

Richland Creek Family,

How's your prayer life?

It's a simple question, but it can be tough to answer. Literally it sounds like, "How has your talking to God been lately?" Emotionally it might feel like, "Sum up your relationship with God at this point in your life." Bible reading, by comparison, is clearer and more "objective." How many pages? How far along in your plan? Which books have you been reading? What have you learned? Prayer doesn't fit into an Excel sheet quite as easily.

God means for your life — married or unmarried, student or employee, young or old — to run on the power of prayer. Prayer fuels the engine of your heart and mind. It's not coffee, or Chipotle, or social media buzz; it's prayer. You need God in and through prayer more than you need anything else. We will not do anything of any real and lasting value without God, which means we will not do anything of any real and lasting value without prayer.

The purpose of these devotionals is to motivate us to pray, and challenge us to pray boldly and consistently, beginning with the next 30 days. As we continue this journey of transition, we pray that God would open our hearts so that spending time in prayer becomes an even more essential part of our lives.

DAY 1 – GOD THE CREATOR

Genesis 1:1-2 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Most of us aren't going to spend our time reading about ancient Near East cosmology. But did you know that the Old Testament is saturated with that type of language and world view? The Creator God we see in Genesis 1 does not merely create; He ordains and assigns function and order to all of creation! We see this in the Psalms in particular as David and others pour out their hearts to God, begging for Him to intercede on their behalf. So often they do so by pleading for Him to act based upon His character as a God of order, purpose, and function, as one who has defeated the agents of chaos and disorder.

Our lives are no different than the authors of the Bible. So often we can feel as though our lives are filled with disorder and chaos. We still live in a sin filled world where the agents of chaos, sin, and Satan seek to sow disunity, disorder, and chaos. Yet our God is the Creator God who spoke all things into existence and assigned to them a pure purpose according to His design. He has done the same thing for you and our church.

Go back to Genesis 1 and read the whole chapter from this perspective. God didn't speak all things into creation and leave them "formless and void" in a state of chaos without function and order. Instead He demonstrates to us His awesome power and His innate character not only to create but also to design and reign supreme over disorder and the agents of chaos.

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for God's character to be revealed in your life and in our church through how we demonstrate unity, purpose, and God's will for our lives.
- Consider Psalm 74:12-17 as the author appeals to God's strength and order over chaos for his deliverance.

Colossians 1:15-17 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

DAY 2 – GOD THE REDEEMER

Ezekiel 36:22-28 Therefore say to the house of Israel, “Thus says the Lord God, ‘It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,’ declares the Lord God, ‘when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.’”

How do we bear up while under the discipline and refinement of the LORD? Do we really trust in those times that while our sin has led to His discipline, that it is also His desire to redeem us for His glory?

All throughout the prophets we see that it was God who delivered His people into the hands of their oppressors for their good and the glory of His name. Therefore, He is fully able to deliver them from exile, and indeed He did! Moreover, His deliverance is presented as a display of His righteousness (Isaiah 51:8; 56:1), His love (Hosea 14:4), and His essential nature (Ezekiel 36:22-24).

In these times of doubt, discouragement, or lack of direction, we need to remember that our God desires to redeem us from sin, to purify His people, and to put a new heart within us that is transformed by the Spirit to cause us to walk in His statutes.

Prayer Prompts:

- Consider if you pray more to be removed from your circumstances or to be refined and redeemed by your holy God.
- Pray that God would work in your life and in the life of our church by displaying His nature as a redeeming God as He refines us during this time into a people who are purified, filled with the Spirit, and walking in obedience.

Hebrews 12:11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

DAY 3 - OUR COMFORTING FATHER

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

We read in 2 Corinthians 1 as Paul writes to the church of Corinth that they should rest in the fact that God is the God of all comfort. When we think about what it means to receive comfort, we usually connect comfort as something that provides reprieve from a difficulty. It is no doubt that since the fall in Genesis 3, all of humanity has experience heartache and sorrow. For the believer, there is something beautiful that comes in the midst of suffering. The same God who redeemed your life from the pit and adopted you into his family extends comfort to you in your most pressing time of need. Not only does God give you what you need when you need it most, but He does it with a purpose. God wants those who have experienced His comfort to then extend that same comfort to others who are in affliction.

I don't know your present circumstance, but I know that God does and He is ready to provide you with all that you need to walk humbly with Him. He is ready to walk through whatever you are going through. I don't know the circumstances of those to whom you are closest, but I know that God has uniquely equipped you to extend to them the same comfort you have embraced by grace through faith.

Questions to consider: Do I know the God of all comfort? Have I actually placed my faith in Him? If I have, during my deepest point of struggle have I experienced His comforting presence? Am I sharing that same comfort with others who are in need?

Prayer Prompts:

- Today rejoice that you have a comforting Father who walks through the highest peaks and the deepest valleys with you. Thank Him for caring about the details of your life.
- Pray that God would cause you to embrace His comfort more deeply than you ever have before.
- Pray that God would give you someone you can extend that glorious comfort to during their great time of need with the intent of pointing them to your Heavenly Father.

Psalms 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

DAY 4 - GOD IS JUST

Psalm 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

The foundation of anything, be it a ministry, a marriage, or a home, is incredibly vital to the longevity of what is built upon it. When the foundation is not level or correct, what is built upon it will eventually become askew or out of alignment. The justness of God means that He is required to render a verdict based on the charge against us, which is disobedience to His Word. Based on His righteousness, we know that He will always make the right or correct decision.

As believers our sins are counted as Christ's sins. Christ's righteousness is counted as our righteousness. And God justly passes over our sins because of what Christ did on the cross.

Questions to consider:

Is the foundation of your life built upon the truths found in God's Word or the truths you tell yourself? Anything built on something other than the foundation of Christ's redemptive work on the cross will eventually crumble.

Prayer Prompts:

- Thank God for His justness and remember the moment when Christ became your sin.
- Ask God to reveal any lies you have told yourself to be true. Repent and make a solid foundation that is built on your salvation and God's Word.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

DAY 5 - GOD IS STEADFAST

Lamentations 3:22 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end;

From time to time children do or say things, not understanding the levity of their actions due to being overcome by the emotions of the moment. Adults, too, are guilty, sometimes of thinking rashly in view of the situation. Our sin nature causes us to fluctuate in our feelings. God, on the other hand, is not hampered by sin for He is holy. His love for us is unwavering, patient, and enduring, even for those who are unworthy. In the midst of our rebellion against Him, "God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ dies for us" (Romans 5:8). God's love for you has been established since creation and the promised demonstration in Romans since Genesis 3:15.

Throughout Scripture we read moments that prove God's love is always abiding, never ceasing. Believer, take comfort in the truth that God's steadfast love and mercy will never end, no matter what you do.

Questions to consider: Have you ever questioned God's love for you? Have you ever thought that the God of the Bible does not love you based on your current life situation? When was the last time you remembered how God demonstrated His steadfast love?

Prayer Prompts:

- Praise God for His faithful love to you, remembering that He sent Christ to die for you who are unworthy.
- Ask God to help you love others like He does.

Psalm 107:31-32 Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

DAY 6 – GOD IS HOLY

Isaiah 6:1-3 In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"

Isaiah refers to God as high and lifted up three times in the record of his prophecy—that is, Isaiah 6:1-3; Isaiah 52:13; and Isaiah 57:15. The pair of Hebrew words used in this description make it apparent that God is well above our natural state and condition. High and exalted not only explains what Isaiah sees in the temple vision, but they also point us to the vast distance between Him and His creation—a distance that can only be closed by God. If He does not make Himself accessible, we can never transverse the distance.

The seraphim attending to the Holy One begin to describe Him. They announce that He is holy. But, saying it once is not adequate to express their awe. They are overwhelmed with God's holiness. The uniqueness, the separation, the total magnificence of God requires a much more vivid expression. They declare His holiness three times, "Holy! Holy! Holy! Is the Lord of hosts." The seraphim, who are close to God at all times, are absolutely consumed with the splendor of His majesty. He is really, really, really holy!

Question to consider: When was the last time you were overwhelmed with the holy nature of God?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that you will experience the splendor of the Holy One of Israel.
- Ask the Lord to give you a new understanding of the significance of His holiness.

Psalms 99:3 Let them praise your great and awesome name! Holy is He!

DAY 7 - GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS

Isaiah 54:10 “For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

The symbolic wife of God in this section of Isaiah’s prophesy is Israel. She has been described as childless and separated from her husband. She is fallen and disgraced in Isaiah 51. Now we see her restored to her place of glory. The time of shame and sorrow (Isaiah 54:4) has ended. The steadfast love of the Lord is offered in an everlasting promise.

This enduring love is a magnificent characteristic of the God of Israel. The love of God (Hebrew, *chesed*) is longsuffering. God will tirelessly travail with us in spite of our errors. He will never cease offering loving protection and forgiveness for His people. The nature of God prohibits Him from withdrawing His love.

From the pen and heart of Charles Wesley we have this hymn:

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior’s blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me?

Prayer Prompts:

- Ponder the generosity of God’s unmerited love for you.
- Consider how the Lord would have you demonstrate His lovingkindness.
- Pray for forgiveness from God for your lack of compassion.

DAY 8 - GOD SHOWS GRACE

Genesis 6:8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

We read in Genesis 6 that the level of sinfulness in the world was out of control, causing God to be grieved in His heart (Genesis 6:6). God decided to pour out His righteous judgment on a sinful world through a cataclysmic worldwide flood. Yet one man, Noah, "found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8). The Bible goes on to tell us: "Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:9). "Just" does not mean that Noah always did what was right, and "perfect" does not mean Noah was sinless. The key to understanding Noah's character, and therefore God's character, is that Noah "walked with God." Noah was a sinner and deserved judgment just like the rest of mankind. However, unlike the rest of mankind, Noah had a relationship with God. It is in this relationship that God manifested His grace, or unmerited favor, upon Noah and his family.

Like those living in Noah's time, we are sinners and our sin deserves judgment. Like Noah, we can walk with God in close relationship with Him. God has ultimately manifested His grace toward humanity through His Son Jesus. God offers forgiveness and life, even though we deserve judgment and death. That is His grace toward all of us.

Questions to consider: Am I, and my family, walking with God? If not, how can I begin to do so? How can I show grace toward those who sin against me?

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks to God for His matchless love for us as demonstrated through the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf (Romans 5:8).
- Pray for help in the Spirit as you walk with Him daily.
- Pray to forgive those who have sinned against you.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

DAY 9 - GOD DESIRES A RELATIONSHIP

John 20:26-27 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

The Bible doesn't have much to say about the Apostle Thomas, but what it does say is quite amazing. He is called "the twin," which may simply mean that he had a twin sibling. Many think it may be a reference to the duality of his nature: sometimes very strong in his faith, other times very skeptical. It's no wonder the term "doubting Thomas" was derived from his character. One of the best examples of this in Scripture is in John 20. The risen Lord had already appeared to the other apostles, but Thomas was not with them and had yet to see Him. When the others told them they had seen Jesus, Thomas said he would have to see Jesus for himself and even touch the wounds from the nails and spear to believe. Knowing Thomas very well, Jesus did exactly that in John 20:26-27. In response, Thomas gives one of the clearest testimonies of belief recorded in Scripture: "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus showed His love and care for Thomas on an extremely personal level. While Jesus is the Savior of the world, He is also the Savior of the individual. God desires an intimate relationship with each and every person and has made that possible through His Son. Even if we, like Thomas, have doubts, we can all take faith in the unchangeable character of God.

Questions to consider: Do I have doubts about God? What can I do to grow closer in my relationship with God? How can I help others who have doubt?

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks to God for His immutable character (James 1:17).
- Pray for those in your life who are lost.
- Pray to grow closer in your relationship with God.

Matthew 18:12-14 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

DAY 10 - GOD IS WORTHY

Revelation 4:11 Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.

Whatever we say about God's character, He is truly worthy of all glory, honor, and power! We try and describe God's attributes and character by saying things like, "God is love" or "God is holy" or "God is eternal." We then struggle to define what those words mean. One of the great minds of the early church, Anselm of Canterbury, described God as, "That than which nothing greater can be conceived." This is known as the Ontological Argument for the existence of God. Forget about the big words for a minute and think about God's character, His goodness, for example. Using Anselm's reasoning, as good as you can conceive something or someone to be, God's goodness is even greater!

But God is also love, holy, truth, eternal, knows all, always present, all-powerful to whatever extent we can conceive and still so much more. This is why He alone is worthy to receive glory and honor and power! I challenge you to try and grasp that God is worthy of our praise and allow that to drive your prayers. You speak directly to the creator of the universe. He hears you, He knows you, and He loves you more than you can conceive!

Questions to consider: Which aspect of God's character is most attractive to you? Do you see this manifested in your life?

Prayer Prompts:

- Praise God for His character, that He is worthy of all glory and honor and power!
- Pray that the Lord uses your life to bring glory and praise to Himself.
- Pray for a heart of tenderness, gratitude, and obedience to the Lord's will.
- Thank God for His steadfast love that endures.

Colossians 1:15-16 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

DAY 11 – GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Deuteronomy 10:16-20 So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer. For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name.

Do you really believe that God fulfills His promises? That through His power, He is sovereign when He makes covenants in that He can see the end at the very beginning? All the way back in Genesis 12, God made a covenant promise to Abram that He would bless him, make his name great, make from him a mighty nation, and that all nations would be blessed through him. As we see in Scripture, God accomplishes all these things and yet what is displayed time and time again is not the greatness of Abraham or his descendants, but the faithfulness of God and the greatness of God's name.

In spite of the constant faithlessness and disobedience of Abraham, Sarah, and the Israelites, God remained faithful. Even though He knew they could not remain faithful to Him, He still covenanted with them that they may receive the blessing of His presence and glory. In all this, He desires for His people to reflect His holiness, walk in His faithfulness, and share in the greatness of His name by taking it to the ends of the earth! So do we really believe this? Do we believe that God desires to use each of us and His church to display His greatness and His faithfulness to a lost and dying world all around us? If so, we must "circumcise our hearts, and stiffen our necks no longer" but humbly lay our lives on the altar as a living sacrifice to Christ our King.

Questions to consider: Do I shape my prayer life around an awareness of God's sovereignty, and pray for God to move and reveal His faithfulness and glory?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that God would move and reveal Himself to His church in such a way that the only explanation is that God moved. Ask God to give you an eternal mindset, a Kingdom focused heart.
- Pray that God would move for the greatness of His name among His people.

2 Timothy 2:11-13 This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

DAY 12 – TRUST IN HIM

Psalm 27:11-14 Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a level path because of my foes. Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence. I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the Lord.

It is hard to wait for the Lord; to be still and know that He is God and trust in His faithfulness. Most of us don't turn to the Lord in the same way that David does in Psalm 27. Did you notice the difference here between what most of us do and what David does?

In our lives when we run into difficult life circumstances (either due to our sin, someone else's sin, or just life in general), we run to the Lord in prayer to tell Him all about it. "God, I wanted You to know that Sally lied about me at work today. God, I wanted You to know that my car broke and I need it fixed. God, I wanted you to know that I am lonely."

So often we turn to God to fix our problems and when we pray we just "talk at Him" about these problems that He is already fully aware of, rather than turn to Him in faith to transform our lives through these difficulties. Did you notice the very first things David asks for? "Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a level path because of my foes." David has four verses here, three of which are about God's faithfulness and David's desire to walk in them. Only one is about his circumstance. I would dare to say if it was us, all four would be about our problems!

In all this, do I find my sufficiency in Him in that whether He delivers me or answers my prayers the way I intended or not, I trust in Him for He is worthy? Take a lesson from David today. When you pray for our church and how God desires to use you in our church, pray like David does here, in faith.

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that God would teach you His ways through studying His Word to keep you and our church on a level path.
- Pray in faith, expecting God to move for His greatness and to wait patiently on the Lord.

1 Peter 5:6-7 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.

DAY 13 – FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISES

Job 19:25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.

The story of Job is quite an interesting read. God grants Satan permission to torment a person, the only stipulation being death is not an option. During the episode Job's wife pleads with him to curse God, eventually leaving him to die alone. His friend's counsel is similar, suggesting that Job has been wicked. In the midst of counsel, Job replies confidently that his "Redeemer lives." Job questioned but never cursed God because Job had a confident expectation of the future—a future founded on a promise. Job knew God's promises were guaranteed.

Believer, a resounding truth is that God can never break His promises. He has given many, including an inheritance to all who trust in Jesus. In our lives we will have troubles, fears, or anxieties, but our end is not the same as those who do not believe. We too have a confident expectation of the future, one where we dwell with our Savior, fulfilling the promise given.

Questions to consider: Have you ever wondered if God will do what He said He would do? Do you have fears that are keeping you from believing in God's promises? Have you memorized any promises given to us by God?

Prayer Prompts:

- Remember the promises you have been given and memorize Matthew 6:25-34 and Romans 8:28.
- Thank God for always fulfilling His promises.
- Ask God to help you remember the promises He has given.

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

DAY 14 – TRUST IN GOD'S WORD

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

A proper definition of the word “trust” would be a reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, etc., of a person or thing. The author of Proverbs is encouraging trusting in the One who never lies, is omnipotent, capable of fulfilling promises, and loves without expecting anything in return. These characteristics are quite different from oneself for our hearts are deceitful, selfish, even callous at times. We can even get into the habit of lying to ourselves, enough to begin believing the lies are true. How can trust be established when the foundation is deceit?

Relying on God's Word, its truthfulness, and the promises found within causes our focus to change. It is this change of view that allows our path to be straight rather than winding. Trusting in yourself will lead to destruction, but a trust in God will lead to life.

Questions to consider: What lies are you believing to be true, whether they are ones you told yourself or from another person? Can you trust in your knowledge, being confident this knowledge will lead to salvation? When was the last time you combated lies with Scripture?

Prayer Prompts:

- Ask God to reveal any lies you are believing and repent.
- Pray that God will give you wisdom as you discern truths from lies.

DAY 15 - HE IS FOREVER FAITHFUL

2 Timothy 2:11-13 The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful – for he cannot deny himself.

I have never met anyone who enjoys intentionally letting other people down. There is something unique in our wiring that God has put within us. When we look throughout the grand story of Scripture, there is one thing that continues to present itself as a standard for faithfulness. Spoiler alert: humanity fails time and time again with being faithful; God is the only one who consistently remains faithful. Paul writes Timothy here in this passage of the hope Paul has while suffering in chains for Christ. Paul exhorts Timothy to not only be “strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus” but also to “share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”

Paul reminds Timothy that God keeping His promises to us are not dependent upon our faithfulness but upon God's faithfulness. Paul would remind us in Rom. 3:3 that our unfaithfulness can never cancel out the faithfulness of God. Maybe as you look back upon your life you can recount many times that you failed, you sinned, and you were completely unfaithful to the God who saved you. Today may you rest in knowing that God's faithfulness is eternal. There is nothing you or I could ever do to cause God to choose to be unfaithful. He will always keep His promises to us, even when we consistently fail to keep any promises we make to Him. His grace is sufficient and His promises are true because He is forever faithful.

Questions to consider: Has God ever given you a reason to doubt His faithfulness? Does your life demonstrate unwavering faith in the One who is forever faithful? Is there someone in your life that you need to forgive because you wrongly expect them to exhibit the kind of faithfulness that comes from God alone?

Prayer Prompts:

- Spend a few moments confessing to God the promises you have failed to keep in your walk with Him. Next spend a few moments thanking God that He is faithful to always keep His promises.
- Pray for those you know personally who have never experienced the faithfulness of God in their lives because they don't yet know Him as their Heavenly Father.

Psalms 145:13b The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.

DAY 16 - GOD IN COMMAND

Joshua 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Moses is dead. Joshua is now the leader of the children of Israel. It is time to begin to enter the land of God's promise. I can only imagine the anxiety that Joshua must be experiencing.

God speaks to Joshua to direct him in the task. He gives Joshua specific instruction to lead Israel into this land flowing with milk and honey. He says, "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses" (Joshua 1:3). Everywhere Joshua goes, the Lord goes before him. God will guide and protect Joshua as he leads the people into the future.

Joshua is reminded of the promises God made Moses. He is prepared to enter the next phase of the plan. The plans of God are settled and sure. The will of God cannot be thwarted by the actions of man. Every promise of God is consistent with His ongoing work to make everything "very good" again. With God in command we are not weak or timid. We can be bold and confident. The Lord your God is with you.

Prayer Prompts:

- Find promises of God that will give you courage for the day.
- Ask the Lord to reveal any promises on which you are not depending.
- Ask the Lord to remind you of the promise of redemption.

Joshua 21:45 Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

DAY 17 - HE IS OUR GLORY

Psalm 3:1-3 O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; many are saying of my soul, There is no salvation for him in God. Selah But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.

David, chosen by God to be the just King of Israel is fleeing the vengeance of his son. Things are not like they should be. The world is chasing him, and the pressure of an unsettled life is weighing heavily on him. In anguish he exaggerates the situation and overstates the number of his foes. David, of all people, should know that no enemy is large enough or numerous enough to exceed God's over watch. In the moment, David does what we tend to do. The interpretation of the immediate overwhelms the facts of the permanent. The things he sees pushes the things he knows to the side. He is distraught.

The psalmist then inserts a pause. A moment to reflect. A time to think and remember. *Selah* is frequently found in the psalms. The actual meaning is unclear, although the practical value is evident. Time to think allows the Spirit of the living God to intervene. A small demonstration of self-control gives the reality of God time to become prevalent.

It is not difficult to find things that violate, or oppose, our sense of righteousness. The ideas and actions of the world are battling against the realm of truth. In David's moment of reflection, he remembers that the Lord is the shield and defender. He is our glory. He alone lifts our head so we are no longer beaten down.

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for the Lord to focus your attention on Him.
- Ask for the Spirit to put your challenges in proper perspective.
- Ask the Lord to lift your head so your thoughts are of Him.

DAY 18 - GOD WILL NEVER LEAVE US

Joshua 1:8-9 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

The sobering truth of all human relationships is that they are destined to end. They might end through death, separation, disagreement, betrayal, or other myriad ways. We may try to mitigate the inevitable pain of abandonment issues by keeping people at arms length. Or we may strive to keep our focus on whatever profession or possessions we have, not slowing down long enough to get attached to anyone. No matter how we may try to avoid it, all of us are forced to deal with it throughout our lives. So how can we have genuine relationships with people when we know they will only be a part of our lives for a season? How can we trust others if we've been hurt in a past relationship? We can when we trust in God and His promises.

Joshua was a godly leader, called by God and trained by Moses. Joshua had been through much as the Israelites prepared to enter the Promised Land. He'd seen and heard countless times how God led and provided for the Israelites. He'd also seen and heard even more times how the people would complain and speak against God. Moses had died, as well as an entire generation, and Joshua was now the leader of Israel. Where could he turn? Who could he trust? God encouraged Joshua to know His Word and to do what it says. In doing so, Joshua and the Israelites would prosper in the new land. No matter what they would face, God would be with them always. This promise is still in effect for all of us today: God will never abandon us. We can trust Him implicitly, no matter our circumstances. Trusting in Him also gives us the capacity to open ourselves to relationships with others, enjoying those relationships no matter the duration or how they end. Be of good courage; God is with you!

Questions to consider: What promises have I seen fulfilled in Scripture? Am I keeping people at arms length out of fear of abandonment? Am I genuine in my relationships?

Prayer Prompts:

- Trust that God will never leave or forsake you (Deuteronomy 4:31).
- Pray restoration for any broken relationships in your life.

Deuteronomy 4:31 He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.

DAY 19 - JESUS BEARS OUR BURDENS

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

There's a common saying that goes: "God doesn't give you more than you can handle." This saying seems to reflect God's mercy toward us. However, is it biblical? Well, to quote the Apostle Paul: "Certainly not!" First of all, God does allow evil or sinful things to come into our lives (James 1:17). He is sovereignly aware of all things. Because we live in a fallen world we face disease, death, natural disasters, and so many more things that are "more than we can handle." In fact, our very own sin is "more than we can handle."

Matthew 11 records the compassion of Jesus and the promise of rest. God knows this world is "more than we can handle," so He sent His Son into the world to defeat sin and death. When Jesus died for our sins, He didn't simply make them disappear when we trust in Him. Jesus took our sins upon Himself and paid our debt in full. He took every burden we will ever experience, every load too heavy for us to carry. The image of a yoke here is spot on: when oxen were yoked together they would be able to bear an exponentially heavier load than they could on their own. When we are yoked with Christ, we can completely trust that He has already died for our burdens and is able to carry us through them. Whatever burdens we may carry, we can all find rest in the person and work of Jesus.

Questions to consider: Are there burdens that I need to trust Christ to carry? How would I define biblical "rest"? What does it mean to be "gentle and lowly of heart" and do I exhibit these traits?

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks to God for sending Jesus to bear our burdens.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to bring to mind any areas of struggle in your life.
- Pray for our church during this time of transition, specifically for each ministry leader and any burdens they may carry.

1 Peter 5:6-7 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

DAY 20 - GOD'S WORD AND PROMISES

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

Have you ever reflected on how much your faith depends upon the Word and promises of God? Everything we know about Jesus we know from God's Word. Forgiveness of sin, eternal life, and resurrection of the dead are all promises found in the Word. God's Word is truth (John 17:17) and nothing else causes us to believe, or strengthens our faith, better than His Word.

This is why, whenever we face trials, our first source of strength and guidance should be God's Word. Too often we run to a friend, social media, or our own wisdom. Our emotions might temporarily be lifted, but real answers, and the foundation of our faith, are only found in God's Word. It is God's Word that teaches us how to be steadfast under trial. It is God's Word in our hearts and minds that the Holy Spirit uses to encourage us, and convict us of sin, as we face each day.

Questions to consider: How has God demonstrated His faithfulness to you in the past? How will I recognize His faithfulness in my life now?

Prayer Prompts:

- Thank God for His Word.
- Repent of any doubt or lack of trust in the truth and authority of God's word.
- Pray for a heart that thirsts after the Word of God, a heart that cries out to Him in good times as well as during trials.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

DAY 21 - PURE AND HOLY PEOPLE

Zephaniah 3:9-12 For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, My dispersed ones, will bring My offerings. In that day you will feel no shame because of all your deeds by which you have rebelled against Me; for then I will remove from your midst your proud, exulting ones, and you will never again be haughty on My holy mountain. But I will leave among you a humble and lowly people, and they will take refuge in the name of the Lord.

Did you notice the progression that takes place in the text here? Did you see the implications of what it means to be a purified people? First, we see that God will give them purified lips for a purpose—namely, that they may call upon His name and in unity serve Him. Second, He gathers His people from the ends of the earth to worship Him, because He first purified their lips that they may do so. We cannot worship Him in Spirit and in truth, when we are still in sin; when we have not placed our faith in Christ. Third, those who have been purified by Him will no longer look back upon their sin but look forward in unity to their new purpose in serving Him. And in this purity of soul and purpose, God will separate His remnant from those who have not been purified.

This is not a separation of believers from the world, but a separating of those who outwardly give allegiance to Christ but inwardly are proud and have exalted themselves rather than God. Lastly, we see a humble remnant who takes refuge in the name of the Lord.

Questions to consider: Is that you? Is that Richland Creek? Are we a purified people, intent upon worshiping and serving Christ in unity, and laying our lives before Him as a fragrant aroma and pleasing offering, a people who take refuge in the great name of the LORD? Or are we the proud, exulting ones, who will not approach Him on His holy mountain?

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray that God would purify His people and unify us in serving Him.
- Pray that we would examine our hearts to see if there is any pride within us, any sin that would separate us from His presence and blessing.
- Pray that God would make us a humble people who rest in the name of the Lord as we take the greatness of His name to the nations.

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord

DAY 22 - OBEDIENCE NOT SACRIFICE

Micah 6:6-8 With what shall I come to the Lord and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Have you ever been broken over your sin? That may be a silly question as I assume you have joined with the Body of Christ to lift up our church in prayer. But have you ever really been broken over your sin?

So often, we don't take our sin seriously because we don't take God's holiness seriously. Most of us don't wake up and think, "I really want to pursue sin today!" Instead, we wake up and say, "Lord deliver me from myself and my sinful nature." But as the day goes on, we get distracted here and there by the ever-present temptation to sin, and we lose sight of why we are striving for holiness in the first place.

What we see here with Micah is a heart broken over sin - a heart reflecting the opposite of what we so often want to do with our sin. We want to assuage God by doing something to cover our sin so we don't get in trouble by it. However, Micah desires obedience in the first place.

Micah knows that because of his sin, there is nothing that he can do on his own to come before the Lord. Therefore, all he can do is walk in obedience. For us who are in Christ, the challenge is the same. We cannot do anything to make right our relationship with God. Only faith in Christ's work on the cross can reconcile us back to God. But in that expression of faith is an expectation of obedience; in short, living in light of the faith we claim.

Prayer Prompts:

- Begin your prayer by laying your sin before God in brokenness and repentance, and dwell for a moment upon what God has done for you in Christ.
- Sincerely ask yourself, "Do I try to make up for my sin, or try to live in such a way to reflect the holiness of God; knowing that in Christ, He has already done everything for me?"
- Pray for holiness and obedience in the Body of Christ, knowing that a church is only as spiritually healthy as the individual members who make it up.

Galatians 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

DAY 23 – OUGHT TO LOVE

1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

John 3:16 is a verse that most Christians have memorized. It points to the extent to which God loved us, sending Christ to die. It is the same love Paul wrote about in Romans 5:8, love that was demonstrated by Christ's finished work on the cross. This type of love is one that seeks out our best interests, all the while never expecting anything in return. It is not a 50/50 love; rather, it is a 100/0 type of love. Knowing this, John teaches us how believers are to love. Just like a peach ought to taste like a peach, one who has trusted in Christ "ought to love one another."

Expressing this love is what sets Christians apart from other belief systems. It's what will cause others to ask why we are different, perhaps even leading to a Gospel presentation. Loving one another is not an option, it is the mark of a changed life.

Questions to consider: How do you think a believer "ought" to love/act? Are you currently doing what you "ought" to do? Is there someone you are having trouble loving? Are you praying for them?

Prayer Prompts:

- Remember the love that God showed you and let this love be the guide to how you act towards others.
- Ask God to give you a spirit of love to those around you.
- Ask God you give you the strength and courage to tell others about the love He has lavished upon you when Christ died for your sins.

Romans 12:10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

DAY 24 - PRAY WITH THANKSGIVING

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

It is quite interesting that Paul, the author of Philippians, encourages us to not be anxious. This is a man who was questioned about his salvation, shipwrecked and left for dead, imprisoned for preaching Christ crucified, and even contemplated his own death (1:20-24). Yet through all that, he has learned the recipe for dealing with anxiousness; it is prayer with thanksgiving.

When we pray with thanksgiving, the result is a mindset shift. Choosing to focus on God and His character reminds us whose and who we are. Our gazing upon the situation of life can fade away with the remembrance of all God has done for us. Anxiety and fear are strong forces but they do not have to rule us. Choose this day to pray with thanksgiving.

Questions to consider: Are you being ruled by anxiety and/or fear? Fear is a form of worship; whom do you fear? When was the last time your prayers focused on thanking God for what He has done instead of what you want?

Prayer prompts:

- Remember who God is (His character) and what He has done (sent Christ to take the punishment for your sin).
- Spend this day in prayer, not asking for what you want, but thanking God for all He has done in your life.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

DAY 25 - WORSHIP

Psalms 63:3-4 Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands.

It can be difficult to express gratitude to others, and this is especially true if you received something from someone that you just can't simply repay. For those who have placed their faith in the finished work of Christ, it is clear that there is nothing anyone could ever do to repay the work that was done on our behalf. However, the Scripture points us to a couple of different examples of a right response to what God has done. One of those is proper worship. David would write here in Psalm 63 that because of the love of God that he has experienced, his only response could be rejoicing in praise of who God is and what He has done. Notice that he mentions two things his body will do in response: his lips will praise and his hands will be raised.

David Foster Wallace points out, *"In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship."* If you were to look hard at your daily life, can you honestly say that you demonstrate a worshipful response to what God has done on your behalf? The challenge for each of us is that we often don't meditate and marinate upon the love God has shown us (Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:21), which in turn leaves our hearts open to worship other things in place of God.

Today reorient your heart to focus on the only One deserving of your worship, the One who died in your place, the One you could never repay, but the One who created you to bring glory and praise to Himself.

Questions to consider: What things in my life currently distract me from focusing on God? Have I elevated anything in my life such that I love it more than I do the God who saved me? Do others in my life see me as someone who worships God in the little aspects of my day-to-day life?

Prayer Prompts:

- Confess to God everything that you currently spend your time, energy and love on that has replaced the worship He is rightly due.
- Pray that God would cause you to remember and experience His love afresh and anew today.
- Pray for those in your circles of touch that have yet to experience the redemptive love of God.

Revelation 3:13b To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!

DAY 26 – GRACE PRECEDES OBEDIENCE

Galatians 2:19–21 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

“Grace precedes obedience” - Timothy Keller

It is easy to make ourselves believe we can perform our way to authentic spiritual growth. It is convenient to rely on ceremony to appear genuine. Practicing the form of religion without embracing the substance of grace is a futile effort.

Paul was very well prepared to defend the religion of the Pharisees. He knew the ways of men to present the will of God. He was convinced his persecution of the people of the Way was the most proper and righteous thing to do. How easily we can become trapped in the appearance of propriety.

The mystery of the Gospel is that the ways of God are not the same as the plans of man. How often does our insistence on ways and means result in false security? It is the nature of human nature to define actions as evidence. Is it truly possible to please God outwardly with genuinely receiving His grace internally?

Our privilege is to be redeemed by the work of Christ. We can rise above ritual and enjoy true freedom. We can die to ways and live to God.

Prayer Prompts:

- Examine your life for habits of religion.
- Ask the Lord to set you free from those habits.
- Seek to enjoy the freedom of grace in spiritual things.

DAY 27 - COMPLIANCE IS NOT OBEDIENCE

1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams."

I can still hear my mother's words ringing in my ears. "Do the right thing. The right way. For the right reason." Saul would have done well to have heeded her lesson.

If you have children you are familiar with the difference in obedience and compliance. Compliance looks like obedience, but it is frequently not the same. Compliance looks right. It shows effort and activity. Compliance looks like accomplishment. It is often merely busyness. Compliance has the appearance of obedience with none of the authenticity of obedience.

Saul tried to hide his true nature behind religious ceremony. He attempted to justify his acts of rebellion by appealing to Samuel's passion for God. He was not doing the right thing. He certainly did not do it the right way. And there is no doubt his reason was wrong. Appearing to do the right thing, for the wrong reason is of little, if any, value.

Questions to Consider:

- Are your actions obedience or compliance?
- Will you take time to recognize where God is working?
- Will you make the adjustments necessary to join Him in that work?

Romans 5:19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

DAY 28 - FOLLOWING HIS PLAN

Esther 4:14 For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

Esther was an ordinary Hebrew woman who became extraordinary through her obedience to God. Even though God is never mentioned by name in the Book of Esther, His sovereignty is at the forefront at every step of this incredible story. Consider for a moment the uniqueness of a young Hebrew woman becoming the queen of Persia. King Ahasuerus had hundreds of potential queens to consider, with likely most of these ladies being Persians. Also consider the unlikeliness of Esther being there to be considered at all. Esther and her family were part of the Babylonian captivity and stayed in Assyria rather than going back to their homeland. She shouldn't have even been in Assyria in the first place.

We know that God had a unique plan for Esther: He would work through her to deliver His people from death. But Esther had to trust God and obey His plan, which she did even in the face of her own potential death. Esther 4:15-16 goes on to state that Esther called for prayer and fasting as she prepared to address the king. Like Esther, God has a unique plan for each of us. Like Esther, we must seek God's will through prayer and act in obedience to Him.

We have a unique set of circumstances of our own at Richland Creek. Our current season of transition could very well be our "such a time as this." It is a time to call out in prayer, trusting fully in God's Word. It can also be a time to obediently embrace the role God has for you within His church. God can still accomplish the extraordinary using ordinary people like us!

Questions to consider: How can I know God's plan for me? What role do I fill in our church ministry? How can I pray for our church family, our church staff, and our community?

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks to God for His plan of salvation through faith in Jesus.
- Pray for wisdom to discern how to serve God and people.
- Pray for our church family, staff, and community during our transition.

John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

DAY 29 - LIVING FOR CHRIST

Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

The concept of “light” is used in different ways to describe spiritual things in Scripture. It is used to describe holiness in 1 John 5-7. Jesus calls Himself “the light of the world” in John 8, and even refers to His followers in the same manner as recorded in Matthew 5. This is an incredible statement of comparison, and one that is fundamental to grasp as a disciple of Christ.

The use of the same phrase to describe Jesus and His followers encourages us to be a bit more like Him. Yes, we know there are limits to this concept as Jesus is God the Son and we are merely sinful people. However, in Matthew 5 He is calling us to reflect His glory. This harkens back to idea of being created “in His own image” in Genesis 1:26-27. Think about the relationship of our sun and moon: the sun produces light, the moon reflects it. In a similar way, we are to reflect the light of the Son to glorify God.

This is so much more than simply thinking or acting like a Christian, for even lost people can occasionally think about, say, or do something that appears to be rooted in genuine faith. Being a Christian is who you are, not what you do. If faith is dependent upon our thoughts, words, or actions, it is not faith at all. When our hearts are truly focused on Christ, others can see Him reflected in us. Through faith in Christ we can be bearers of “the light of the world.”

Questions to consider: Does my life reflect Jesus? How can I grow in my faith? Am I depending upon my thoughts, words, and actions, or on Jesus Christ?

Prayer Prompts:

- Give thanks to God for creating us to be image bearers for Christ.
- Pray for wisdom and endurance in walking faithfully with God.
- Pray for opportunities to share “the light of the world” with others.

Matthew 5:14 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

DAY 30 - RECOGNIZING HIS FAITHFULNESS

Deuteronomy 7:9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations,

This description of God's character is given to Israel as they are about to cross the Jordan River and enter Canaan, the land promised to Abraham many generations ago. They are about to begin a campaign to reclaim their ancestral home that would be difficult, dangerous, and require their absolute obedience to God. So, who is this God they are asked to follow? He IS the one, true God. He IS the faithful God—the God you can count on to love you, protect you, and provide for you and your family if you love Him and keep His commandments (John 14:15). And He is the eternal God who will be faithful throughout your life and to a thousand generations.

That's the God I will follow into battle! That's the God I will lovingly obey! During this time of transition for RCCC, I am thankful that I can cling to God's faithfulness to His promises and love for me. There may be difficult days ahead, but our God is faithful. He will fulfill His promises and lovingly care for us. There can be no better outcome!

Questions to consider: How has God demonstrated His faithfulness to you in the past? How will you recognize His faithfulness in your life now?

Prayer Prompts:

- Thank God for His faithfulness.
- Repent of any selfishness or pride you have regarding the Lord's will.
- Pray for a heart of tenderness, gratitude, and obedience to the Lord's will.
- Thank God for His steadfast love that endures.

Romans 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

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