



2022
THE YEAR OF

DISCOVERY

DEVOTIONAL
AND
FASTING GUIDE

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***And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself Restore, Confirm, Strength and Establish you.
1 Peter 5.10***

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR MAC

Good Bye 2021! It is my prayer that in this year of “RESET,” you have been able to use this time as your opportunity to examine your actions and reactions. As a Christian, it is important to fortify your mind and heart with the word of God using the example of Christ as your earthly guide to responding the way Christ would, which would be in obedience to your Father. From the eight sermon series preached this year, the goal was for everyone to address the areas where the Holy Spirit has not received the room to be Lord.

The Body of Christ must endure being reset, including every believer in how we view money to community engagement and political preferences. The thing we have to remember is that God is God. No personal preferences regarding anything have a place in God’s world. However, we continue to drown ourselves in conversations and behaviors that do not reflect the grace and love we say we have received from God.

Keeping the Church’s ministry simple but powerful will be more accessible when we reset from this modern world’s idea of God’s Church and return to God’s plan for His people.

Instead, the modern Church continues to develop systems designed to qualify a church as a Church. As if to suggest if you meet certain requirements by hitting specific quotas of numeric value; from attendance, baptisms and don’t forget offerings but if you do not make the quota you’re being told maybe this is not for you. The need to reset has nothing to do with anyone else. Resetting is not for man’s approval of what God called you to do; it is for your emotional, mental, and spiritual wealth; to remain consistent to complete the work God began in you, as your act of obedience to God.

To Reset, we must be willing to accept and address our need for help. Instead of Adam asking for help, he took the time to blame God for the woman God gave him. Playing the blame game is never the correct answer to addressing and owning sin; therefore, let us reset. Reset to make sure everything that comes out of you mirrors and reflects the glory of our Lord.

DEVOTIONALS

THE PETER IN YOU

Let us begin by putting all the cards on the table; there is some Peter in all of us! Now the question is, which part of Peter? Of course, we like the part when he witnessed over 5 thousand people eating from only two pieces of fish and five small loaves of bread and when he walked on water. We even liked it when he was cutting and cussing. However, how many of us will learn from our mistakes then stand up and speak the Gospel of Jesus even in hostile environments as Peter did?

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues[a] as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,[b] 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” 13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

You Need to Stand & Speak with Authority.

v.14-15

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning!

Everything Peter lived through since he began following Jesus prepared him for this moment to stand and speak with BOLDNESS because of that discipline relationship. God gives boldness when our objective is to glorify and obey Him with it. Peter was always bold as an entrepreneur and fisherman, but his motives were not always right. There is a difference between worldly boldness and spiritual boldness.

Worldly boldness is boldness without discernment; it is foolishness on high display. Today we accommodate this behavior and label persons who live risky lives as adrenaline seekers, even rewarding this type of behavior with fame and fortune. Therefore, in this age of deception and resistance to truth, we need Spiritual boldness now more than ever.

God is the source of Truth

John 17.3 – Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Satan is the Source of Falsehood

John 8.44 – You belong to your Father, the devil, and you want to carry out your Father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the Father of lies.

When will you begin speaking in BOLDNESS regarding your relationship with God?

Take every excuse you are forming and throw them away, casting them to God. You now have the moment, and it is the season for you to express what you know about the handy work of God in your life.

Excuse #1

Excuse #2

Excuse #3

Excuse #4

Excuse #5

Inform your spouse or parent of your decision, and ask them to be in prayer with you as you work through living your bold spiritual life.

Today is the day!

You Need to Stand & Speak with Accountability

v.22-24

22 "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23 This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men,[d] put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

Accountability is the expectation of giving an account, the ability to explain. Many of us struggle with accountability because we do not like answering or asking questions. In this passage, Peter wanted to make sure all those present knew what was going on; therefore, he explained what was happening. Peter was not letting the people off the hook for choosing Barabbas over Christ; he wanted them to know their actions were ultimately a part of God's plan. It was meant for them to do what they did, and it was meant for Peter to stand and inform them of what God did despite them yet for them.

Now and then, everyone needs someone to pull their coattail, get their attention, tell them the truth about the decision they have made, and remind others that they are not walking alone. We need to trust those who are doing life with us to stand and support us during our time of struggle. Unfortunately, all the adversary desires to make you think you are alone, and no one understands what you are going through. The feelings of disconnection, helplessness, and ultimately vulnerability make you think neither God nor your family nor your Church family cares. Do not be deceived; this is a lie! They only want you to be the best you, you can be, so get up and do better!

The writer of **Hebrews (10.24-25)** sums it up best saying, "and let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

There is so much the Body of Christ must address, and one of those tasks is to make sure our brothers and sisters are functioning well on their salvation journey, spurring them on to better decisions and learning from the bad ones.

Are you running from the Spirit's accountability?

Are you avoiding earthly accountability from trusted spiritual individuals?

Do you remember the event that happened when you lost faith in your spiritual siblings?

Pray and ask the God of restoration to give you the willingness to accept trustworthy spiritual people in your life. {write out your prayer}

You Need to Stand & Speak with Affirmation

v.29–33

29 “Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his Body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

Peter continues to speak with a bold voice because everything happening is a part of God’s plan to redeem the world. It was a preplanned death and resurrection. The purpose of Jesus’ life was to fulfill the prophecies of God to be born in Bethlehem and die on Calvary. So, it was going to happen this way, no matter what. Nevertheless, the death of Christ continues to be romanticized and throughout the years to the place of not appreciating everything Christ knowingly endured to bring salvation to the world. Moreover, because of the affirmation of Jesus’ life, we are now recipients of a new life as new creations because Christ completed his assignment.

As you go through your day, it is essential to remember the sacrifice Jesus completed on the cross. From the crib to the cross, all that happened had to happen the way it did, and because of it, every Christian can stand tall because our God keeps his word. Unfortunately, there are many whom we hold high as faithful leaders in our lives and churches just as the Jews did David, but like David and everyone else, they remain in their graves BUT Jesus! He is the only one who has risen and is still alive.

Let the affirmation of your faith drive excellence in your life and work today.

What are the things preventing you from living confidently in your faith?

Whatever they may be, address them and begin living affirming Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

You Need to Stand & Speak with Authority

v.38–40

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”

Peter continues to stand and speak in Holy **BOLDNESS**. He is not concerned about the backlash; he is not concerned with being censored or unliked. However, Peter recognizes that the crowd's lives are on the table; therefore, he charges them to repent.

Sadly, as the modern Church, many will walk away confused when we express the need for repentance. Puzzlement comes because we have used our verbal capital speaking mess (untruths); therefore, when we challenge someone to repent, their initial thought and response could be, "I will repenting causes me to act like you, I will have no part of it."

Peter's **BOLDNESS** led him to tell the people about Jesus so they could walk in the forgiveness of their sins and have the gift of the Holy Spirit. Next, Peter calls the people to repentance: a change of heart and mind, stop being controlled by this world's assumptions, stop living for this world, and start living for God in obedience through Jesus Christ. Finally, he calls people to baptism. The New Testament teaches us that baptism is an act of obedience and identification with Jesus and his people.

Because of Jesus' obedience to be baptized, we are united to him when we are baptized. Thus, the old way of life is washed away, and we are united with God through Jesus Christ. In the Orthodox Church, when a person is baptized, they are given a new name. It is a picture that we become, in baptism, completely new people. 'If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. The old has gone; the new has come. **(2 Corinthians 5:17)**

Can you imagine how impactful it will be when you live consistently in obedience to the Spirit of the Lord and His word? When Peter preached, over three thousand people were added to the Church. When you finally stand and speak God's word in boldness, I'm not saying three thousand people will become Christians, but I am saying your life and ministry will affect change wherever you are.

Please, stop waiting around! No one has to co-sign what God has placed in your heart; all God needs from you is the response, "Yes, I Will Go"!

What is preventing your Yes?

FULFILL YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Matthew 28.16-20

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

When you gave up your life to follow Jesus, you aligned yourself to fulfill the responsibility of denying yourself and taking up your cross. This decision now affects every area of your life, and it presents a lifelong assignment to fulfill. Completing this assignment not only brings an amount of personal completion, but ultimately it also achieves the purpose God has for your life. The mission for the Christian Church is to reconcile humanity to God, and as this happens, the assignment is completed, and the ministry of Christian love makes disciples.

Because we are allowing God to Reset the Church, one of the results must be the Church taking back her ownership of making disciples. Disciple-making begins long before the actual conversion. In the Gospels, people came to faith, but the conversion was a process as often as an event. For example, Peter was disciplined by Jesus long before he understood the core elements of the gospel and the cross. Was he converted when he first started following Jesus in **Matthew 4:18**? (As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.) Or was it when Christ called to be one of the twelve in Luke 6? What about when he denied that Jesus even needed to die on the cross in **Mark 8:32**? (He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.) Was it when he walked on water, **Matthew 14.28-29**? Was it when Jesus breathed on him and said, "receive the Holy Spirit" in **John 20:22**? (And with that, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.") Was it on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when he preached the first sermon? These tricky questions help us to realize what is often involved in the messy journey of discipleship.

Describe your journey of Discipleship. I realize moments you do not want to relive on the trip, and there are moments you cannot relish in too long. However, I believe it is therapeutic to write your testimony.

Why is it important to make disciples? Because it's what Jesus instructed us to do.

You've Been Commissioned

v.18

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Before all military personal and denominational missionary begin their tour of duty or time in a foreign land to share the Gospel, they are a part of a commissioning ceremony/service. Commissioning is when commanding officers or organizational leadership sanctions those leaving to do the work. As the high-ranking official is speaking, all attention is on that person. Remember the old commercial about E.F. Hutten? The Hutten's were Wallstreet heavyweight, best known for their advertisement, saying, "When E.F. Hutten speaks, everyone listens." When the resurrected Savior's absolute authority enters your space, his presence demands attention as he commissions you, giving you orders, where to go, and what to do when you arrive.

We know salvation is a process of attempting to understand what God is doing. Imagine these men finally registering the truth of what Jesus had been teaching them regarding His life. They saw him endure his arrest, mock trial, crucifixion, and now the word of his resurrection.

If we truly believe all authority belongs to Jesus Christ, why do we remain interested in the voices of others? Why do we give these other voices so much attention? The only voice that should have our undivided attention is the voice of The Good Shepherd **(John 10.27)**.

We allow people to get us raddled. We let their feelings and ideas convince us to do things that are knowingly against The Shepherd's leading.

Where are you in the process of trusting the Authority [God] in your life? Please explain the reason for silencing the Shepherds voice?

Just like in the disciples' lives, have you ever thought about how many lives you helped to damage because you were not listening to The Shepherd? Write your prayer of Thanksgiving for God, not allowing your disobedience to stifle the lives of others.

Your Assignment Is Clear

v.19

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit,

As a former member of the fighting Terrell Tiger Marching Band, I remember learning to mark time for our halftime shows. Mark time was our stance before we moved into our next position. Our knees would be moving up and down, but our feet were not moving forward or backward. Sadly many Christians are guilty of spiritually marking time. We know where we are supposed to be for the subsequent formation, yet we are not moving for reasons unknown to the rest of the company.

The assignment is to GO and train everyone you see. GO and make Disciples.

We must answer why it takes us so long to be obedient and GO?

- Are we too comfortable with the life God has given us?
- Are we satisfied with the level we are in with Christ?

Your Life is the Lesson

v.20a

Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God has called and commissioned us to declare His truth, which is the truth that causes men to change. Can you imagine the change in the power structures around you when you walk and speak the truth?

One of the problems with man is over the years humanity thinks she's smarter than God. because of progress in science, mathematics and many other disciplines yet man is too dumb to know whatever mental abilities he may have it is because God has opened his understanding expanding his capacity to retain and disseminate information. We have the greatest lesson to teach yet we settle to talk about church fashion, politics and carpet colors. Are you still using the excuse of not knowing enough scripture as to why you are not training making disciples? Why?

As you train them to be disciples, mark them by baptism, which symbolizes their decision to choose Jesus as Lord, not the government—not just getting them wet but baptizing them in the name of The Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Why do you believe baptism is so important?

Jesus knew there would be those coming behind Him baptizing in their names, in the words of whomever they decide to be their authority, but all power belongs to Him only.

In whose name are you training?

In whose authority are you marking them?

You've Got Supernatural Support

v.20b

and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

After the government or denomination commissions you, there is a chance you may never see face to face the commanding officer who commissioned you again. Because of other duties and more critical issues, time may not present itself with the opportunity to be in your life. However, friend, you should be encouraged! Your supernatural authority is always present with you! Your Commander is prepared to walk with you through the entire journey. Jesus gives the disciples a deadline of His presence by saying, "till the end of the age," this means He will never leave you. I know it is bad grammar, but "he ain't going nowhere."

Knowing this, how do you feel knowing our help is not only present in your time of trouble, but your supernatural support will always be with you no matter the circumstance?

Maybe there are some around you who need to be reminded of this, how will you do it without coming on too strong?

Read **Hebrews 4.14-16** and write how this passage encourages you to remain vulnerable to your supernatural help?

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

SERMON SERIES: THE CROWN

MOSES' PATH TO TRUE FAITHFUL LEADERSHIP

Exodus 2.25 – So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

Today is the third entry to our series, “The Crown.” We are transitioning to another person of royalty, Moses. We see in Moses a fall from power but a Rise to Authority. He wanted to side with his people!

Moses is not necessarily the model of the law, even though God used him to write it and was named because of him, “The Mosaic Law.” Instead, Moses was the MODEL of Faith made through a series of choices.

Abel showed us how to Live by Faith.

Enoch showed us how to Walk by Faith

Noah showed us how to Work by Faith.

Abraham showed us the Pattern of Faith.

And Moses showed us how our **CHOICES** are made by Faith!

What was it about Moses? Every aspect of Moses' life was preparation for the ultimate calling on his life that he would have to complete. In the same manner for everyone still alive, we have not finished something. Therefore, instead of fighting against God's plan, let us accept it to better address the season we are currently in to finish what God has called us to do.

I would venture to say you're like Moses; a series of decisions and events have led you to where you are today. All of them may not have been great experiences, but the grace over your life is you'd rather than seeing the glass half empty, through our eyes of faith, we see the glass as half complete. Because you trust in the Lord, you can find support in Paul's words in Romans 8.28, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

With a Spirit of APPRECIATION, take the next 20 seconds and thank God, through all the stuff that you caused or were a victim of God, continues to show patience and forgiveness to you.

Moses' Path to Faithful Leadership Began with:

Faithful Parents. **Exodus 2.1-3/Hebrews 11.23**

Exodus 2.1-2 – Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months.

Hebrews 11.23 – By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

The world needs parents to rise to the occasion and be parents. There is no such thing as illegitimate children, only illegitimate parents. These two passages show parents' faithfulness from the beginning of the baby's life from the womb to birth. Amram and Jochebed Moses' Father and mother were Levites descendants from Levi, the son of Jacob. The people of that day were devout to God, especially the Levitical tribe, because they were responsible for all aspects of worship, from setting up the tabernacle to porters, guards, administrators, musicians/singers, and law teachers. So it is safe to surmise Moses' parents continued a rich history of believing in God. How important is it for you to establish or maintain a family standard of faithful living?

Take some time and write your plan to accomplish this standard.

If we believe this 1st we must:

Protect The Infant Leader.

Hebrews 11.23-29 – By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

You Must See What Others Cannot See

Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months.

Parents, especially mothers, are wired to nurture. Meaning they possess the ability to recognize potential and develop it. As every mother should, Moses' mother saw something in him that she had to protect. She knew there was something special

about her baby, so she did what she had to do to save his life. But, unfortunately, the Pharaoh sent a decree to kill all Hebrew baby boys. This proclamation caused Moses' parents to spring into action.

Of course, Pharaoh and no one else who did not love the baby could see anything passed the law to kill. Moses means to draw out; could he be named for being drowned from the Nile River as a three-year-old? I believe that could be accurate, and it could be possible that they called him when he was born for what God knew and saw him delivering his people out of Egyptian bondage?

Your Thoughts:

Are you protecting the potential in your children or the children you influence?

How far are you willing to go providing protection?

Know Leadership Placement

3. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile.

Accurate leadership decisions present leaders with the opportunity to protect even when it means getting dirty and placing the very thing you are guarding in dangerous waters for protection and deliverance. For example, Jochebed, Moses' mother, built a baby watercraft to transport her son to safety. She believed God would protect her son even in the treachery crocodile-infested Nile River waters.

God Honors Your Leadership

Verses 7-8 state, "Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" 8 "Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. 9 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. 10 When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."

In these verses, God uses parental leadership to save their child; in addition, God honors their willingness to trust because of their obedience. Finally, due to their desire to trust God to let their son go, received compensation and the chance to raise their son.

God honored them because now they would have the time to teach him who he is!
Moses always knew who he was because he learned his identity from his parents at HOME!!!

How important it is to trust God with your leadership even placing His gifts in seemingly undeserving places?

Are you taking advantage of the opportunities to teach and help others know their identity in God?

If so, how are you training them?

What did you learn in this process?

The life of Moses is a beautiful example of God's planning, providence, and provisions. God's design for Moses is similar to the plans God has for you. The calling of Leadership is on you, so LEAD!

To advance your leadership, tell yourself three things every day,
"I Am God's Chosen Leader,"
"I have the ability to articulate God's Vision & Goals."
"I have the ability to think strategically."

Your path to Leadership continues now! I know the Spirit is talking to you; as He leads, begin writing the vision regarding your marriage, family, ministry, and business.

WHO TURNS THE TABLES

Esther 9.1 - On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the edict commanded by the king was to be carried out. On this day the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, but now the tables were turned and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them.

Your God has the power to balance the scales of your life. Time after time in the scriptures, you have read of God's people at a place of despair, and somehow God interrupts the plans of their enemy and delivers them to a place of freedom. For example, a young man named David kept his Father's sheep, yet one day found himself in a situation to defend his God. The circumstance seemed to be impossible, but God. Amid the trash-talking by the Philistine giant, David spoke truth talk saying, "You are coming to fight against me with a sword, a spear and a javelin. But I'm coming against you in the name of the Lord who rules over all. He is the God of the armies of Israel. He's the one you have dared to fight against". **(I Samuel 17.45)** Therefore, with a shepherd's sling, a rock, and the Holy Ghost's momentum, God turned the tables.

Still, today, due to obedience, God's people find themselves in compromising places, yet God always provides a way towards freedom. As you read the book of Esther, although God's name is not mentioned, His hands are continually at work balancing the scales of life. As she faced Haman's pride and useless council hovered with Mordecai's pleasure to please God and save his people, God is at work. The same goes for your life. You may not be able to trace Him, but you know the results that have happened can only be because of the Lord's presence in your life.

When Esther understood, she made up her mind trusting God and doing it His way. She makes a declarative statement saying, "When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I will perish". Please allow this to inspire and encourage you. Situations arise when you will not have the warm and fuzzy feeling to co-sign your next steps, but you know you are being led in the correct direction because you trust and know God's voice. For we know as the Sons of Korah wrote in Psalm 46, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." No matter the situation, God's got you.

Being reminded, God has your back and is the only power who can turn the tables in your life where things seem to be pieced together like a masterful work of art, who does that make you feel? I feel

Write and explain one testimony how God turned the tables in your life. What were the circumstances around it and what exactly did God do?

We need to trace the movements of God in our lives. It is encouraging to remind yourself of the consistency of God at work in your life. Have you taken a few minutes to reflect on the actions of God from yesterday? Sometimes we celebrate the big events and happenings, and we forget to praise God for the seemingly small things such as protection on the road, having food to eat, and being in good health. When was the last time you thanked God for your Bible?

What are other things you should be more vocal giving God thanks regarding?

Esther was in an awful state, although she had risen to a position of royalty as the favored Queen. She was confident that her purpose was for a divine purpose, even though it possibly meant losing her life. Saving her people from destruction was more important than her own life. Esther said to Mordecai in chapter 4.16, "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

Do you have a cause that's more important than your success?
If so, when was the last time you sacrificed towards its completion?

Isn't it interesting when you decided to trust God all the way, people began offering their unwarranted opinions?

Some thought you were moving too fast, or they thought the decision didn't make sense. Aren't you glad you never felt, or you've gotten over the need to have anyone co-sign what God had already planned for your life?

All the while, they're living beneath their God-given potential. But what people don't understand is God is in the midst of every decision you make, for He's the reason why it all works out. Through the wrong, eventful, and prosperous decisions, God is there and has allowed all of them to be beneficial for your life. Paul wrote, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Joseph told his brothers in **Genesis 50.20** – You intended to harm me, but God intended it for Good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." This passage carries the same feeling and situation of Esther's current state; she is there to save her people. Therefore, she is God's design, not Mordecai or anyone else; God has a purpose that she was chosen to fulfill.

Chapter 5 Promotes Esther's Wisdom:

She Prepares herself to be seen by King Xerxes.

She Positioned herself to be seen by King Xerxes.

She Plans to make her appeal to King Xerxes.

In the presence of ultimate danger why do think Esther was so convinced what she was doing was right? Where do you think her conviction came from?

What are the things in your life that prevent you from responding to God with courage and conviction?

You must remain aware the adversary contends against everything God stands for. The level of hate Haman had for Mordechai, and the Jewish/Hebrew people is remarkable. After the 1st banquet on cloud high, Haman leaves the feast, sees Mordechai not showing respect, and is livid. Verses 9-10 says, "Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king's gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai. 10 Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home."

God's timing is always perfect. As the old Church would say, "God's timing is always on time." No circumstance nor difficulty could present itself where God moves too slow or fast. You need to trust the journey. As my Dad would say, "I would rather be one step behind the Lord than one step in front of the Lord." What are the lessons you have learned regarding God's timing?

Have you shared your lessons with others? if so, what did they take away from it?

Being prejudiced and hating people because of their origin is not new; shamefully, the culture and church communities distance themselves from other groups based on ethnicities, skin color, and hair types. The defeated Spirit of Haman lives on. The hatred Haman had for the Jewish people heightened to a level of desiring death. Haman, a guy filled with arrogance and pride, possessing a superiority complex so much so if you did not outwardly show respect or fear, you were only good to die. Esther is looking out for her people, while Haman is looking out for himself. How does the racist behavior of Haman mirror the American Christian culture today?

Haman did not realize the God of Mordechai had a plan for him and the other racist, hateful people who partnered with his disgust towards the Jews. Get this Haman goes home excited about eating with the king and queen and for the invitation to come back the next day to dine in the royal palace. He listens to the foolish counsel of his wife Zeresh and friends who encourage him to have gallows built with the motive of hanging Mordechai. Again, he didn't know that the God of Esther and Mordechai was revealing plans to Xerxes regarding him at the same time. Is it not amazing how God works simultaneously, two different places with two different people but regarding the same purpose?

How has God manifested displayed His plans in your life in this manner?

While Haman wanted to kill Mordecai and all Jews, God set it up so in chapter 6 for the loyalty of Mordecai to be remembered by King Xerxes. Follow me here: On an innocent average night, Xerxes could not sleep; a servant brought one of the Chronicles of his life to be read to him. The chronicle selected was the chronicle written about Xerxes in chapter 2 when Mordecai warned him of the assassination plans by two of his officers, who guarded the doorway. We could move past this, but I believe there's something to be addressed and marveled at how it seems to be a random night for the particular servant on duty that night and to select the specific chronicle to read to Xerxes randomly. Again, Nothing happens to happen. God was at work, while Haman was planning and plotting, God was putting into place the liberation of His people.

I'm sure Mordecai was not concerned with how God would deliver him and his people. But, if liberation happened a King's sleepless night wanting to hear a historical lullaby, so let it be.

The truth regarding Esther, Mordecai, and Christians today is only our God still has the power to turn the tables. The power to turn a situation with all the devastation pieces into a remarkable testimony. God used the love Mordechai and Esther had for their people and the hatred of Haman with his self-pride putting those things together, forming an opportunity for God to be God in that circumstance.

Esther 9.1 - On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the edict commanded by the king was to be carried out. On this day the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, but now the tables were turned and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them.

Where do you God to turn the tables in your life?

ARE YOU ON YOUR MISSION?

Matthew 25.14-30

Typically when the word mission, when mentioned in religious circles, minds automatically lean towards sending money and supplies to specific areas and eventually going there on a “Missions Trip.” Those things are a part of the Churches concept of missions, yet there’s more to it than sending items. Christians have a responsibility to unite, unified working together as the Body of Christ to help those in need. Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church regarding this unity in I Corinthians 12.12 saying, “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.” It is your responsibility to know the part you play and to play it well. If you are an arm, vein, tendon, nail, heart, pinky toe, be the best part you can be; if you do not function as you should, the Body will not perform its assignment.

You are co-laborers with God sharing the responsibility to meet the needs of those around you. God says in Deuteronomy 15:11, “There will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’” The Church in Acts brought about God’s desire to meet needs. Acts 4:34–35 says, “There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.” God longs to use you like the Israelites were commanded to and how He did his Church in Acts. We get to work with God in seeing His longing to provide for people come to pass. We get to be the Hands and Feet of our Savior and co-labor with Christ.

The Body of Christ shares the same commission, meaning instruction which is called the Great Commission found in Matthew 28.19 saying, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

The Great Commission is your instruction, yet your mission is your responsibility to fulfill your part of the commission. Therefore before you can deal with the Churches commission, you need to know your Mission.

I have a few questions for you:

What is your personal Mission, your personal Assignment?

What is supposed to be produced from your life?

What is the Assignment of your Marriage?

What is the Assignment of your Home and Family?

What are you producing together?

If you are not clear about your mission, assignment, or job, you will never have a sense of accomplishment, therefore never completing God's work for your life.

Knowing My Mission

The vision and mission statements play an essential role in your life and this Church. The mission statement provides a clear and practical guide for making decisions. In contrast, the vision statement ensures that all the decisions made align with what you want God to achieve in your life.

They force you to think deeply about your life, clarify its purpose, and identify what is truly important to you. Personal mission statements also cause you to define and express your deepest values and aspirations as briefly as possible. It imprints your values and purposes in your mind, so they become a part of you.

Our first step in defining a personal mission statement is defining our core values. Start by writing down 10-15 words that capture your values.

“Outstanding people have one thing in common: An absolute sense of mission.” — Zig Ziglar

“My Mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.” —Mya Angelou

Since you know everything God does is purposeful, your assignment in the mission is intentional for you to complete for a motive bigger than you. Therefore, it might be worthwhile to recognize the end first to complete the project. ask yourself, “what will success look like when I am done?” Athletes see themselves as victorious, as champions, and that’s the reality they’re going after.

Mathew 25 has within it a parable. Jesus tells of a man going on a journey. He calls his servants to give them assignments that include a portion of his wealth according to their abilities to complete by his return. It reads, “15 To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.”

The goal for you is to hear what The Master said to the servant with 5 and 2 talents in verses 21 and 23, “His Master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master’s happiness!’ Three of the points to Jesus’ story are the trust the Master had for his servants, giving them wealth, the Master’s wisdom in knowing their capacity according to their ability, and finally, inspecting what you expect leadership truth. Just as the fruit of your life will be inspected, it is important to know the end at the beginning. Because we know God will inspect our lives, we should be motivated to give and do our very best at all times because we never want to hear The Master say, “depart from me,” only “Well Done.”

Because the goal is to hear, “Well Done”, we must be Good Servants & Faithful Servants.

What does this mean to be Good & Faithful?

What does it mean to be a Servant?

At the beginning of the parable, all three were trusted servants; verse 14 says, "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them" But by the end of the story, only 2 of the 3 were; good and faithful servants. God describes these men as servants, and He trusted His servants!. Like a soldier, a servant does not have the option to do things their way. The servant and the soldier must be obedient to what those over them command from and out of them.

Good is the conduct we choose when we are presented with a choice of possible responses.

Good is the opposite of Evil.

Good is the presence of Morality and Ethics.

Micah 6.8 says, "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

How good are you responding as a servant?

How faithful are you responding as a servant?

On a Mission, you must choose goodness no matter the obstacles. The excellence in you should win over evil every time. On the mission, goodness must be a standard for how you perform while fulfilling your orders. Therefore, there should be evidence of God's character resulting in your life. As a matter of fact, "God Is Good!" Everything God does is GOOD. There is no evil in the Goodness of God. God did not introduce sin to the world; the opposite of Good is evil. Therefore, when humankind turned from God in disobedience, that action introduced evil to humanity.

1 John 1.5 – This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

James 1.14 – but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.

Psalm 100.5 – For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Psalm 119.68 – You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees.

After reading these scriptures what message did you receive?

How's your behavior for Good on your Mission?

Good Fair Needs Work

How are you conducting yourself?

In a Selfish Way or Godly Way

They were Good & Faithful

Faithfulness comes from a place of trust and loyalty. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is a confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." As you have aligned yourself to God, surrendered Christian, first, it is essential to be faithful to God. Faithfulness requires you to submit your ways to God, meaning you have accepted entirely the assignment in God's mission you have been given.

In addition to public, community worship, being a faithful Christian involves private prayer and reflection. By engaging your community and praying on your own, you can strengthen your relationship with God and live a fulfilling, faithful Christian life. Our Faithfulness to God should be evident. There should be enough proof to convict us of trusting God.

When orders come down, the commander prepares the Operation Orders for a soldier. This document lays out the plans and development of how the specific mission will be carried out. The commanding officer prepares this OPORD (military slang), so the soldiers will not overthink while on the task. The Commanding officer has thought everything through for them. Now they must Trust the Plans. They must have faith in the preparation work of the Commander.

As you have entered 2022, are you committed to trusting God's prepared plans for your life?

What areas of trust must you do better in 2022? Explain.

Clarity is essential; therefore, God has given us guidelines in the Word of God to complete our assignment. You will encounter hungry, tired, broken soldiers along the way, yet no matter the setbacks, stick to the plan and the one who made the plan for your ultimate success.

What's your mission?

What do you need to accomplish the mission?

We should want to hear God say, "Well Done and not Well Then". 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

When a soldier is guilty of disobedience, they are held accountable for their actions which could mean a dishonorable discharge. If this happens, there's embarrassment and shame brought upon their family. As a Christian, when you are insubordinate, we are disciplined and dealt with, yet we are redeemed and given another chance because of our Father's grace.

How thankful are you for God's grace that gives you another chance?

I WANT WHAT'S COMING TO ME!

Matthew 25.21-30

21 “His Master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master’s happiness!’

Luke 16.10 – He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

The present society is a culture of celebration. Being famous is the goal of many lives, and for some, it doesn’t matter how this status is reached. Society has been bitten by this worldly bug for empty acknowledgments, just wanting recognition for anything. Then, honorable mention was an acknowledgment regarding the value, but now kids receive this status if they come to the practice of play in the game or not. Unfortunately, some Christians function as the kid who wants the uniform but does not sweat. Knowing to sweat apart from being an athlete, you decided you just wanted to look apart, never effortless to win.

It ends up being a hustle. We have Christians who use the ministry as the other option. It’s like some school teachers who teach because they could not get a job anywhere else. It’s not about the kids, just a legal way to make money and have the same schedule as their children.

We live in a performance-driven culture, where people are taught to perform and achieve success no matter the cost.

What do you believe is coming to you?

Success is a Choice.

21 “His Master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master’s happiness!’

23 “His Master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master’s happiness!’

Where you are and what you have is due to a series of choices you have made. When you respond in obedience to the Master’s command, you continue to experience the

favor of the Master. Whatever the amount of success you are experiencing, decisions were made to push you towards that success. Jim Rohn said, "It doesn't matter which side of the fence you get off on sometimes. What matters most is getting off. You cannot make progress without making decisions." As a Christian, your success is of your obedience to God and not what we have produced.

Unfortunately, our performance-based culture continues to convince us that victory is in the product. Say back at me, "My Victory is in My Obedience to God!!!

"Life is about choices. Some we regret, some we're proud of. Some will haunt us forever. The message: we are what we chose to be." —Graham Brown

Proverbs 16.3 – Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.

1 Kings 2.3 – and observe what the Lord your God requires: Walk in obedience to him, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and regulations, as written in the Law of Moses. Do this so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go.

What are these verses saying to you regarding plans and obedience to God?

Describe the some of the choices you have made that led to your success.

Failure is a Choice

24 "Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' 26 "His Master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. 28 "'So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. 29 For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

After reading verse 24 you can see the 3rd servant had the necessary information to make a wise decision, but he chose not to. Just like the 3rd servant, the time will come when the Master will accept no excuse. Sadly, many Christians look to give themselves the benefit of the doubt, but the grace bucket is dry when it comes to others.

I realize it is an interesting statement, but I'll say it anyway: some people choose failure over success. Everyone comes from their own set of family circumstances, yet the truth remains that you have to make the best decision for your life. Remember, you have been born again. You are Christians; therefore, you no longer judge yourselves and your worth based on the world's criteria. All three servants had a choice to make and one of them chose wrong. Why would he chose wrong?

Why would he not value the trust that had been given to him by the Master?

What was so important that he decided to do nothing, just sit back and watch?

Like the third servant, the excuse of fear can grip you away from making a decision. This cannot be, you must choose to make the decision, or the decision will make you.

Your Reward is His Choice

Because of the right decisions, your reward is hearing God say, "Well Done." Imagine hearing God's voice. Then, describe the picture of what's happening.

SERMON SERIES: IT'S HARVEST TIME

A DRY AND POWERLESS CHURCH

“OBEDIENCE IS THE SEED WE SOW.”

Galatians 6.9 – Let us not become weary in doing Good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Isaiah 1.30-31 – You will be like an oak with fading leaves, like a garden without water. 31 The mighty man will become tinder and his work a spark; both will burn together, with no one to quench the fire.”

The stamina of the Christian life is her unshaken and wavered faith in God. It has been said, “Faith is only real when there is obedience, never without it, and faith only becomes faith in the act of obedience.” Therefore, it has and remains vital for every believer to live by the faith they confess and possess throughout history.

Deuteronomy 11.26-28 Moses declares the responsibilities in submitting to God’s commands saying, “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse— 27 the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; 28 the curse if you disobey the commands of the Lord your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known.”

It is essential to remember our obedience is the seed we sow; therefore, if we desire to receive God’s favor blessings and not suffer through curses, the answer lies in our obedience to God’s word. Richard Foster said, “Worship begins in holy expectation; it ends in holy obedience.” It is possible to miss the harvest you desire because you have not responded to God with obedience. I am suggesting to you why you may be experiencing a powerless life because you may not be functioning in complete obedience.

Judah’s & Jerusalem’s Charges v.1-4

The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. 2 Hear me, you heavens! Listen, earth! For the Lord has spoken: “I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. 3 The ox knows its Master, the donkey its owner’s manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.” 4 Woe to the sinful nation, a people whose guilt is great, a brood of

evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the Lord; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him.

Reading these verses should soften how we point the finger at others because we see our actions and attitude towards God as we read. The complex but absolute truth is WE are guilty. The American Christianized church continues to forget about the grace and provisions of God. We often get caught in the web of success and overlook our training and responsibilities. Honestly, the text reads more pointed than that because it says, "They have forsaken the Lord." This carries the idea of abandonment. Have you ever considered the fact you have abandoned God or rejected God? As you reflect on your day, please consider the ways the Church has abandoned God. Also, take the time to write out your offenses against God.

Now, please write a prayer expressing your thanks to God for His grace given through Jesus Christ. Thank God for Jesus!

Judah's & Jerusalem's Condition v.5-9

5 Why should you be beaten anymore? Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. 6 From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness— only wounds and welts and open sores not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with olive oil. 7 Your country is desolate, your cities burned with fire; your fields are being stripped by foreigners right before you, laid waste as when overthrown by strangers. 8 Daughter Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard, like a hut in a cucumber field, like a city under siege. 9 Unless the Lord Almighty had left us some survivors, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah.

Let me tell you; it is not an exciting thing; it is not something you want to advertise on your social media platforms being likened to Sodom or Gomorrah. Can you imagine being God's special people, yet Sodom or Gomorrah is mentioned in the same sentence as you? This is not a situation to be in. Sodom and Gomorrah are two ancient cities known for their corruption, precisely due to sexual behaviors. The bottom line is they were corrupt.

Your condition way is not the same as Sodom & Gomorrah, yet all of us have some level of corruption that God wants to deal with this year aggressively. So do not let your mind begin to play the comparison game, as if to say, "at my dishonestly is not as bad as my brothers, I only buy 3 Lotto tickets a week while he spends his whole check on those things", you know stuff like that.

What are the areas of immorality that you have to deal with this year?

What are the stumbling blocks preventing you from addressing them?

Where can your church partner with you to walk in your victory over these things?

After reading ***II Chronicles 28.19-21***, looking at King Ahaz write what you learned about God's response to continued corruption that's never appropriately addressed.

The Lord had humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel,[b] for he had promoted wickedness in Judah and had been most unfaithful to the Lord. 20 Tiglath-Pileser[c] king of Assyria came to him, but he gave him trouble instead of help. 21 Ahaz took some of the things from the temple of the Lord and from the royal palace and from the officials and presented them to the king of Assyria, but that did not help him. 22 In his time of trouble King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the Lord. 23 He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus, who had defeated him; for he thought, "Since the gods of the kings of Aram have helped them, I will sacrifice to them so they will help me." But they were his downfall and the downfall of all Israel.

Judah's & Jerusalem's Ceremonies

10 Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah! 11 "The multitude of your sacrifices— what are they to me?" says the Lord. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. 12 When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? 13 STOP bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations— I cannot bear your worthless assemblies. 14 Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I HATE with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. 15 When you spread out your hands in prayer, I HIDE my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I AM NOT LISTENING. Your hands are full of blood!

I believe all of us share in our belief, commitment, and responsibility to Worship God. Yet an unshakeable concern arises when we become committed to the ceremony of sacrifice and forget the consecrated purpose. How do you think you would feel if you knew God declined your gift? Entirely naturally, there's sadness, maybe frustration, devastation, and or embarrassment. All of these emotions are understandable, but in the verses, God's people, instead of confessing and doing it right, continue worshipping how they want to partner with wicked motives. The hearts of the people would not allow them to serve God through obedience instead they helped him inconvenience and their desire to do it their way.

List all the definite emotions and commands from God.

v.13

v.14

v.15a

v.15b

You should never want to feel left alone knowing God has muted the sound of your voice. For this cause and more, we choose to make a joyful noise unto the Lord! Always choose to Worship God only in the manner He has prescribed to be Worshipped; anything else is unsatisfactory and will not be accepted.

God's Care

16 Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. 17 Learn to do Right; seek Justice. Defend the Oppressed.[a] Take up the cause of the Fatherless; plead the case of the Widow. 18 "Come now, let us settle the matter," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. 19 If you are Willing (prepared, ready) and Obedient, you will eat the good things of the land; 20 but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. 21 See how the faithful city has become a prostitute! She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her— but now murderers! 22 Your silver has become dross (Garbage, waste), your choice wine is diluted with water. 23 Your rulers are rebels, partners with thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them. 24 Therefore the Lord, the Lord Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: "Ah! I will vent my wrath on my foes and avenge myself on my enemies. 25 I will turn my hand against you;[b] I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities. 26 I will restore your leaders as in days of old, your rulers as at the beginning. Afterward you will be called the City of Righteousness the Faithful City." 27 Zion will be delivered with justice, her penitent ones with righteousness. 28 But rebels and sinners will both be broken, and those who forsake the Lord will perish 29 "You will be ashamed because of the sacred oaks in which you have delighted; you will be disgraced because of the gardens that you have chosen. 30 You will be like an oak with fading leaves, like a garden without Water. 31 The mighty man will become tinder and his work a spark both will burn together, with no one to quench the fire."

After reading what God said regarding the disobedience of Jerusalem and Judah, we must remember He is also the God of supernatural care. God charges them to take responsibility for certain social channels happening around them. Do you think you bear responsibility for your community in the manner God speaks to His people?

What is your stance regarding do right, seeking justice and defending the oppressed?

How does taking up the cause of the fatherless and the widow fit in your life?

It is God's desire for the Church to love Him only!

Throughout time the love humanity once had for God has been given to others and gods. Man's love had become so prerequisite they are called prostitutes. Isn't it sad to think that God's people are simple, willing to give up their love in a real easy way?

What must you do this year to prevent becoming a spiritual prostitute?

Once a faithful city, God's people have now missed the mark; they are like fading leaves in a garden without water. Much like the people of Judah and Jerusalem, the American Church has to face the reality of God's love and provision for us; even though our passion for so many things, the oak shades its leaves, making room for the fresh new leaves.

In 2022 remain close to God to prevent dryness because of the lack of nutrients. Keep your eyes on the Lord, continuing the passion for Christ, loving your neighbor, and taking

DEALING WITH ANXIETY IN KINGDOM LIVING

Matthew 6:25-34

In the time period of 2020–2021, anxiety and depression became rampant on our society. The fears and pain cause by a pandemic coupled with a bitter election and a violent attempt to overthrow our government exacerbated those worries.

In **Matthew 6:25–34** Jesus talked about worry and how we should deal with it. What are the things that cause us so much worry? We worry about material, physical things. Finances are the number one source of anxiety in our nation just as they were in Jesus' day.

Matthew 6:25 – Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your Body, what you will put on.

We hear those words, but the reality of our lives, make them hard to accept. We live in a capitalist society that has become increasingly inequitable. The gap between the upper class and the middle and lower classes is the greatest it has ever been. Over two-thirds of the nation's wealth is owned by only five percent of the population. The ultrarich are envied and adored by the masses.

Psalms 73:3 – I was envious of the boastful when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. We are beset with a feeling of relative deprivation.

No matter how much we have, there is always someone who has more. The man with a new Ford is envious of the man with the new Mercedes. We are conditioned by our system to always want more. We are told no one should be satisfied with what they have but strive to have more; failure to gain more, or even worse yet, lose what we have, results in anger and even hatred. We look for someone to blame for our relative deprivation. Many blame their lack of success on immigrants, minorities, government assistance programs, and unfair rules. Those who are less fortunate than us, the poor, the homeless, those on government assistance programs, are condemned as being lazy and immoral despite the words of **Proverbs 17:5** – He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker.

Another source of our anxiety is family.

Proverbs 17:25 – A foolish son is grief to his Father and bitterness to her who bore

him. The bitterness and divisions in our land have entered our homes. Families are fractured over politics, social issues and even religion.

Proverbs 18:19 – A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city and contentions are like the bars of a castle.

With the pandemic, the disputed election, and insurrection, many became depressed over their fears for the future. The fear that our democracy will be replaced by an authoritarian government desired by over forty percent of the population caused worries that a second civil war would erupt. The alarming rise in white nationalism embraced by political leaders caused fears of a race war. The widespread rejection of medical science caused fears that the pandemic would never end.

James 4:14 – You do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

All of our worries, fears and depression are, in reality, futile.

Matthew 6:27– Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

Matthew 8:26 – Why are you fearful” O you of little faith.

Worry and anxiety cannot bring change, but they do cause harm. They lead to physical harm. Increased stress is a major cause of strokes and heart attacks. They lead to harmful activities. To ease their anxiety and depression many turn to alcohol or drugs. The United States is the number one consumer of illegal drugs. Alcohol consumption is at record levels. Many who are dealing with anxiety and depression have turned their backs on God. They feel that He has abandoned them.

They are like David in **Psalms 13: 1-2**– How long O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul having sorrow in my heart daily.

As followers of Christ, we need to deal with the issues of anxiety and depression. We must acknowledge our need and seek help. “God helps those who help themselves” is not in the Bible. We need to support one another.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 – Comfort each other and edify one another. We need to rely on the Spirit of Christ to help us.

Romans 7:24 -25– O wretched man that I am. Who will deliver me from this Body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. We should not be ashamed to seek professional help, counseling, and guidance. We need to address our mental and emotional distresses just as we do our physical infirmities.

We need to concentrate on the Good in our lives and not what we do not have.

Philippians 5:8 – Whatever things are true, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things.

We need to have the right priorities.

Matthew 6:33 – Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you. We cannot be devoted to the things of this world and the service Christ.

Matthew 6:24 – No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. We need to realize that all in this world is temporary.

I Timothy 6:7 – We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

Regardless of our situation, we need to be like Paul in his letter to the Philippians.

Philippians 3:8 – I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ.

The poem of Rhea Miller set to music by George Shea should be our prayer. “I’d rather have Jesus than silver or gold, I’d rather have Jesus than riches untold. I’d rather have Jesus than house or lands, I’d rather be led by His nail pierced hands.... I’d rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today.”

DEALING WITH CONFLICT

Author: Larry Pool

Several times in His sermon in **Matthew 5-7** Jesus talks about fulfilling the law. He says, “You have heard it said...but I say to you” several times. He makes it clear that ethical kingdom living is more than just physically obeying the law.

Matthew 5:21-22 – You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, “Do not murder and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.” But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.

We are now living in a time of great divisions. There is bitterness, anger and even hatred everywhere. Sadly, it has also affected our churches.

Why is there so much division and even hatred in our churches?

Much of it is due to so many having the wrong priorities. The Church was founded by Jesus for the purpose of being His witness to the world, Acts 1:8 – You shall be witness to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth, and to make disciples of those who believe, **Matthew 28:19-20** – Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. Too many churches have other priorities.

Politics is a major focus of many Christians and churches. They believe you must support their party or their candidate to be a Christian, even if their party and politicians are antithetical to the teachings of Jesus. Together with a devotion to politics is devotion to nation. Christian nationalism is a major focus of many churches in America today. There is a belief that the United States is a specially chosen nation by God and thus other nations are inferior. Being a loyal American is viewed as more important than loyalty to the teachings of Jesus. This is a heresy that is dividing our nation and our churches. God says in **Isaiah 40:17** – All nations before Him are as nothing. Paul reminds us in **Philippians 3:20** – Our citizenship is in heaven.

Churches are also divided because too many are majoring on the minor. We are to preach the gospel message. **Acts 5:42** – And daily in the temple and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. Sadly, that message has become secondary to preaching on social and cultural issues. There is more emphasis on physical birth than on the new birth. People are told that unless they believe life begins at conception, they cannot be a Christian. There is more emphasis

on sexual orientation than on the redemptive power of Jesus. There is great debate over the role of women in the Church, over the styles of worship and even church music. Too many ignore the words of Paul to Timothy and Titus. **1 Timothy 2:23** – Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes. **Titus 3:9** – Avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and useless. Tragically, too many churches are not willing to address the bitter divisions in our land. They are willing to condemn strongly sins of the flesh but ignore the sins of the heart. This is what Jesus was preaching about. That is what Jesus condemned in **Matthew 23:25** – You cleanse the outside of the dish but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. In his letter from the Birmingham jail, Martin Luther King called out the pastors who refused to address the bitter racial division of his day. Churches should be the driving force to end the bitterness and hatred that is so prevalent in our land. **Matthew 5:9** – Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

The first thing we must do is to recognize the problem. It is in the hearts of men. Jesus says those with hatred in their hearts are in danger of hell fire. No one can hate another and be in the will of God. **1 John 2:11** – He who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness. **1 John 4:20** – If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” Churches need to condemn the hatred and bitterness that divides our land. There is no place in the worship of Christ for racism, extreme nationalism and hatred of others. We should not tolerate it in our fellowship nor should we support those who promote hatred and division. Christians need to be reconciled with one another by following the scripture. Jesus commands us to love one another. **John 15:17** – These things I command you, that you love one another. We need to go to our fellow Christians when we have conflict and disputes, and with love and humility seek reconciliation. **Matthew 5:24** – First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. **Romans 12:19** – In honor giving preference to one another. When we put aside the issues that divide us and concentrate on the Christ who unites us, we can experience the blessings of God. **1 Corinthians 1:10** – Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Psalms 133:1 – How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

Jesus condemns those who hate and calls us to love. Let us be not only hearers of His word, building our lives on the Rock that is Jesus, but doers of His word as well.

Let each of us pray this prayer **Psalms 139:23** – Search me, O God, and know my heart, see if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

FASTING GUIDE

THERE ARE FOUR KINDS OF FAST

NORMAL FAST: Going without food for a definite period during which you ingest only liquids. (Can be conducted for 1 day, 3 days, 1 week, 1 month, 40 days)

ABSOLUTE FAST: Allows no food or water at all and should be short.

PARTIAL FAST: The one that omits certain foods or is on a schedule that permits limited eating.

ROTATIONAL FAST: Consist of eating or omitting certain families of food for designated periods

Throughout the month of January, we encourage the OneChurch family to participate in one of three fasting plans :

21 DAY FAST [Detailed in this guide]

14 DAY FAST

7 DAY FAST

There will be no eating after 8:00p.m. throughout the entire selected fast. However, you can refer to the **THE SCHEDULE** section for daily food selection guidance.

While fasting, we will be studying God's word (Devotionals provided in this document) and praying at least five times a day.
(6:00am, 10:00am, 2:00pm, 6:00pm, and 10:00pm)

If you are diabetic and taking Insulin, Tolinase, Glipizide or Glyburide, you are encouraged to eat at least two servings of starchy vegetables per meal. The starchy vegetables consist of green peas, corn, yams, sweet potatoes, white potatoes and hard shell squash. You should also include pinto beans, black eyed peas, red kidney beans, navy beans, lima beans and crowder peas as your vegetables.

CONSULT YOUR PHYSICIAN, DIETICIAN, AND/OR PERSONAL TRAINER.

**THE
PROCEDURE**

FASTING IS ONE OF THE TOOLS GIVEN TO US BY GOD TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM THROUGH HIS SON.

Dr. Sang-Yang Tan writes, "Fasting is a most tangible and practical way of surrendering to God and allowing the Holy Spirit more control in our lives."

A **BIBLICAL FAST** is always an attempt to seek God's favor or direction, and is always accompanied by prayer. Ezra 8:23 says, "So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and He answered our prayer."

It is important to know what God has to say about fasting. In reading **Isaiah 58**, God speaks clearly regarding His response to proper fasting. This is not something we do merely to be active in church life. We fast because God honors it and it's His way for us to remain connected to Him.

As we are fasting **DO NOT BE SIDETRACKED BY IMPULSES**. They are there to derail you. This pursuit of clarity is the determined end. In Isaiah 58 God informs His people what a true fast really is. As you're studying this month make this periscope a part of your reading.

KEEP YOUR MOTIVES IN CHECK

By this, I'm suggesting while you are fasting resist the temptation of becoming upset with God because He's not responding in the manner you desired from Him. This fasting time is not for us to be satisfied with no other means accept God and His Word.

USE THIS TIME AS A WAKE UP CALL

If we complete our fast and we continue to quarrel and fight, whatever we "gave up" was a complete waste. Your fasting is not about self-fulfillment or any personal happiness; it only has to do with pleasing God and drawing closer to him.

**WHY DO WE
FAST?**

21 DAY FAST

Days 1-10

Vegetables, including tofu; baked/broiled fish, turkey or chicken (4-6 oz., once a day); water & liquid protein drink (no more than 2-3 times a day)

Days 11-17

Vegetables only (no meat); water & liquid protein drink

Days 18-21 (TWO OPTIONS)

OPTION 1

Days 18-19

Vegetables, including tofu, baked/broiled fish, turkey and chicken (4-6oz.)

Days 20-21

NO FOOD! Water only!

OPTION 2

Days 18-21

Vegetables, including tofu, baked/broiled fish, turkey and chicken (4-6oz.)

DEVOTIONAL SCHEDULE:

DAY 01: THE PETER IN YOU

DAY 03: FULFILL YOUR ASSIGNMENT

DAY 05: MOSES' PATH TO TRUE FAITHFUL LEADERSHIP DAY 07: WHO TURNS THE TABLES

DAY 09: ARE YOU ON YOUR MISSION?

DAY 11: I WANT WHAT'S COMING TO ME!

DAY 14: A DRY AND POWERLESS CHURCH

DAY 16: DEALING WITH ANXIETY IN KINGDOM LIVING DAY 19: DEALING WITH CONFLICT

DAY 19: DEALING WITH CONFLICT

THE
SCHEDULE

PRAY thanking God for our 15th Church Anniversary.

PRAY for every member to take on the privileges, rights, and responsibilities of being a member of One Church.

PRAY for the heart of the Senior Pastor to remain open to the preceding Word from God.

PRAY for his marriage with Alexis and their parenting of Mackenzie, Michaela, & Demetrius II.

PRAY for the leadership of One Church; Elders, Deacons, Staff, Ministry Leaders and Volunteers.

PRAY for every endeavor to impact Midlothian and surrounding communities.

PRAY for every family in One Church to be healthy. Pray all marriages and singles will live appropriately according to the Word of God. Husbands & Fathers to make the time to invest into every person in their home and those under their covering.

PRAY for One Church as we prepare to build our first building.

PRAY for One Church members to be consistent in their attendance and giving.

PRAY for the OC Onderful Kids to continue growing in attendance and with volunteers.

PRAY for the Youth in our church to become ministers that impact their generation.

PRAY for the evangelistic efforts for 2022 as we reach out to our family, neighbors, and online community.

PRAY for the churches in Midlothian to work in partnership to advance the Kingdom of God.

**DAILY
PRAYERS**

Recipe Table of Contents:

Apple-Cinnamon Hot Cereal

Baked Oatmeal

Berry Blast Smoothie

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Butternut Squash & Broccoli Salad

Black Bean Minestrone

Chunky Potato Soup

Black Bean Hummus

Garden Vegetable Soup

Southwest Corn Black Bean Soup

RECIPES

Apple-Cinnamon Hot Cereal

1 (14.5-ounce) can coconut milk
2 cups cooked brown rice
1 apple, chopped, unpeeled (about 1 1/2 cups)
1 banana, mashed (about 1 cup)
1 cup roughly chopped dates
1½ teaspoons cinnamon
Pinch nutmeg
½ cup toasted pecans or walnuts

Add coconut milk, brown rice, apple, banana, dates, cinnamon, and nutmeg to a medium saucepan. Cook over medium-low heat about 10 minutes or until heated through. Stir frequently to prevent burning on bottom of pan. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon pecans or walnuts over each serving.

Yield: 8 servings (serving size: about ½ cup)

Recipe Notes

Store chopped dried figs or raisins for the dates.

Add 1-tablespoon flaxseed meal.

Makes a great snack or dessert!

Store unused portion in refrigerator or freeze for later use.

Baked Oatmeal

1 ½ cups old-fashioned rolled oats
1 ½ cups unsweetened almond milk
½ cup unsweetened applesauce
¼ cup chopped dried apricots
¼ cup chopped dates or raisins
¼ cup chopped pecans or walnuts
½ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Put all ingredients in a large bowl and stir well. Transfer to an 8 by 8-inch baking dish that has been lightly rubbed with olive oil. Pour oatmeal mixture into dish and bake 45-50 minutes or until slightly browned and crispy on top.

Yield: 6 servings (serving size: 2 squares)

Recipe Notes: Spread almond butter or Date Honey on each serving.

This recipe can be doubled and baked in a 9 by 13-inch casserole dish.

RECIPES

Berry Blast Smoothie

1 cup water or any unsweetened non-dairy milk (such as almond, coconut, rice or soy)

1 cup frozen blackberries, blueberries, and raspberries

1 banana, peeled

Yield: 2 servings (serving size: about 8 ounces or 1 cup)

Recipe Notes

Your smoothie will taste best if either the berries or the banana is frozen. To freeze bananas, remove peels before placing in freezer. Put in a plastic zip-top bag until completely frozen.

To make this a “green” smoothie, add 1 cup of fresh spinach or kale leaves (stems removed from the kale).

Add 1-tablespoon flaxseed meal for a fiber boost.

Raspberry-Pecan Smoothie

1 cup water or unsweetened almond milk

1 cup spinach or mixed greens

1 large frozen banana, peeled, sliced

½ cup fresh or frozen raspberries

2 tablespoons chopped pecans

Yield: 2 servings (serving size: about 8 ounces or 1 cup)

Recipe Notes

You can also use unsweetened rice or soy milk.

To freeze bananas, remove peels before placing in freezer. Put in a plastic zip-top bag.

If using fresh fruit, you can add chopped ice to make your smoothie cold. Add 1-tablespoon flaxseed meal.

RECIPES

Orange-Poppy Seed Salad Dressing

- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon diced red onion
- 1/2 teaspoon poppy seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon orange zest
- 1/8 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

Combine all ingredients in a covered glass jar, and shake well. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Yield: 8 servings (serving size: about 1 tablespoon)

Ozarks Sunset Fruit Salad

- 4 cups fresh spinach, torn into bite-size pieces
- 4 cups romaine lettuce, torn into bite-size pieces
- 4 kiwifruit, peeled & cut into half moons
- 2 cups oranges, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 cup sliced strawberries
- 1/2 cup sliced or slivered almonds, toasted

Combine ingredients in a large bowl, and toss well.

Yield: 4 servings (serving size: about 1 1/4 cups)

Recipe Notes

Serve with Orange-Poppy Seed Salad Dressing or Apple-Cinnamon Salad Dressing.

Apple-Cinnamon Salad Dressing

- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup unsweetened apple juice
- 1-tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon diced red onion
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

Combine all ingredients in a covered glass jar, and shake well. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Yield: 8 servings (serving size: about 1 tablespoon)

RECIPES

Roasted Potato Salad

1 pound B size red potatoes, unpeeled
1/2 pound Brussels sprouts, trimmed & halved
1 cup trimmed fresh green beans, cut into pieces
1 1/2 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, divided
1/2 teaspoon tarragon
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1/4 cup chopped red onions
1/4 cup finely chopped pecans or walnuts
2 cups chopped romaine lettuce

Scrub potatoes well. Place in a large saucepan, and cover with water. Heat to boiling. Reduce heat slightly to a soft rolling boil, and cook 15 minutes. Drain, and allow to cool slightly.

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Cut potatoes into quarters, and put in a large bowl, along with Brussels sprouts and green beans. Add 1 tablespoon olive oil, tarragon, salt, and pepper. Stir well to coat. Place vegetables on a baking sheet. Bake 10 minutes, and flip. Cook another 10 minutes, or until vegetables are slightly blackened. Place in a large bowl, and set aside. Heat 1/2 tablespoon olive oil in skillet over medium heat. Add onions and pecans, and cook until onions are soft and translucent. Mix in with potatoes and vegetables.

To serve, place 1/2 cup lettuce on each plate, and top with roasted potato-vegetable mixture. Drizzle a little olive oil over each serving, if desired.

Yield: 4 servings (serving size: about 1 cup)

RECIPES

Butternut Squash & Broccoli Salad

- 1 - 1 ½ pounds butternut squash
- 3 cups broccoli florets, cut into pieces
- 1/2 cup canned black beans, rinsed & drained
- 1 ½ tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/8 teaspoon thyme
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 2 tablespoons chopped walnuts
- 2 tablespoons pumpkin seeds, toasted

Trim ends of squash, and use a vegetable peeler to remove outer layer. Cut squash in half lengthwise, and scoop out pulp and seeds. Slice squash into strips, and cut into 1-inch cubes (should yield about 3 cups).

Lightly steam butternut squash and broccoli until tender crisp (butternut squash takes about 15–18 minutes and broccoli about 10–12 minutes). Place in a large bowl, and add beans. In a separate smaller bowl, whisk oil, basil, garlic powder, and thyme together. Pour over vegetables and beans, and stir to coat. Mix in parsley, walnuts, and pumpkin seeds. Serve warm, or let sit at room temperature for 10–15 minutes. Makes about 5 cups.

Recipe Notes

Substitute cooked carrots for the butternut squash.
Use as a topping for a lettuce salad.

This dish is best served warm, but it can also be eaten cold, straight out of the refrigerator.

RECIPES

Black Bean Minestrone

1-tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

½ cup chopped onion

1 cup chopped carrots

2 stalks celery, sliced

2 cloves garlic, minced

4 cups water or Vegetable Broth

1 (15-oz) can black beans, rinsed and drained

1 cup fresh or frozen green beans, cut into 1-inch pieces

1 cup chopped tomatoes, unpeeled, unseeded

1 cup chopped fresh spinach or ½ cup frozen spinach, thawed

2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil or 1 ½ teaspoons dried basil

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley or 1 ½ teaspoons dried parsley

½ teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon pepper

Heat olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Cook onions, carrots, and celery until vegetables are softened. Stir in garlic, and cook for another minute, stirring constantly so garlic doesn't burn.

Add water or broth, black beans, green beans, tomatoes, spinach, basil, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil. Simmer, uncovered, over low heat about 20 minutes to allow the flavors to blend. Stir in parsley before serving.

Yield: 6 servings [serving size: about 1 ¼ cups]

Recipe Notes

Add barley, brown rice, or whole grain pasta.

Other vegetables to add: corn, peas, potatoes, squash, or zucchini.

RECIPES

Chunky Potato Soup

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 cup chopped onion
1 cup chopped carrots
1 cup sliced celery
2 cloves garlic, minced
4 cups water or Vegetable Broth
3 large russet potatoes, peeled and cubed (about 5 cups)
1 bay leaf
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon thyme
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1/2 cup almond, rice, or soymilk
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley or 1 teaspoon dried parsley

Heat olive oil in saucepan over medium heat. Cook onions, carrots, and celery until vegetables are softened. Stir in garlic, and cook for another minute, stirring constantly so garlic doesn't burn. Add broth, potatoes, bay leaf, salt, thyme, and pepper. Bring to a boil. Simmer, covered, for 30 minutes or until potatoes are soft. Discard bay leaf. Add half of potato mixture to a food processor or blender, and process until smooth. Return to saucepan. Stir in almond milk, and parsley. Cook until heated through, and serve.

Yield: 6 servings (serving size: about 1 cup)

RECIPES

Black Bean Hummus

1 clove garlic

1 (16 ounce) can black beans, drained (reserve liquid) 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1-2 tablespoons tahini

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Crush garlic clove and place in food processor

Add black beans, lemon juice, tahini, cumin, salt and cayenne pepper; process until smooth.

Add enough of the reserved liquid (1 tablespoon at a time) from the beans to reach desired consistency, pulsing after each addition.

Serve with tortillas, crackers or sliced vegetables.

Garden Vegetable Soup

4 tablespoons olive oil

2 cups chopped leeks, white part only (from approximately 3 medium leeks) 2 tablespoons finely minced garlic Salt

2 cups carrots, peeled and chopped into rounds (approximately 2 medium) 2 cups peeled and diced potatoes

2 cups fresh green beans, broken or cut into 3/4-inch pieces

2 quarts vegetable broth

4 cups peeled, seeded, and chopped tomatoes

2 ears corn, kernels removed

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1/4 cup packed, chopped fresh parsley leaves

1 - 2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

Heat the olive oil in large, heavy-bottomed stockpot over medium-low heat. Once hot, add the leeks and garlic salt until they begin to soften, approximately 7 – 8 minutes. Add the carrots, potatoes, and green beans and continue to cook for 4 to 5 more minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the broth, increase the heat to high, and bring to a simmer. Once simmering, add the tomatoes, corn kernels, and pepper. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook until the vegetables are fork tender, approximately 25 to 30 minutes. Remove from heat and add the parsley and lemon juice. Season to taste with Kosher salt. Serve immediately.

RECIPES

Southwest Corn Black Bean Soup

1 ½ cups corn kernels (fresh or frozen) 1/3 cup pine nuts

1/4 cup lime juice

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro

2 (14.5 ounce) cans black beans, rinsed 2 cups shredded red cabbage

1 large tomato, diced

1/2 cup minced red onion

Place pine nuts in a small dry skillet over medium-low heat and cook, stirring, until fragrant and lightly browned, 2 to 4 minutes.

Whisk lime juice, oil, cilantro, salt and pepper in a large bowl. Add the corn, pine nuts, beans, cabbage, tomato and onion; toss to coat. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Freshly ground pepper and salt to taste just before serving.

RECIPES

We encourage you to utilize basic stretching throughout your fast. You may also want to incorporate other moderate exercises as you are able. Though it might take some time for your body to adjust, we believe you can achieve your goals if you stay the course.

GOALS:

Improve flexibility

Improve body composition

Improve performance

Practice safe and effective stretching

It may not seem easy in the beginning, but you will get the hang of it. We encourage you to do these before and/or after your morning and nighttime prayer.

STRETCHING TIPS:

- Stretch slowly without bouncing. (If you happen to bounce, let up some. You will get better as you progress)
- Hold each stretch below the pain threshold for 10–60 seconds.
- Perform 2–6 repetitions for each exercise.
- To improve flexibility, the routine should be performed at least three days each week.

Hopefully you're motivated to improve your overall well-being.

With stretching, you can prepare your body for the various physical challenges you may encounter throughout the day. It also allows your body to relax when it's time for rest.

If you have any questions please contact:

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STRETCHING

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