent. James encourages us that though our immediate condition may seem daunting, the Lord is using our experiences to shape us into the person he perfectly planned for us to be. Perseverance primarily requires faith. We must have faith in God’s sovereignty and the supremacy of his will.

Rather than resenting our difficult seasons, we must praise the Lord, knowing that his grace is sufficient and his power is made perfect in our weakness. May this understanding lead us to encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ to also endure faithfully.

- *Ask the Lord for understanding that his ways are better than our ways and that his glory is of more value than our plans.*
- *Pray for those being persecuted for the Faith, that they may joyfully persevere for the sake of the cross.*
- *Pray for faith that enables us to endure to the end.*

Chad Wilson

Day 38—Praise and Adoration

Psalm 66, Psalm 103

“Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! (Psalm 66:1)

With adoration and praise, we hallow and lift high the name of God.
We worship, proclaim, declare, remember, and confess who God is.
We lift our gaze, and focus our hearts on Jesus, the one true God.

Bless the LORD, O my soul and forget not all his benefits! (Psalm 103:2)

Who died for me when I hated him and took the wrath I deserve?
Praise the Lamb, Jesus my Savior, Redeemer, Substitute.

Who welcomes me, day after day, into his presence and lifts me out of fear, loneliness, hopelessness, weariness, sorrow, and self?
Praise Emmanuel, and Praise God the Spirit, Comforter, Healer.

Who leads me through this broken world and who is with me through every trial?
Bless the Lord, my Shepherd, my Counselor, my Guide

Who dwells in, inhabits, and is enthroned in our praises? Who is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love? Who is all these and so much more? Who is this God of glory?
He is Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. He is the One, who alone is worthy of all praise!

- *Pray that we will focus more and more on our Lord Jesus Christ, learning to trust him more so that we fear, worry, and doubt less.*
- *Pray that as we practice praising and adoring God both privately and together, he will bring more awareness of his ever-presence.*
- *Praise and thank God for the gracious gift of corporate worship in which he captures our hearts by reminding us of his glory. Hallelujah!*

Susan Moore

Day 39—Thanksgiving

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

A wonderful blessing of thanksgiving is that it complements and enhances every aspect of our prayers. All that God is (praise) becomes so personal when we thank him for who he is to us. Out of confession flows thanksgiving for the forgiveness we already have through the finished work of Christ. We can thank him along with our petitions and supplications for what he is going to do in answer to our prayers.

Giving thanks in all circumstances is an act of the will.

Giving thanks is always a good choice.

In her inspiring, helpful book, *31 Days of Praise*, Ruth Myers says:

“It helps me to think of worship as a beautiful crown adorned with two brilliant jewels. One jewel is praise; the other is thanksgiving.”

Come, let us worship the Lord with praise and thanksgiving and with gladness!

- *Pray that God will strengthen our gratitude as we express it.*
- *Ask God to make thankfulness our first response in all circumstances.*
- *Thank God for continuing to teach us to pray and for increasing our desire to pray.*
- *Thank our Lord that he is building this house of prayer.*

Susan Moore

Day 40—Maranatha!

Revelation 21:20-21

“He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

With these words, the Apostle John closes the Revelation and the biblical canon. The last prayer in scripture is a simple one: “Come, Lord Jesus!” John, echoing Paul’s prayer at the conclusion to 1 Corinthians, “*Maranatha!*”, expresses a sentiment of many New Testament writers: the anticipated return of the risen Christ to earth to eternally establish his kingdom among his people.

Part of being a Christian is that we have set our hope upon the return of Christ and we eagerly await the day when the Kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ forever and ever. Our faith is grounded in the hope that Christ—who came once in humility—will come again in victory to restore and renew this creation by eliminating sin and Satan once and for all and glorifying all those who believe in him.

Do you eagerly await that day when our faith will be made sight, when we will behold Jesus in his glory? Or have you been sidetracked by things in this life? The New Testament writers tell us to anticipate that day by proclaiming this truth to our neighbors, and living a life worthy of our calling to that Kingdom. Let us keep our eyes on That Day as we live in This Day—longing for Christ to be glorified and adored among the Saints.

- *Pray that the Lord gives you eyes of faith to live in light of his return.*
- *Pray that we will be found faithful—as individuals and as a church—when he returns. Pray for his Spirit to be at work preparing us.*
- *Pray that we will boldly proclaim the message of the coming Kingdom to those who are still lost in darkness.*
- *Rejoice in the knowledge that Christ has come and is coming again!*

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