

☀ New Life Christian Fellowship

Week 1

This Week's Memory Verse:

Matthew 6:33 – But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

In *Matthew 22:37-38* – *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.* – we discover the priority God wants to hold in our lives – TOP priority. What a challenge! Loving God half-heartedly is not enough. He wants complete commitment, and through that commitment to Him, our lives will be forever changed. In this week's devotionals, we will have the opportunity to search our hearts and examine your lives. Are there areas we have failed to surrender to Christ? In the areas where He is not top priority, what IS? And what can we do about it?



Day 1: Monday – January 21

Matthew 6:33 – *Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* This verse puts the pattern for Christian living in a nutshell: Seek the kingdom of God above all else. In our busy lives we cannot do everything. However, the thing we can decide is what we will do first. What we choose first, over time, takes top priority in our lives. If we look at the entries in our calendars, checkbooks, and credit card statements for the past month, we might be surprised by what has been top priority in our lives lately.

After thinking through your schedule, checkbook, and credit card statement, list the areas that have received most of your attention.

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Because Jesus knew that earthly non-eternal things tend to crowd out spiritual and eternal priorities, He spoke directly about this in *Matthew 6:25* – *Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?*

Perhaps you see in His list some things that have captured too much of your attention, and even caused you to worry...

In *Philippians 4:19* – *My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus* – Paul reminds us of God's promise. Notice He didn't say He would meet some or a few of our needs, but all our needs.

Do you fully believe this promise applies to you? Yes No

What needs do you have in your life now that you need to turn over to God?

As Christians, the desire to give Christ top priority in every area of our lives must be foremost. Saying Christ is top & living with Christ as top priority are different matters. When Christ comes first, our lives will change. We will make decisions based on new commitments. We will schedule time based on new priorities. Let's use this week's memory verse to keep this commitment in focus.

Day 2: Tuesday – January 22

Matthew 6:25-27 – Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

When Jesus spoke about 'these things' in *Matthew 6:33* (this week's memory verse), He was referring to what He said in the preceding verses, beginning with verse 25. He offered a choice: 1) worry about these things or 2) seek His kingdom. God has promised that we will receive what we need. In spite of this, observation reveals that most Christians continue to worry rather than simply claim this promise. Worry is an affront to God. He told us He would supply all our needs, and He knows what we need even before we ask.

In *Matthew 6:28-33*, Jesus continued His instructions about trusting instead of worrying. But how is worry different from concern? Simply put, worry leads to inner turmoil and a sense that we must do something, but trust leads to inner peace and prayer. Worry says, "If I don't take matters into my own hands, nothing is going to happen." But trust says, "If I take this to God and listen, He will give me instructions about what to do." That's why God wants us to be concerned about others, situations, what is happening in our lives and our relationships with others. He wants us to pray earnestly about them, but don't worry and fret over them. If the situation is one over which we have no control, we should give it to God – He does have control.

What are the things that cause you to worry?

How much time and energy do you give each week to worrying about the things God has promised to provide for those who seek His kingdom first?

△ Very little △ Somewhat △ Quite a bit △ Way more than I should

With a little thought, we could all come up with things that we should not be worrying about. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray in *Matthew 6:9-13*, part of the prayer focused on the kingdom of God: "*Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" We will experience more and more of God's kingdom in our own lives as we embrace His priorities in our lives as they are embraced in heaven.

How would your life change if you invested your emotional energy in spiritual priorities, rather than letting it drift toward worry?

We find another wonderful promise from God in *Matthew 21:22* – *If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.* – When you pray about the things that cause you to worry and when you believe in God's faithfulness, He will provide what you need. How would this day change if you asked God to use you today to accomplish His will in your part of His world – at school, the office, the store, or your own home? Let's allow His kingdom to break through on earth today through us.

Remember the Serenity Prayer:

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
And the wisdom to know the difference.*

-Reinhold Neibuhr, 1926

As you pray today, list the details of your worries or concerns and turn them over to Him. Repeat the memory verse in your prayer, telling God that you are willing to seek His kingdom first. Ask Him to help you trust Him more.

Memory Verse:

*Matthew 6:33 – But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Day 3: Wednesday – January 23

Romans 14:17 tells us two things that are not and three things that are are priorities in the kingdom of God. *'For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.'*

The two things that should be incidental in our lives – eating & drinking. In other words, the things that have only to do with this physical world.

The three things that should occupy our time and attention – righteousness, peace & joy. These things rise to the top when we live in partnership with God's Spirit.

Spiritual concerns are to out-weigh physical concerns. The Bible does not teach that our physical life is unimportant or that it is unnecessary to provide for ourselves and those who depend on us. While we need to focus on the spiritual priorities, we also need to care for our own physical needs and the needs of others. The challenge comes as we attempt to live responsibly without allowing the daily pressures of living on this earth to consume most of our time and energy.

Colossians 3:17 gives us a guideline for transforming even the mundane activities of everyday life into experiences that draw us closer to God. It says – *Whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.*

If you decided to live with this perspective today, how would it change your day?

Would this change (drastically?) the way you normally live your life?

To what degree are you experiencing God's righteousness, joy and peace?

Do you lack the energy needed to be all you can be? Use the following prayers to ask for God's help...

Lord, help me to balance my time and energy to meet the demands of my life today.

Lord, help me be Your representative in all that I do and say this day.

Lord, help me do everything in this day with a grateful heart.

Memory Verse:

Matthew 6:33 – But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Day 4: Thursday – January 24

Luke 9:23 contains 3 commitments we must make if we want to follow Christ with the kingdom of God as our top priority. Jesus said – *If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.*"

Describe one area in which you need to deny yourself so you can follow Christ more fully.

Considering your cross as a personal sacrifice you willingly make in order to serve other people, what cross should you pick up today?

What is one step you need to take in following Christ that you have been reluctant to do until now?

In *Luke 9:57-62* the cost of following after Jesus is described. Consider some of the familiar excuses given by those in Jesus' day who said they wanted to follow Him...

As they were walking along the road, a man said to Him, 'I will follow You wherever you go.' Jesus replied, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.' He said to another man, "Follow Me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Still another said, 'I will follow You, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.' Jesus replied, 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.'

When Jesus told us to take up our cross and follow Him, He meant we were to follow Him wherever He would go. He healed the sick, ministered to those in need, taught His disciples, prayed for sinners, and He depended on His Father to supply all His needs. If we want to follow Jesus and be like Him, we must be willing to commit ourselves to doing the tasks of furthering His kingdom. Seek Him first, and He will help us do this.



Remember *Philippians 4:13* – *I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.* Our only sufficient source of strength is Christ.

Let's consider this week's memory verse again:

Matthew 6:33 – *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

And let's pray these three simple prayers based on Jesus' instructions:

Lord, help me say no to my selfish desires that would crowd out Your Kingdom in my life.

Lord, help me look for ways to serve other people, even when they require personal sacrifice.

Lord, help me follow You by responding to the people and situations in my world the way You would.

Day 5: Friday – January 25

In *Matthew 5:16* Jesus told His disciples to let their lights shine so that others could see their works and praise their Father in heaven. Fill in the blanks in the following paragraph:

Jesus assumed that His disciples would live lives that attracted attention. Others would see the _____ they did and pay attention to their lives. But Jesus wanted His disciples to do more than attract attention. He wanted people to see their good deeds and _____.

In most cases, people will not make the connection between our good deeds and our Father in heaven unless we help them. We will have to tell them that the reason we live as we do is because of the difference Christ has made in our lives. Only then will they glorify God because of our deeds. One thing is for sure...when they notice the difference, they will ask. Consider how you might respond if a co-worker or friend said, "You are such a disciplined person! I don't know how you have so much self-control."

Christ makes us different only to the degree that we give Him top priority in our lives. Consider the following verses which indicate ways we can evaluate whether we are putting Christ first in our lives:

1 Samuel 15:22

But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams."

Proverbs 3:9-10

Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first-fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

Romans 12:1

Therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.

Romans 13:8

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray continually.

Based on these verses, how would you evaluate the degree to which Christ is top priority in your life right now? Check the box beside each characteristic that best expresses the degree to which it has developed in your life:

STRONG / AVERAGE / WEAK

I desire to know and obey God.

I honor God by regularly giving my tithe (10%).

I offer myself to God as a living sacrifice.

I love others on an ongoing basis.

I sustain a lifestyle of prayer.

Below, write a prayer for another person here at New Life asking God to help them with whatever needs or struggles they are facing. Then, write a prayer for an unbeliever who is in your life – such as a neighbor, coworker or family member- and ask the Lord to let the light of God's love in your life shine to others.

Lord, give me the opportunity to help a friend, family member or co-worker make a spiritual connection through my life.

God, give me the wisdom to explain the connection between the way I live and the fact that Jesus is top priority in my life.

Memory Verse:

Matthew 6:33 – *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Day 6: Saturday – January 26

The reason we are to put God first place in our lives is because He owns everything in this world...including us! The Bible is very clear about this. Notice the following verses:

Psalm 5:10-12 – Every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills...and the creatures of the field are mine...the world is mine, and all that is in it.'

Haggai 2:8 – "The silver is mine and the gold is mine," declares the Lord Almighty.

1 Chronicles 29:14-16 – But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your hand. We are aliens and strangers in Your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. O Lord our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building You a temple for Your Holy Name, it comes from Your hand, and all of it belongs to You.

Psalm 24:1 – The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

When we put God first place in our lives, it isn't just a one-way street where we do everything for God, and He says, "Thank you very much." In fact, what comes from God to us is far greater than anything we could ever give to Him. The Bible is equally clear about this. Consider the following verses:

James 1:17 – Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights.

Ephesians 1:3-4 – Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Proverbs 8:18-22 – Unending riches, honor, justice, and righteousness are mine to distribute. My gifts are better than the purest gold or sterling silver! Those who love and follow me are indeed wealthy. I fill their treasuries.

Isaiah 26:12 – All that we have accomplished You, Oh Lord, have done for us.

Because God is so generous with us, two constant and destructive dangers threaten us. 1) That we will become proud and forget that all that we have comes from God and is still owned by Him. 2) That we will become selfish in the way we manage the things He has entrusted to our care. And, once again, the Bible is very clear about this.

Consider the following verses:

Deuteronomy 8:17-18 – You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth.

Psalm 62:10 – If your riches increase, don't be proud.

Deuteronomy 8:11-14 – Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God...Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 – The Lord says, "Let not the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands & knows Me."

What is the possession(s) God has entrusted you with that tempts you most with pride?

With what possession (s) do you tend to be most selfish?

What can I do today to overcome these temptations?

Memory Verse:

Matthew 6:33 – But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Day 7: Sunday – January 27

Not only are we to be appreciative of all that God has supplied, but we are also to manage it as His steward. Consider the following verses:

Colossians 3:17, 23-24 – Whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus... Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Romans 14:7-8 – None of us live to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord.



Matthew 25:19-21, 24-26 – After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of gold said, "Sir, you gave me five bags of gold to invest, and I have doubled the amount." The master was full of praise. "Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!"... Then the servant with the one bag of gold came and said, "Sir, I know you are a hard man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate. I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth and here it is." But the master replied, "You wicked and lazy servant!"

Focusing more clearly on the temporary nature of this world and everything in it (including our own physical bodies) helps us better understand our role as stewards. The Bible teaches us that we shouldn't consider this world our home because it is not our permanent place of residence. Consider the following verses:

Hebrews 11:13-16 – These men of faith...agreed that this earth was not their real home but that they were just strangers visiting down here...they were looking forward to their real home in heaven. If they had wanted to, they could have gone back to the good things of this world. But they didn't want to. They were living for heaven. And now God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has made a heavenly city for them.

Hebrews 13:14, 16 – For this world is not our home; we are looking forward to our everlasting home in heaven...Don't forget to do good and to share what you have.

God can do great things through one person (or a group) that is devoted to Him. When we put Him as top priority, we put our lives in His hands & give Him permission to do whatever He wants with what we have to offer. And since He is our creator, we know He has already provided everything we need in order to serve Him in the way that He wants.

Week 2

This Week's Memory Verse:

Matthew 21:22 – If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

A vital part of our spiritual life is our communication with God through prayer. A great way to learn how to pray better is to use Scripture as our basis for prayers. On one occasion, Jesus' disciples asked Him, "Lord, teach us to pray." (Luke 11:1). Jesus didn't scold or rebuke them for not knowing how to pray. He responded gently, guiding them into new insights about talking with God. Jesus wants to teach us how to pray as well. The Bible is the text. In this week's study, you'll learn about people who prayed effectively. You'll discover patterns for praying, what the Bible teaches about how to pray, why you pray and what to expect when you pray.



Day 8: Monday – January 28

Hebrews 11:6 – Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

Prayer acknowledges that God exists. When we pray, we seek God; we admit that we need God's help. The key question is: do we believe God hears our prayers and will help us?

Read through the following Scriptures & consider ideas common to all four:

Matthew 21:21-22 – Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree [referring to Him shriveling it on command], but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

Mark 9:23 – "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."

Mark 11:22-24 – "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea.' And does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

James 1:6 – But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

As you can see, when we pray, it is important for us to believe and not doubt. Each of these verses affirms this principle. We can pray with confidence because we have a powerful and loving God. When we place our faith in God, we stand on a strong foundation. Faith demands a focus. Our focus as a Christian is Jesus Christ. As we seek God & therefore learn to know Him more fully, it becomes easier to place our faith in Him. We discover that He is faithful. We can trust Him. Our faith will grow.

Many Scriptures dealing with prayer contain two parts: a condition and a promise. We cannot claim the promise if we do not meet the condition. Read each of the following verses & jot down both the condition & then the promise.

Mark 11:24 – Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Condition:

Promise:

Mark 11:25 – And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

Condition:

Promise:

John 15:7 – If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

Condition:

Promise:

1 John 3:21-22 – Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

Condition:

Promise:

Suggested Prayer:

Thank You, Lord, for the promise to hear and answer my prayers when I pray and believe.

Father, You told me that You will not break Your covenant with me. Give me the faith and strength I need to keep the covenant I made with You on the day of my salvation.

Memory Verse:

Matthew 21:22 – If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Day 9: Tuesday – January 29

Mark 1:35 – *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed.* This passage gives us a clear picture of Jesus' prayer life. From His example we can learn three important principles of prayer. Let's take a look at the setting for this verse:

Mark 1:21-34 describes Jesus' activities the day before He rose early to pray. Consider how He might have felt at the end of the previous day...

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at His teaching, because He taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, "What do You want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who You are – the Holy One of God." "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly, "Come out of him!" The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey Him." News about Him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee. As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. So He went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but He would not let the demons speak because they knew who He was.

#1 – *A Proper Perspective* – Isn't it a bit surprising that He got up early to pray after a day like that? So often it seems as though there are a million "more productive" things to do with our time than pray...but Jesus knew that all the productivity He could muster would not be as effective as the time He spent with His Father. Is my perspective about this the same as Jesus'? _____

#2 – *A Reserved Time* – In the situation we just read about, Jesus prayed early in the morning. On other occasions, He prayed in the evening and sometimes He prayed all night. When is the best time for you to pray?

#3 – *An Appropriate Place* – Jesus found a place where He could be alone. People demanded Jesus' time and attention constantly. He struggled to find places where He could be alone. What place can you set aside where you can be alone with God? _____

If prayer was so important in the life of Jesus, it should also be a priority in our lives. Let's resolve to spend time with God every day. As we do, we will find ourselves saying with more regularity and confidence, "Not my will, but Yours be done."

Please check the following commitments, if you are willing to make them:

△ Commitment: I commit myself to pray each day

△ Time: The time of day I will pray is _____

△ Place: I have chosen _____ where I can be alone each day in prayer

Heavenly Father, I commit myself to pray just as You prayed, seeking God's will in my life, rather than my own.

Precious Lord and Savior, remove the obstacles that keep me from spending time with You each day.

Memory Verse:

Matthew 21:22 – If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Day 10: Wednesday – January 30

Often people fall into the habit of praying prayers that only involve asking God for things. The Bible teaches there should be at least four dimensions to healthy prayer. To help us remember these, we can use the acronym A-C-T-S.

- Adoration: Expressing our worship to God for who He is
Confession: Requesting God’s forgiveness for sin in our lives
Thanksgiving: Expressing our thanks to God for what He has done
Supplication: Seeking God’s answers for our needs and the needs of others

Consider the following Scriptures that relate to each component of prayer:

- Adoration: *Psalm 9:1-2 – I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.*
- Confession: *1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*
- Thanksgiving: *Psalm 100:4 – Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name.*
- Supplication: *1 John 5:14-15 – This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.*

Evaluate your own prayer life based on each of these four dimensions. Circle a number on each line below to indicate how strong or how weak you think each dimension of prayer is in your life right now.

<u>A</u> doration	<i>very weak</i>	1	2	3	4	5	<i>very strong</i>
<u>C</u> onfession	<i>very weak</i>	1	2	3	4	5	<i>very strong</i>
<u>T</u> hanksgiving	<i>very weak</i>	1	2	3	4	5	<i>very strong</i>
<u>S</u> upplication	<i>very weak</i>	1	2	3	4	5	<i>very strong</i>

Practice using these four dimensions by writing a brief prayer for each:

Adoration: I express my love to God for who He is:

Confession: I ask God’s forgiveness for sin in my life:

Thanksgiving: I express my love to God for what He has done:

Supplication: I seek God’s answers for my needs and the needs of others:

Father, help me to express my love to You through prayer. Guide me in expressing my thoughts, ideas and concerns to You.

Memory Verse:

Matthew 21:22 – If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Day 11: Thursday – January 31

Many Christians feel awkward while learning to pray. We want to say the right words because we fear that God won't listen unless we say it just right. For those of us who have doubts about our prayers, the Bible offers good news! Consider the following passage, and then check the boxes that apply:

Romans 8:26-28 – The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.

- ~God understands our weakness, even our weakness in prayer.
- ~God's Holy Spirit, living in us, helps us pray for the right things.
- ~God listens to our thoughts, deepest longings & the desires of our hearts.
- ~We can sit silently before the Lord, trusting that He knows our desires.

The amazing truth is that He does all these things and so much more. God wants to talk with us more than we could ever want to pray. Through the Holy Spirit's work in our lives, God enables us to have an on-going conversation with Him. Sometimes words come easily in prayer. At other times, especially in times of crisis and pain, we do not know what to pray. Consider how the following verse can help us when words fail:

Matthew 6:8 – Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

Even when words won't come, God knows our hearts. We can simply sit in silence in His presence and allow our hearts to speak for us. If we'll just relax and focus on God's presence, thanking Him for being with us and knowing our needs, the Holy Spirit makes our silence a prayer to the Lord.

We have learned that prayer has a condition as well as a promise. One condition we must meet is to do what God says we must do. Then we can claim His promise and trust Him to do what He said. Consider the following passage that has four conditions/instructions and two promises. See if you can find them:

Philippians 4:6-7 – Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, & thank Him for all He has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Condition/Instruction –

Condition/Instruction –

Condition/Instruction –

Condition/Instruction –

Promise --

Promise --

With so many promises from God concerning our prayers, we can pray with confidence that God hears us, or we can sit silently knowing that God hears our hearts. What a joy and comfort this is to every believer!

Review this week's memory verse below, and think of it as you pray the following suggested prayer:

Lord, help me to pray with confidence, realizing that You know my every thought and desire before I say a word, and that You will answer when I pray believing Your Word. I know that I can seek Your will with any request, and that You will answer out of the abundance of Your great riches.

Memory Verse:

Matthew 21:22 – If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Day 12: Friday – February 1

Some passages on prayer make it sound as if God is Santa Claus, waiting to give us anything we want – no matter what it may be. However, truths in other verses about prayer bring a better perspective about these Santa Claus type prayers!

For instance, let's look at what John writes:

1 John 5:14 – This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

The principles in this verse provide the context in which we must understand prayer. Prayer isn't so much about us getting God to do what we want, as it is about coming to an understanding of what God's will is and getting our lives in alignment with it. He will hear and answer our prayers when we pray according to His will.

James expands on this thought when he writes:

James 4:3 – Even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.

God wants to give us the desires of our heart, but only after our hearts have been brought into alignment with His unselfish will. When we understand this, it keeps us from asking for the wrong things.

Do you ever consider God's will a limitation on prayers that you wish to pray?

Yes No Consider for a moment "Why?"

God's will includes His wisdom – He knows all things. God's will includes His power – He can bring good out of any situation. God's will includes His love – He walks with us through everything. This is why He answers prayers according to His will.

Consider the chaos that would take place in our world if God answered every prayer that you or anyone else prayed, without any limitation? What problems might result if He did?

Jesus led the way in praying this way. Consider one of His last prayers on this earth:

Matthew 26:39 – Going a little farther, He fell with His face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible may this cup be taken from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.'

Since Jesus prayed this way, let's do the same today as we pray this suggested prayer:

Lord, help me to seek Your will in my life and to pray according to that will. God, I know You are the creator of the universe and that You can do all things. Help me to trust You to bring the best out any situation that may arise in my life.

Memory Verse:

Matthew 21:22 – If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Day 13: Saturday – February 2

God instructs and requests us to put Him first place in our lives for two great reasons. The first centers itself around the quality of our life on this earth. Although our selfish nature begs to differ, the truth is that placing God's kingdom and His will first in our lives produces a richer, fuller, and more significant life on this earth. It is far better than anything we can experience by pursuing our own desires and wishes. Consider the following verses:

1 Timothy 6:18-19 – Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Philemon 1:6-7 – You are generous because of your faith. And I am praying that you will really put your generosity to work, for in so doing you will come to an understanding of all the good things we can do for Christ. I myself have gained much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because your kindness has so often refreshed the hearts of God's people.

Matthew 6:33 – God will give you all you need from day to day if you live for Him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern.

John 10:10 – (Jesus said) I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.



The second reason is that our dedication to the causes of Christ in this world also impacts our experiences in eternity. It's hard to grasp, but the Bible clearly teaches that we can (and should) do things on this earth that last for (and impact) our eternity. Consider the following verses:

Luke 14:13-14 – When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

Matthew 6:19-20 – Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Revelation 14:13 – I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this down: Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they are blessed indeed, for they will rest from their hard work; for their good deeds follow them!"

Suggested prayer:

Lord, give me the faith to believe that seeking and following Your will is the only way to maximum life on this earth...especially when my selfish nature wants its own way. Help me learn to distinguish the voice of Satan which usually begins with the words "I deserve," from Your voice which usually begins with something far less selfish. Also, Father, please give me a heart that is more in tune with the coming life than the demands and wishes of this one.

Memory Verse:

Matthew 21:22 – If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Day 14: Sunday – February 3

There is a concept (one of the most important things you can ever know in this life) that is found in one form or another on most pages in the Bible: God loves you and has a plan for your life. One of the basic purposes of prayer is to enable us to discover and successfully live out His plan for our lives.

Because He is so powerful and we are so weak, it is easy to assume that God doesn't need me...that He can accomplish His will quite effectively without me.

And on the surface, that is true. If He wanted to, God could do everything without any of us. However, the Bible teaches that God has chosen not to do this. In fact, He has chosen to make us His partners in the greatest work on earth – His Kingdom!

Consider what the following verses teach:

Ephesians 2:10 – For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Acts 1:8 – You will be My witnesses, telling people about Me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

1 Corinthians 3:8-9 – The one who plants [in God's kingdom] and the one who waters, work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. For they are both God's fellow workers.

If being a co-worker with God is the proper way to find significance in this life, then Satan must have a counterfeit to offer. And to be sure, he does. It's bright and flashy, and it glitters. And, on the surface, it's much more appealing. What is it? It's money and possessions. Without even trying, we all have a natural tendency to measure success in this life by our possessions and our portfolios. No wonder God warns us so many times about trusting in money, riches, and possessions.

Consider the following:

Luke 12:15 – Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

Proverbs 11:28 – Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.

Matthew 6:24 – No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 – Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable... Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need...By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life.



The last two verses above point out clearly that there are two great alternatives in life, and each of us is in one camp or the other. In the one camp, people draw their security from what they possess. They measure other people's success by what they possess. And they look to possessions for joy in this life. Although it is difficult to admit it, they have built their life around possessions.

In the other camp, people draw their security from their relationship with God. They find their significance in what He does through them. Their possessions are viewed as a blessing from God to be used as He directs them. They understand that possessions are temporary at best, so they never use them as a measure of success.

The first group tends to be stingy and selfish because every dollar they give away reduces their personal level of success. The second tends to be generous because their perspective about possessions gives them a freedom to share and give to others. For group number one, giving is a painful obligation to be avoided or minimized wherever possible. For group number two, it's a wonderful privilege that brings great joy.

And finally, group number one struggles to ask God in faith because they intuitively know that God isn't likely to grant a selfish request. But group number two eagerly asks in faith because they know that the more blessings God pours into their lives, the greater their capacity is to give to multiple causes that are closest to His heart.

Perhaps the best way to know which camp we belong to is to ask ourselves this question:

When I ask God for something, do I ask primarily to RECEIVE, or primarily so I will be able to GIVE to Him or others?

Memory Verse:

Matthew 21:22 – If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Week 3

This Week's Memory Verse:

John 14:21 — Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him.

God expects us to obey Him. Not only by our actions but even our thoughts and desires must be aligned with God's commands. God is serious about our obedience. In this week's study we'll have an opportunity to examine what the Bible says about living a life of joyful obedience. We'll discover some incredible truths about what God will do in our lives as we obey Him. We'll also learn about the consequences of living a disobedient life. Plus, we'll have the opportunity to evaluate our lives to see how fully we are obeying God. Based on that evaluation, we'll be able to see what steps we'll need to take to follow Jesus in joyful obedience.



Day 15: Monday – February 4

If you want to learn anything well, find a master teacher – one who has mastered the skill or subject you want to learn. The same principle holds true if you want to learn how to obey God. Fortunately, we have THE Master Teacher to follow: Jesus. While He lived on earth, Jesus always obeyed His heavenly Father. He modeled the way we should live in obedience. The following verses describe a night in Jesus' life when He struggled to obey God. Listen for how Jesus expressed His personal desire to God.

Luke 22:39-46 – Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and His disciples followed Him. On reaching the place, He said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. When He rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, He found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. "Why are you sleeping?" He asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."

What did Jesus want more than the fulfillment of His own personal desires?

Do you think that His attitude of submission to His father made it easy for Jesus to face what was about to take place? This passage shows us Jesus agonizing in prayer, struggling to obey God. What did God do to encourage and help Jesus face what was coming?

Ultimately, Jesus obeyed His Father unto death. Obeying God isn't easy and it wasn't easy for Jesus. During Christ's agonizing struggle, the Father sent angels to encourage and strengthen Him.

In *1 John 3:21-22*, two principles are linked: answered prayer and obedience.

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him.

Obedience, then, becomes a condition for answered prayer...what is your confidence before God in prayer based on?

Sometimes when God answers prayer, the answer doesn't come in the exact form we anticipated or desired. Part of obedience is embracing God's will (His answer) above our own desires. Experience demonstrates that God will faithfully help us embrace His will, if we really want to.

How did I respond the last time God answered my prayer in a way that was different from what I really wanted?

For many people answered prayer remains a great mystery. They try to earn God's answers. They look at the answered prayers others receive and wonder why it isn't like that in their life. Often, the answer is a very simple one. Those who receive answers to their prayers are people who are seeking God's will, while those who rarely receive answers are those who want God to do what they want.

Here is an important truth about prayer. Prayer is a means for us to seek and receive God's will, and not a means for us to try to convince God to agree to ours.

From Jesus' prayer in the garden, we can learn four important concepts for prayer and obedience:

- Express your desires to God in prayer.
- Set aside what you want if it conflicts with what God wants.
- Don't expect life to be easy if you are obeying God.
- Expect God to strengthen you as you obey Him.


Suggested prayer:

Dear Lord, give me an obedient spirit and help me to set aside my own desire when I pray. As I do this, I also pray for the strength and encouragement I need to accept Your answers and obey You completely.

Memory Verse:

John 14:21 — Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him.

Day 16: Tuesday – February 5

A well-known minister asked his congregation to consider if a trial were held to settle the issue as to whether or not they were Christians, would there be enough evidence to say that they were, or would the case be dismissed for lack of evidence? 

there be enough evidence to say that they were, or would the case be dismissed for lack of evidence?

What type of evidence establishes or demonstrates that we are Christians?

1 John 2:3-6 We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands. The man who says, 'I know Him,' but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys His word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in Him: whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.

These verses present four "if...then" statements. Write the missing half of each statement as needed to complete the idea.

If	Then
	We know we have come to know Him
We do not do what God commands	
We obey God's word	
	We know that we are in Him.

These verses should be an encouragement for us. They show us exactly what must be done and then give the results. IF we cannot say we are seeking to obey God, THEN we must question our true commitment to Him.

Do you know for sure that you are a Christian and will go to heaven when you die? Check the box that best describes your answer:

- I know for sure I am a Christian
- I don't know if I am a Christian, but I want to be certain if that is possible.
- I am not a Christian, but I would like to become one.

If you have checked the second statement, talk to your LIFE Group leader, a Christian friend or one of our pastors...he/she will be able to provide guidance.

If you checked the third statement, you can and should make that decision right now. Just tell God about your decision, and then call Ron, Bob, or Michael. They will be happy to help you get started on your Christian journey.

In looking at prayer from God's perspective, what would be the difference between His response to the prayer of a person who lives a life of obedience and the prayer of a person who lives to please only self?

Consider what each verse below says about obedience:

Job 36:11 – If they obey and serve Him, they will spend the

rest of their days in prosperity and their years in contentment.

Matthew 7:21 – Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

1 John 2:17 – The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

1 John 3:22 – And receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him.

Suggested prayer:

Heavenly Father, I commit myself to You and pray that You will help me to be obedient unto Your will. Jesus, I acknowledge You as my Lord, and I invite You to direct every portion of my life.

Memory Verse:

John 14:21 — Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him.

Day 17: Wednesday – February 6

What is the motivation behind our obedience to God? Is our obedience based on a sense of obligation, duty, and guilt; or is it based on the love God shows for us and the anticipation of the great things that will happen as a result of our obedience?

Below are three negative and three positive areas concerning obedience to God. Which ones have you experienced?

Negative:

- I'll obey God because He will punish me if I don't
- If I obey God, He will make me do things that will make me miserable.
- Although I am not thrilled about it, I obey God because I owe it to Him.

Positive:

- I'll obey God because He gives me so much in return.
- If I obey God, I'll experience His richest blessing.
- I'll obey God because of what Jesus did for me on the cross.



Reluctant obedience describes how many Christians respond to the challenge of obeying God. The Bible, however, presents a positive picture of the obedience that should characterize our lives. If you checked any of the positive ideas above, you are experiencing the joy that comes from obedience.

The following verses contain positive obedience principles:

Deuteronomy 26:16 — *The Lord your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.*

Psalms 40:8 — *I desire to do Your will, O my God; Your law is within my heart.*

Psalms 119:59-60 — *I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to Your statutes. I will hasten and not delay to obey Your commands.*

What is the common thread that binds the following verses? _____

Isaiah 55:12 — *You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills will burst into song before you, and all the tress of the field will clap their hands.*

John 16:22 — *So with you: now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.*

Galatians 5:22 — *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness...*

In view of the joy found in salvation our obedience should spring from hearts that are filled with joy.

Suggested prayer:

Dear Lord, help me experience and embrace the joy You supply in my salvation, so that my obedience comes more from gratitude and happiness than from obligation or fear. Father God, give me the desire to love You and serve You with all my heart.

Memory Verse:

John 14:21 — *Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him.*

Day 18: Thursday – February 7

How do we respond when we encounter challenges in our lives? Do we hold up well or do we crumble? The key might be our spiritual foundation. By obeying God, we can build solid foundations for our lives.

Jesus told a story to illustrate this principle:

"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to Me and hears My words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears My words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete." Luke 6:46-49

Think about your own experience in obeying God...when you obey God, how do you feel about yourself?

When you obey God, how do you feel about life in general?

When you obey God, how do you feel about your ability to handle challenging situations?

God communicates His plans for us and teaches us the principles on which we should build our lives. Consider these verses from Jeremiah regarding what God promises when we call upon Him and seek Him with all our hearts...

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:11-13

We can claim God's promise through our obedience to Him. We have a choice: to obey or disobey. When we obey, we express our love for God. As we obey God, our choice anchors our lives on His solid foundation.

Suggested prayer:

Lord, help me to build my life on the solid foundation of Your love. Lord, Your Word promises that You will listen when I



pray. Hear my prayer and instill in me the desire to be obedient to You.

Memory Verse:

John 14:21 — Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him.

Day 19: Friday – February 8

Have you ever said no to the Lord – or at least tried to? Since Jesus is Lord of all and the rightful Lord of our lives, our response to Him must be 'Yes, Lord.' Jesus demonstrated this attitude while He was on Earth in His relationship with His heavenly Father. Jesus is our teacher, and we must learn from Him so we can live as He did. God wants us to constantly be ready to say 'Yes, Lord' as He leads us.

Here is an example of Jesus' obedience to His heavenly Father:

Although He was a son, He learned obedience from what he suffered. (Hebrews 5:8)

Here is another example of Jesus' total obedience to His heavenly Father:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!

Philippians 2:5-8

In what areas of your life are you obeying God? List some specific areas of your life where you know God's will and are now working to bring your life into alignment with His plans.

Are there any areas in your life where you are being disobedient? Are these

areas with which you have had struggles in the past? Identify any area in your life where you know what God wants you to do, but you just don't want to obey at this time.

Think about times you have responded to God's leadership in your life by saying 'Yes, Lord.' Then think about the times when the issues or concerns in a situation may have prompted you to say 'No, Lord.' If you ask Him, God will give you the strength and desire to do His will. God stands ready to answer a prayer like that!

Suggested prayer:

Lord Jesus, You have shown me Your love through Your obedience to the Father. Give me the strength and desire to answer 'Yes, Lord' when You call. God, You know my limits and weaknesses; You know every part of me. Help me to be obedient to all Your will.

Memory Verse:

John 14:21 — Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him.

Day 20: Saturday – February 9

Experience shows that often the greatest test of our obedience is how we handle the money and possessions God has entrusted to our care. Our fallen human nature tends to look to money and possessions for several of its most important needs — security, identity, sense of worth, and joy.

One unfortunate result of this misplaced trust is that we tend to struggle in each of these areas. Money is powerless to give us any real security, healthy identity, proper sense of worth, or lasting joy. The other unfortunate result is that we tend to struggle with the concept of giving our money away.

Because God wants to free us from this unproductive bondage, He has placed in our lives a plan that calls us to regularly give our money and possessions away. It's called 'tithing'.



Notice how tithing was practiced, even from the beginning of the Bible.

Genesis 14:20 — Abram gave...a tenth of everything.

Genesis 28:21-22 — The LORD will be my God... and of all that you give me I will give Him a tenth.

And then, when God was giving instructions to His nation of Israel, notice how He continued these instructions.

Deuteronomy 14:22-23 — Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce...The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives.

Exodus 22:29 — You must be prompt in giving Me the tithe.

And finally, Jesus was also clear about tithing.

Luke 11:42 — Though you are careful to tithe even the smallest part of your income, you completely forget about justice and the love of God. You should tithe, yes, but you should not leave these other things undone.

We are naturally tempted to think that God commands us to tithe because He wants OUR money to finance HIS kingdom. The logical conclusion of this kind of thinking is that when we give, we are doing God a favor.

When we think like this, we actually miss the most important purposes of giving. God could easily finance His kingdom through other means. However, He has chosen to do it through our giving because it produces a double blessing in our lives. Here is how it works:

- God brings into our lives more than we need in order to live so we have the resources to be able to give.
- He commands us to give according to His plan.
- When we give according to His plan, His kingdom is properly resourced.
- This produces two great blessings in our lives.
 - 1— We get to experience the wonderful joy of giving.
 - 2— Voluntary giving tends to free us from the bondage money wants to exercise over us.

Just how high does this concept rank in God's priorities for us? He leaves little to our imagination when He says the following:

Malachi 3:8-9 — "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob Me." But you ask, "How do we rob You?" "In tithes and offerings..." says the Lord Almighty.

At first glance, to most of us this verse seems harsh. But God's intent is not harshness; it's reality. When we go to the doctor, we don't consider the doctor harsh when he tells us we have some sickness. Even though we may not like his diagnosis, we are still grateful he tells us the truth. Similarly, we should be grateful that God cuts to the chase and tells us that when we do not tithe, we have actually taken what belongs to Him and spent it on ourselves.

But God's real purpose in this warning is actually to set up a promise He doesn't want us to forfeit. Notice what he says next:

Malachi 3:10-11 — Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

As you can see, tithing is the foundation for all the other money management principles taught in Scripture.

Which statement below best describes your current practices?

- △ I give a full 10% of my income to God without fail.
- △ I give a full 10% of my income to God most of the time.
- △ I give at least 5% of my income to God.
- △ I give less than 5% of my income to God.

Now, check the statement that best applies to you.

- △ I am committed to continuing to honor God with my full tithe.
- △ I wish to commit myself to increasing my giving to the point that I can honor God with my full tithe.
- △ I struggle with this concept, and would like help in understanding and implementing it.

If you checked the third line, please pick up the phone and call the church office (765.0956). We have several people who would love to help you through the journey of aligning your finances according to God's economy without judging or condemning you in the process.



Here is a suggested prayer:

Lord, I want to experience the fullness of Your blessing in my life as I honor You through the obedience of tithing. Please increase my faith and trust in Your plan for all of my life.

Memory Verse:

John 14:21 — Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him.

Day 21: Sunday – February 10

After we have brought to God the tithe that already belongs to Him, we are now ready to actually give something voluntarily. Reaching this level means we are really beginning to experience the freedom God wants us to have.

Certain groups of people throughout history have reached this point and have experienced a joy not possible any other way.

Exodus 35:21-23 — Everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewelry of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments. They all presented their gold as an offering to the LORD.

1 Chronicles 29:7-9 — For the construction of the Temple of God, they gave about 188 tons of gold, 10,000 gold coins, 375 tons of silver, 675 tons of bronze, and 3,750 tons of iron. They also contributed numerous precious stones, which were deposited in the treasury of the house of the LORD. The people rejoiced over the offerings, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD.

Mark 14:3 — A woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume (worth a year's wages), and made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus' head.

Thought Questions: How much would a year of your wages be worth? Does that seem a little "over the top" as a gift for Jesus?

2 Corinthians 8:3-6 — [The people of Macedonia] gave as

much as they were able and even more than they could afford. No one told them to do it. But they begged and pleaded with us to let them share in this service for God's people. And they gave in a way we did not expect: They first gave themselves to the Lord and to us. This is what God wants.

All of these people shared a number of things in common as they gave.

- They gave voluntarily.
- They gave generously.
- They gave to the causes God had placed in their hearts.
- They experienced great joy!

As we complete this 21DOP journey together, these statements reflect God's will and desire for us. We have begun well. But a little more than 1/3 of our journey still lies ahead of us. God wants us to finish well. After all, that was His purpose in taking us on this journey in the first place.

In order to finish well, we will need to continue to...

- Give voluntarily
- Give generously
- Give to the cause God has placed in our hearts

And as we do that, we will get to see God's plan completed! And when that happens...

- We will experience great joy!!!!

Memory Verse:

John 14:21 — Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him.