

CULTIVATE CHURCH

21 DAYS OF
PRAYER + FASTING
GUIDE

**MAKE
ROOM**

INTRODUCTION

God has been shaking things up at Cultivate Church in the last 10 months as we've seen him grow our church in faith, and in numbers. We've cast an exciting vision of what the future holds for us with growth and expansion as we have to make room for all that he wants to do in our city and in our church. But as with any life-changing decision or direction, we are full aware that when and how we take our next step are questions we'll only gain answers from through prayer and fasting.

Our only hope for influence, impact, and life change is found in Jesus. Because of our complete dependence, we believe there is no better way to start 2024 than by making room in our lives for prayer. What a beautiful privilege to commune the Creator of the Universe with full assurance of His presence! How marvelous to sit with the King of Kings and hear His voice! For the next 21 days you are invited to make room for God in your daily life. Use this guide to help read God's Word, think through the passages, and focus on prayer. God promises that seeking Him is ALWAYS time well spent.

"You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart." - Jeremiah 29:13 CSB

SHOULD I FAST FOR THE NEXT 21 DAYS?

What a great idea! When you fast, you deliberately replace food, social media, entertainment, or any other distraction with prayer and Bible study. You purposefully eliminate options to find satisfaction and enjoyment in God alone. Fasting cuts out the noise of life and amplifies the voice of God. As we make room for His presence over the next 21 days, this discipline compliments prayer to prioritize time for holy reflection.

THE GUIDE

There are two components to this guide: weekly prayer exercises and daily devotionals. The weekly exercises are activities meant to be done during the week at a time that makes sense for your schedule. The daily devotionals should be completed every day, incorporating prayer prompts, Bible reading, and small devotional writings. We encourage you not to rush through your daily readings. Sit, think, listen, and make room for the presence of God.

WEEK ONE

Make Room For God

Take some time this week to prayer-walk your neighborhood. If you know the residents of the homes you pass, pray for them by name. If you do not know their names, pray God will open a path for you to connect with them.

DAY 1: NOVEMBER 3

Cease Striving & Make Room

READ

Psalm 46:8-11: ⁸ Come, see the works of the Lord, who brings devastation on the earth. ⁹ He makes wars cease throughout the earth. He shatters bows and cuts spears to pieces; He sets wagons ablaze. ¹⁰ “Stop fighting, and know that I am God, exalted among the nations, exalted on the earth.” ¹¹ The Lord of Armies is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold. *Selah*

EXAMINE

The opening phrase of Psalm 46:10 translates to, “stop your fighting,” “be still,” or “cease striving.” God declares for both His people and His foes to recognize His power and give up struggling against His purposes. He stops wars, shatters weapons, and conquers kingdoms without breaking a sweat. Our call and privilege is to know Him, to see Him high and exalted, and humble ourselves to His great, unshakable plan.

APPLY

So much of our time and energy gets wrapped up in building our own little kingdoms. We work hard to get the promotion, establish our home, gain the reputation, or any number of other achievements. We even let our faith get reduced to an exercise in effort we can control. We falsely believe church attendance, moral choices, and good works earn God’s pleasure. In Psalm 46 God urges, “cease striving! Just be still and know me. Understand how much bigger and higher and greater I am than your preoccupations. Don’t reduce me to a set of rules, make room for ME!”

PRAY

Ask God to search your heart and reveal where you are striving right now. Are you striving to build your own little kingdom at work or home? Are you trying to control your own faith by following rules instead of experiencing true communion with God? Pray that God would still your heart and show you He is exalted among the nations. Pray you can humble yourself and know Him better today.

DAY 2: NOVEMBER 4

Make Room for Reading God's Word

READ

Joshua 1:8-9: ⁸ This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to meditate on it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do. ⁹ Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

EXAMINE

In this passage, Joshua has been made the leader of the nation of Israel after the death of Moses. He is stepping into the shoes of a giant leader who has courageously led the Israelites through thick and thin. It would've been easy for Joshua to rely on his own knowledge, strength, and experience as he steps into this leadership role. However, God instructs Joshua "to meditate on [the Scriptures] day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it." Joshua found strength in God's Word, not in his own leadership experience.

APPLY

It can be easy for us to turn to our own strengths and knowledge as we overcome the struggles of daily life. This can lead us to feeling disconnected from our God who has given us His Word to know Him and receive instructions for life. Through our devotion to the Word, we begin to grow closer to God as our Father and we receive truth like Joshua received in 1:9: "Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

PRAY

Pray for the desire to spend time in God's Word even when it is difficult or you don't "feel like it." Ask Him to show you places in your day where you can redeem the time you have to spend time with Him and in His Word.

DAY 3: NOVEMBER 5

Make Room for Private Prayer

READ

Matthew 6:6-8: ⁶ But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷ When you pray, don't babble like the Gentiles, since they imagine they'll be heard for their many words. ⁸ Don't be like them, because your Father knows the things you need before you ask Him.

EXAMINE

In Jesus' day it was common practice for the religious leaders to make a show of praying. They would stand in the synagogues or in the streets and pray in public merely to be seen by people. Jesus refers to these people as hypocrites. The word 'hypocrite' comes from the Greek word which means 'actor'. These people were merely acting – putting on a show. Instead, Jesus tells his disciples to pray in private where they cannot be seen. Why? Because the Father sees in secret. He is omnipresent – present everywhere always! But even more than that, Jesus says that the Father will reward the private prayer of his people.

APPLY

Private prayer is difficult because it often seems meaningless. You've experienced this before... you finally set aside some time to pray, but after a few minutes you wonder if your prayers are really accomplishing anything. In those moments, you must believe in faith that God sees and hears you in your private prayers. You don't need to put on a show for Him to hear you. Not only that, God actually rewards private prayer! This doesn't mean that He answers all private prayers exactly how we want. It means that the Father is pleased with you when you pray to be heard by only Him. This doesn't mean that it is always wrong to pray out loud, nor is it wrong to pray publicly. What it means is that Jesus' primary concern is with your heart. Are you praying to be heard by people, or are you praying to be heard by your Heavenly Father?

PRAY

Spend some time reflecting on your own experience in prayer. Why is it that you don't pray as often as you wish you did? Is it because deep down you don't think you're being heard? Ask God to increase your faith in believing that God sees and rewards you when you pray.

DAY 4: NOVEMBER 6

Make Room for Personal Worship

READ

Psalm 63:1-5: ¹ God, you are my God; I eagerly seek you. I thirst for you; my body faints for you in a land that is dry, desolate, and without water.
² So I gaze on you in the sanctuary to see your strength and your glory.
³ My lips will glorify you because your faithful love is better than life.
⁴ So I will bless you as long as I live; at your name, I will lift up my hands.
⁵ You satisfy me as with rich food; my mouth will praise you with joyful lips.

EXAMINE

David declares that his every satisfaction is found in God. He was on the run from either Saul or Absalom, away from the tabernacle, but danger did nothing to quench his deep desire for God's presence. David's thirst for God found relief as he praised Him. He considered God's favor even better than life itself. Thinking about God's ability to satisfy his every need brought a sense of fullness into David's life. David's meditation on God overflowed in praise.

APPLY

We all have holes in our heart and life... longings and desperations that we seek for anything and anyone to fill. If you have lived long enough you know that the created things of this world will always be a temporary band-aid and usually come up short. We will continually run back to dry wells. Allowing God to fill and satisfy us reveals the true love and power of our Creator. When you meditate on these truths, gratitude is produced, leading to praise and worship.

PRAY

Taking the posture of prayer like David, with lifted hands, pray and offer praise to God for all the ways He satisfies your soul. Ask Him to remind you of who He is and His faithfulness in your life. Thank Him for revealing Himself in your moments of longing and desperation and blessing you with His presence.

DAY 5: NOVEMBER 7

Make Room to Give Thanks

READ

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray constantly, ¹⁸ give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

EXAMINE

A quick glance at these statements might lead one to think that these are cheesy, Christian clichés that have no grounding in the real world. However, Paul is not foolish enough to think that following Jesus won't be difficult and include times when joy and gratitude are not easy traits to display, especially when surrounded by other people. In fact, Paul is reminding believers that we have a choice to make in how we handle all situations, struggles, and seasons of life.

APPLY

Paul is listing these reminders as the “secret” of how we can love and care for each other well as followers of Jesus. A person who chooses joy, stays in personal contact with God through prayer, and has gratitude in their hearts is going to find it a lot easier to love others well, no matter the situation or circumstance. Joy is a choice. Prayer is a constant reminder that we are never alone, and gratitude says more about our heart condition than our circumstance.

Which of these do you find easiest to display on a regular basis? Which did you need a reminder today?

PRAY

Take some time today to reflect back on how God has blessed you over this past year. Thank Him for His rescue, His provision, His presence, and His love and mercy in your life. Commit to Him in prayer today that “I will choose joy” and ask Him to keep your heart soft and grateful as you love and care for others today.

DAY 6: NOVEMBER 8

Make Room for Holy Meditation

READ

Philippians 4:7-9: ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things. ⁹ Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

EXAMINE

In this passage, Paul reminds us that those who are in Christ can experience the very peace of God because we belong to the God of Peace! These verses demonstrate how a biblical mindset is crucial to experience maturity in our faith journey. This encouraging letter to the church at Philippi serves as a reminder for us today to learn, meditate on, and put into practice the Word of God so we can grow deeper in our love for Him.

APPLY

Our days are full of incoming messages competing for the attention of our mind and affection of our hearts. In this whirlwind of constant communication, it is easy to become distracted by the worries of our world. This leads to a drift from the valuable truth of God's Word, which ultimately causes discouragement. But Paul reminds us in this passage that we serve a God who is with us and guards our hearts and minds with His peace. When we surrender our cares to God and meditate instead on what is "true, pure, lovely, and worthy of praise," we make room in our hearts and minds to enjoy the peace and presence of God!

PRAY

Ask God to show you what distractions are taking up space in your mind and heart today. Are there any worries you haven't fully surrendered to Him? Any lies you need to replace with truth from God's Word? Pray for sensitivity to the Holy Spirit as He reveals these things to you. Spend time meditating on His Word until it resonates in your heart. Practice this throughout your day and ask Him to guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.

DAY 7: NOVEMBER 9

Make Room to Be Still and Delight

READ

Psalm 37:3-7: ³ Trust in the Lord and do what is good; dwell in the land and live securely. ⁴ Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you your heart's desires. ⁵ Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him, and He will act, ⁶ making your righteousness shine like the dawn, your justice like the noonday. ⁷ Be silent before the Lord and wait expectantly for Him; do not be agitated by one who prospers in his way, by the person who carries out evil plans.

EXAMINE

Our focus should be on God and not on things of this world. This passage gives us instruction to “trust” and “delight in the Lord”, “to commit our ways to the Lord”, and then to “be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him”. In verse 7, notice that we are not to just wait. Rather, we are to wait with expectation! We can be confident in receiving a response when our “trust” and “delight” are in Him.

APPLY

So many of us will stay busy trying to make the best choices for ourselves and our family. We will search the internet, ask our close friends, get the opinions of our co-workers, and maybe even ask a pastor for a recommendation. Once we have gathered all the necessary information we try to make the best, well-informed decision even if we still lack confidence. David's encouragement for wisdom is clear in this passage. “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him, and He will act.”

PRAY

Take some time today to be still before the Lord. Remind yourself of His goodness in your life. Are you trying to solve any problems or make important decisions that you brought before the Lord? Pray for wisdom in those circumstances today.

WEEK TWO

Make Room For Missional Living

Find a way to serve someone in your neighborhood in an unexpected way this week. For example, bless them with a meal, rake their leaves or provide for a known need.

DAY 8: NOVEMBER 10

Make Room for Repentance

READ

1 John 1:5-10: ⁵ This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in Him. ⁶ If we say, “We have fellowship with Him,” and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth. ⁷ If we walk in the light as he Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say, “We have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say, “We have not sinned,” we make Him a liar, and his word is not in us.

EXAMINE

Genuine authentic faith is based solely on a relationship and fellowship with God. Understanding the nature of God in relation to who we are as creatures of God is of critical importance. God is light; anything that remains in darkness does not have fellowship with Him. It is impossible to walk in both darkness and light, yet at times we are in danger of being deceived into allowing religious activities replace the work of confession and repentance. Instead, we walk in light with other believers. This is only made possible by acknowledging our sin and allowing the work of Christ on the cross to cleanse us. He is our advocate and sacrifice for our sins.

APPLY

Our daily practice as believers should be to evaluate the thoughts and behaviors in our life that are counter to the character of God. “Walking in the light” means we repent daily with desperation to remove anything that would separate us from the Father. When we don’t slow down enough for self evaluation, it’s easy for busyness of life to cloud our time with the Lord. This ultimately sheds light on the areas of sin that need addressing.

PRAY

Take a few minutes to pause and elevate the Father. Declare His truths and character. Allow Him to bring into perspective who you are: a sinner saved by grace. Ask Him to reveal anything in you that is not Godly. Repent and ask forgiveness and truth the power of the cross to Holy Spirit to release that in you to pursue life and godliness.

DAY 9: NOVEMBER 11

Make Room for Focus

READ

Colossians 3:1-4: ¹ So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

EXAMINE

In this passage, Paul wants us to understand that we are to set our minds “on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” He then goes on to remind us of our new identity in Christ. “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” As Christ followers, we should shift our focus to have a heavenly perspective regarding how to live here on earth.

APPLY

We are faced with a never-ending stream of decisions from the moment we wake up each morning. Most of the decisions are as simple as deciding to get a cup of coffee, checking our phone notifications, or even suppressing a yawn at work. These decisions don't take much thought, and some have become daily habits. As for the bigger decisions we make in our lives, we are called to live and make decisions from a heavenly perspective. We must focus and renew our minds (Romans 12:2). When we can shift our focus, we will make decisions from a kingdom mindset.

PRAY

Take some time today to make a list of big decisions you and your family will be facing this week or even this month. Spend time reading God's Word to renew your mind, focus on a heavenly perspective, and pray for discernment this week.

DAY 10: NOVEMBER 12

Make Room for Godly Priorities

READ

Matthew 13:44-46: ⁴⁴ The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one priceless pearl, he went and sold everything he had and bought it.

EXAMINE

Jesus shares two brief parables that demonstrate the joy and dedication discovering the Kingdom of God can activate. The man and merchant discovered something of great worth to them, yet they did not just enjoy the discovery. They were willing to forgo everything in making that discovery a reality and securing it themselves. The man and merchant were willing to reorient their lives and priorities to deepen their joy and take ownership of their treasure. Everything they did was focused on that single goal, the treasure they found; nothing less would suffice.

APPLY

The word “priority” came into the English language in the 1400s with a singular meaning: *the very first thing*. The word stayed singular for the next 500 years. It was not until the 1900s that it became plural, and we started discussing priorities. We thought we could bend reality to our whim by changing it to a plural meaning, but with many things pulling our affection and attention, nothing gets our complete devotion. Because of this truth of who He is, Jesus cannot just become one of our priorities; with other things, often good things, pulling for our affection and attention, because we know Jesus will always forgive us and is there, He sometimes gets pushed aside. Will Jesus and his God’s kingdom be just another item on our priority list today, or will we reorient our lives around discovering and receiving the deep joy that comes from a singular focus on Him?

PRAY

Take some time to sit in silence and ask God to reveal the answer to this question Jesus asks his disciples in John 1:38-39, “What do you want?”. Pray that your desires, when not aligned with the kingdom priority, will daily become aligned with the Father’s heart and will for you. Ask God to show you the joy of making the Kingdom of God and His love our sole priority.

DAY 11: NOVEMBER 13

Make Room by Walking in the Spirit

READ

Galatians 5:16-26: ¹⁶ I say, then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I am warning you about these things—as I warned you before—that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

EXAMINE

The Holy Spirit is the key to Christian living. In fact, Jesus told His disciples that it would be better for them after He returned to the Father and the Holy Spirit came to lead them in His place. Why? Because in His physical body, Jesus' ministry was limited by proximity. He could only be in one place at one time. The Holy Spirit, however, would indwell ALL believers from the moment of their salvation. We don't have to seek the Spirit out or meet with Him in a specific location or time. He is available to us 24/7. As our Counselor, He leads us, speaks to us, intercedes for us, convicts us, and empowers us. Apart from Him, we can't live out our faith as Jesus intends. This is why Paul urges us to walk by the Spirit. Otherwise, we will default to the flesh, and the results... well, they are VERY different.

APPLY

One of the great things about Paul's command to "walk by the Spirit" is that it's immediately followed by a checklist to help us evaluate how well we're doing. Read through the two lists: the works of the flesh (vs 19-22) and the fruit of the Spirit (22-26). Which list characterizes your journey in this season? Do you lean more heavily towards one or the other? Highlight or write down areas of concern and begin to seek the Spirit's lead in moving towards health. This can happen by time in the Word, time in prayer, and times of vulnerability with other believers who are equipped with unique gifts from the Spirit to help push us forward.

PRAY

Read Romans 8:26-27. Not only does the Spirit empower us, but He also intercedes on our behalf. Even when we don't know what to pray or how to proceed, the Holy Spirit takes our requests to the Father with just the right words. Take a moment to confess any items in the "flesh list" that are prevalent in your life right now and then request any items in the "fruit" list that might be lacking. Ask the Holy Spirit to empower and lead you towards His way in the days to come.

DAY 12: NOVEMBER 14

Make Room for the Source of our Strength

READ

Isaiah 40:28-31: ²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the whole earth. He never becomes faint or weary; there is no limit to his understanding. ²⁹ He gives strength to the faint and strengthens the powerless. ³⁰ Youths may become faint and weary, and young men stumble and fall, ³¹ but those who trust in the Lord will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not become weary, they will walk and not faint.

EXAMINE

God knows we're going to get tired. He knows that life can be difficult and draining, that our own strength will fail us and we will reach points where weariness overtakes us. But this verse reminds us that our God prepares us for those moments. He steps in and offers his hand to each of us. The same God who never tires, who created the universe and everything in it, shares his strength with you. When we take the time to sit and rest in his presence, He provides stability, peace, and strength that you can't find anywhere else.

APPLY

In moments of weakness, it's easy to forget to ask God to step in and give us the strength we need. We often think we can handle it ourselves or we turn to distractions that give us a false sense of rest or security. What we need to remember, and what these verses remind us, is that God can (and will!) provide us the strength to face every battle. Whether it's going through a difficult situation or the little everyday battles that wear us down, when we place our hope in God, He provides. When we turn to face our problems with God, He turns our weakness into strength and desperations into peace.

PRAY

Confess to Him the areas of your life where you feel drained or defeated and ask the Lord to help you acknowledge your own weaknesses. Pray for humility and ask for Him to help show you the areas where you need to rely on His strength instead of your own. Take a few extra moments at the end of your quiet time to meditate on the magnitude of His power, and dwell in the love He has for you that He so willingly shares His supernatural strength and peace with you.

DAY 13: NOVEMBER 15

Make Room for Endurance

READ

James 1:2-4: ² Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

EXAMINE

James says “WHEN” not “IF” you meet trials, and often times we are surprised when a hardship comes our way because it interrupts our illusion of control. He calls us to welcome them, because ALL trails and difficulties have the opportunity to produce joy, not because the trails are pleasurable. When we lift our gaze we see the end results (1 Peter 4:12-13). James is not saying that God authors our suffering or trails, but permits such experience, and works with us in the midst of them to produce a deep joy and character that radiates from Christ. To embrace trails and difficulties is impossible on our own, but we have a God who meets us where we are, and walks patiently with us through them. Patient endurance is key, because while we value pleasure, God values a deep character. We want a quick, one-time rescue, God shows up daily to heal and restore us into eternity. Our faith starts to grow when we get tired of trying to save ourselves or avoid hardship, because there, we start to trust God more fully and ourselves less (1 John 5:4).

APPLY

We don't enjoy trials; most of us do everything possible to avoid them. Trails and testing are profitable to test our faith and reveal where our faith is actually placed. When we meet trials with patience, we open ourselves up to the opportunity to become more and more like Jesus—perfect, mature, full-grown, complete, entire, perfect in every part, lacking in nothing, deficient in nothing, wanting nothing. There is an old tale about a man who lived out in the desert about seven miles from water, “he said to himself one day “What need is there for me to endure this toil? I shall come and live near the water.” And saying this, he turned about and saw one following him and counting his footprints. He questioned him saying, “Who are you?” The follower answered, “I am the Angel of the Lord. I am sent to count your footprints and give you your reward.” At this, the old man's heart grew stout. Renewed, he set his cell further from the water.” This little story and James Chapter 1 are an encouragement that God is still with us, working in us and with us to be “perfect and complete” which is only found in Christ. Do not surrender, for not a single footprint is wasted in the Kingdom of God.

PRAY

Take a few minutes to sit in silence and reflect on the man from the desert and ask God to reveal to you what areas in your life you feel that you are “enduring a toil”. Pray that the Holy Spirit opens your eyes to see the God who loves you and is not letting a single footprint in your life go to waste. Ask God to work with you in developing the patience and perspective you need as He develops your joy in His kingdom.

DAY 14: NOVEMBER 16

Make Room to Draw Near

READ

James 4:1-10: ¹ What is the source of wars and fights among you? Don't they come from your passions that wage war within you? ² You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and wage war. You do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. ⁴ You adulterous people! Don't you know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? So whoever wants to be the friend of the world becomes the enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think it's without reason that the Scripture says: The spirit He made to dwell in us envies intensely? ⁶ But He gives greater grace. Therefore he says: God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. ⁷ Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Be miserable and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.

EXAMINE

Three negative influences are given that entice and cause separation from God: our own passions, friendship with the world, and the devil. These hindrances to holy life cause sin, conflict, pride, and hostility toward God. Thankfully His grace is more powerful than any of these competitors for our affection. James promises that submission to God causes the devil to flee from us. Beautifully, if we draw near in humility, God meets us where we are and gifts His pure and holy presence.

APPLY

According to verse 8, we are called to approach God with clean hands and pure hearts. This cleansing can only be found through forgiveness in Jesus. Each of us must search our hearts, repent of our sins, and humble ourselves before the Lord. Only in this submissive posture, washed clean by the blood of Jesus, are we able to approach the throne of God. What a beautiful invitation! In His presence we are free from the evil and chaos in the world. If we truly understood the joy found with God, drawing near would be the deepest desire of our hearts.

PRAY

Confess the words of James 4:8 out loud today, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." Repeat them until you believe it. Ask God to reveal the negative influences in your life and then humbly surrender them over. Pray to be single-minded in your pursuit of the presence of God.

WEEK THREE

Make Room For Relationships

This week, open your home to one or more families in your neighborhood for a simple get together. Be intentional about getting to know their stories and look for ways to pray for or humbly serve them.

DAY 15: NOVEMBER 17

Make Room for Covenant Relationships

READ

Romans 12:9-10: ⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another.

EXAMINE

Paul says our love for one another must be without hypocrisy. In other words, believers are to display a love that genuinely seeks the spiritual, physical and holistic well-being of others. In his book to the church at Corinth, Paul describes for us what love looks like in a believer's life. Paul writes to the church in Corinth – "Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant, is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and does not keep a record of wrongs. Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth." If we are to live the faithful Christian life God is calling us to live, we must be focused and faithful to obey God's instruction through Paul in these 2 potent and powerful verses. Loving brothers and sisters in Christ isn't optional for mature believers, but is a command for all followers of Jesus. Let us be people who love well.

APPLY

Make a plan to do a kind act of love for someone this week. This could be as simple as writing a personal note to a spouse, coworker, or friend or doing something like inviting a friend to lunch to check-in on how they are doing. Whatever you decide, make it your goal to be intentional this week to show genuine love to someone in your life.

PRAY

Take a moment to pray for the Holy Spirit to give you the confidence and courage to take steps to show His love this week. Ask Him to show you how to love those in your life who aren't easy to love.

DAY 16: NOVEMBER 18

Make Room for Biblical Community

READ

Hebrews 10:24-25: ²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.

EXAMINE

The writer of Hebrews is exhorting these believers to not forsake gathering together as a community of Christ-followers. This source of community between these believers should spur on love between them, holding one another up during times of hardship and abundance. As they continue to do life together, they are to encourage one another to be steadfast alongside each other.

APPLY

We believe that community is forged, not found.” Being a part of a community of believers is not always easy. It takes effort on our part to be intentional in finding our people who will be with us through both the valleys and mountaintops of life. When we forsake the community of believers, we lose the connection with other believers that God designed us for. Although it may not always be easy, it is essential for every Christian to be engaged in biblical community for their own (and others) spiritual growth!

PRAY

Pray that you would be intentional in finding the community of believers that God has for you. Ask Him for the courage and boldness to step out and find your people! If you already are a part of a community, ask God to have open eyes to see the needs of the people in your circle.

DAY 17: NOVEMBER 19

Make Room for Authentic Love

READ

John 13:34-35: ³⁴ I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

EXAMINE

The commandment to “Love God” wasn’t new to those to whom Jesus was speaking. In fact, many of them knew and could recite the Old Testament passage in Deuteronomy that mandated to love God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength. However, Jesus took this idea to a new level. To be a follower of Jesus, you can’t just “Love God”, but are called to “Love one another just as Jesus loved us.” It would now be the identity of a Christ follower: not rules, not knowledge, not even going to church on a regular basis.

APPLY

What does it mean to “Love one another just as Jesus loved us?” What are the characteristics that we see demonstrated in the love of Jesus? 1 Corinthians 13 reminds us what love looks like on display. Love is patient, kind, sacrificial, serving, and delights in generosity. Sometimes in our culture the idea of “love” is captured by feelings, romance, or physical attraction. While love may encompass some of those things, the reality is that God’s love for us is deeper than anything this world has to offer and our love for one another is to be defined by this same type of sacrificial love. What could you do today to love your spouse with a sacrificial love? How could you display a patient love with your children or grandchildren today? What would love look like to a neighbor today? A stranger in the store? Commit today that the greatest thing you could do to tell others about Jesus is to love them well!

PRAY

As you read over John 13 and 1 Corinthians 13 today, ask God to show you ways where you might need to grow in displaying love to others. Ask Him to highlight and celebrate areas where you usually do well loving others. Thank Him for His beautiful life and reminder of what love looks like and commit to loving others as He first loved us.

DAY 18: NOVEMBER 20

Make Room for Sacrifice

READ

Philippians 2:3-4: ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. ⁴ Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others.

EXAMINE

Verse 3 describes two contrasting attitudes. The first attitude should be discarded from your life, the other developed. The verse begins with the charge to, "... do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit." The word 'conceit' comes from the Greek word kenodoxia. Kenodoxia is the combination of the two Greek words "empty" and "glory". It refers to those who have an exaggerated perception of their own self. They are all about their personal "glory", but in reality are "empty" of true spiritual health. This attitude should be destroyed in us all. The attitude to develop is humility - considering others better than yourself. The supreme example is, of course, Christ. He is the opposite of kenodoxia. He has true glory beyond measure, yet He emptied Himself because of his love for us.

APPLY

C.S. Lewis said, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less." We live in the era of the sovereign self. That is, in our culture the self is king. We spend so much time and energy analyzing ourselves, pampering ourselves and living for ourselves. Yet the Christian's calling is to consider other people as more important. This doesn't mean that we never take care of ourselves. After all, the Bible reminds us that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that we must take care of it. But it does mean that when it comes to being a godly spouse, friend, child or fiancé - stop thinking about yourself! Put the interest of others before your own interests! The more you focus on others, the less you'll focus on yourself.

PRAY

Spend time today asking God for three things: 1. Ask Him to help you think of yourself less. 2. Spend some time praying for other people. Pray for the members of your family by name. Pray for your friends by name. And then pause for 1-2 minutes and see who else the Holy Spirit brings to mind, and then pray for them, too. 3. Ask God to help you see opportunities to sacrifice your own desires for the good of someone else.

DAY 19: NOVEMBER 21

Make Room for the Sabbath

READ

Exodus 20:8-11: ⁸ Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: ⁹ You are to labor six days and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. You must not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female servant, your livestock, or the resident alien who is within your city gates. ¹¹ For the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything in them in six days; then He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and declared it holy.

EXAMINE

Moses received these instructions, a portion of what is commonly known as the “Ten Commandments,” on top of Mount Sinai during the Exodus. In the midst of smoke, thunder, lightning, and earthquakes the Lord met Moses and gave Him the core of what would become The Law for God’s people. His command was to “... remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” The day itself was reserved for the Lord, and during this time the Israelites were instructed to abstain from work. They were to rest and honor the Lord, following the example demonstrated by God at the creation of all things.

APPLY

It is very possible that we find ourselves burned out, overwhelmed, and stressed because we do not make room for protected time each week and keep it holy. It becomes easy to discount the importance of the Sabbath when things need to get done, people are waiting, and life is happening. Often, we forget two important points: 1. “Remembering the Sabbath” is a command, not a suggestion. God has told us exactly what He intends for that blessed day—rest, worship, devotion. 2. We are designed to need the Sabbath. We are only truly restored and equipped in the presence of God. May we return to honoring this divine rhythm in our lives.

PRAY

Honor the Sabbath this weekend. Keep it holy by seeking the Lord in constant prayer. Keep a dialogue open with Him, listening and sharing thoughts and emotions all day. Reflect on the previous week and how the Lord was faithful to you. Ask to be equipped for the week ahead.

DAY 20: NOVEMBER 22

Make Room to Sit at Jesus' Feet

READ

Luke 10:38-42: ³⁸ While they were traveling, He entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. ³⁹ She had a sister named Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet and was listening to what He said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, and she came up and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? So tell her to give me a hand." ⁴¹ The Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her."

EXAMINE

The story of these two sisters and their interactions with Jesus teaches us the immeasurable value of fellowship with God. While Martha was distracted, Mary was devoted. Jesus' response to the posture of Mary invites all of us to lay everything else down, sit at His feet, and enjoy a deep relationship with Him. Jesus is our most wonderful treasure, worthy of our full praise. Nothing can compare to Him!

APPLY

There are countless things, both good and bad, that we could spend our time on throughout the day. The very best thing is to sit at the feet of Jesus. We have received an incredible opportunity to walk intimately with the Creator of all things who promises to be with us always! But far too often, we forsake His invitation for lesser things. The way we spend our time reveals the treasure of our hearts. Each day presents a choice for how to invest our time, attention, and affection. We can choose, like Mary, to sit at the feet of Jesus at any time and any place! How will you make room in your life to rest in abiding fellowship with Jesus?

PRAY

Pray for God to show you where your treasure is. Are you currently living like Martha, troubled and anxious about many things? Or are you more like Mary, enjoying and resting in the presence of Jesus? Ask God to show you how to sit at His feet today. Pray for Him to remind you of the incredible gift it is to have fellowship with Him! Ask for help making room for Him in every moment of your day, so you can walk closer with Him.

DAY 21: NOVEMBER 23

Make Room to Abide in Christ

READ

John 15:4-5: ⁴ Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.

EXAMINE

When we get frustrated with life, it's easy to feel frustrated with God. We wonder why things are going wrong and feel angry in our circumstances. But how often does our frustrations and fruitlessness come from a lack of abiding in the Lord's presence and listening to His teachings. In these verses, Jesus is reminding us that the only way to a fulfilling life is through our relationship with Him. Without Him we can do nothing, but with Him we are blessed beyond measure.

APPLY

This decision to abide in Christ is not a one and done choice. Because of our sinful nature, there is a constant spiritual battle going on inside us. Every single day we must wake up and choose to spend time with Jesus, to dwell in His presence, and learn from His Word. When we learn to maintain this habit of walking with Christ, He blesses us in ways that we can't imagine. When Jesus says "apart from me you can do nothing" we need to recognize that this comes down to us making a choice to live in obedience and unity with Christ. We must acknowledge that whenever we try to do things on our own, we are like a branch that withers away, and it is only through God that we can be fruitful.

PRAY

Whatever is currently going on in your life, take a few moments to include God in it. Jesus wants to be a part of every decision, and in every aspect of your journey. Ask the Lord to walk with you as you take on the highs and lows of daily life and ask for help in keeping your heart open to His presence, His voice, and His guidance.

WEEK FOUR

Make Room For Rest

Take a radical step and organize a sabbath day for you and your family. Start in the evening with a meal and clear your schedule for intentional time together and with God for the next 24 hours.

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