

40 DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING?

WHY 40 DAYS?

Throughout the Bible there are numerous examples of godly leaders who sought God for guidance, provision and refuge over a period of 40 days: Moses spent 40 days and nights with God before delivering the Ten Commandments (Exodus 24:18). Twelve men spent 40 days exploring Canaan (Numbers 13:25) before entering the land God had given them. Elijah traveled 40 days to meet with God (1 Kings 19: 8). Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights in the desert, giving His life to the Father before beginning His ministry on this earth. (Matthew 4: 2) Although a period of 40 days in itself is not magical, there is something biblical and dynamic about the reality of a deliberate and specific period focused on prayer. When we set our sights on seeking the Lord and His will for our lives, He responds with power and grace. Our love and search for God becomes even deeper. God gives direction to our leadership in a clear and biblical way. Our Mission is transformed because we are transformed.

HOW THIS DEVOTIONAL GUIDE IS USED

This guide includes daily readings of the scriptures and a short devotional. We encourage you to spend quality time praying based on the guidelines given at the end of each day. Here are some suggestions to help you make the most of your devotional time and time with the Lord:

- Schedule a specific time each day to read and pray using this devotional. Eliminate any distraction in order to hear the voice of God clearly.
- Focus on learning the attributes of God.
- Tell God what you need to be able to overcome each day, even though He already knows it before you ask for it.
- Evaluate your life, confess and eliminate the things that stand between you and the Lord.
- Spend more time than usual in silence, listening and allowing the Word of God to penetrate your heart.
- We encourage you to participate in a fast during these 40 days, according to what the Lord tells you. (See the 'Fasting Guide' below)
- Keep a diary during these 40 days, to keep track of what the Holy Spirit is teaching you.

WHAT I SHOULD ANTICIPATE

You will discover for yourself what will happen to you in these 40 days, but we are sure that God is looking forward to spending time with you. We are excited for what He will do in our hearts as we seek Him with all our hearts.

THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF FASTING

In the Bible, the times of prayer and fasting were to obtain clarity in the direction of God. Moses allowed himself a period of 40 days of prayer and fasting before receiving the Ten Commandments. Jesus fasted for 40 days in the desert. These are some of the types and duration of the fasts mentioned in the Bible. Usually, it is thought that fasting is abstaining from food with the purpose of spending more time

with God. However, fasting is never carried out to obtain favor from God. The purpose of your fast during this period of 40 days of spiritual discovery should be to take time out of your busy schedule to seek God and listen to Him. Fasting is a classical spiritual discipline that has been abandoned in this modern era. However, it was one of the vital disciplines in the lives of the saints in the Bible. They achieved a better sensibility and again heard from God during their fasts. Historically, when a church participated in fasting and prayer as a body, God manifested among them with repentance and demonstrations of His power and revival. This is our hope and what we pray for you during this 40-day period.

GUIDES TO FAST

1. DETERMINE THE PURPOSE OF YOUR FASTING. Although the goal of these 40 days is to be able to spend more time looking for the face of God, a fast can be done for several reasons. Some of them may include a desire to:

- Strengthen the urgency of your prayers (Ezra 8:23, Nehemiah 1: 4, Daniel 9: 3, Joel 2: 12-17, Acts 13: 3) *"Fasting is calculated to bring a note of urgency and importunity into our praying, and to give force to our pleading in the court of heaven. The man who prays with fasting is giving heaven notice that he is truly in earnest... Not only so, but he is expressing his earnestness in a divinely-appointed way. He is using a means that God has chosen to make his voice to be heard on high."* Arthur Wallis
- Hunger reminds us to pray all day.
- Look for God's direction (Judges 20: 26-28; Acts 14:23) - Fasting does not assure us that we can discern God's will, but it tends to make us more sensitive to Him who loves to guide us.
- Approach God and express your pain in the midst of suffering and the sin (Judges 20:26, 1 Samuel 31:13)
- Ask for ransom or protection from God (2 Chronicles 20: 3-4, Ezra 8: 21-23, Esther 4:16, Psalm 109 especially the verse 24)
- Express repentance (1 Samuel 7: 6; Joel 2:12; Jonah 3: 5-8)
- Humble yourself before God (1 Kings 21: 27-29; Psalm 35:13)
- Express interest in the work of God (Nehemiah 1: 3-4, Isaiah 58: 6-7, Daniel 9: 3)
- Ministering to the needs of others (Isaiah 58: 6-7)
- To be able to overcome temptation and dedicate oneself to God (Matthew 4: 1) -11)
- To express love and adoration to God (Luke 2:37)

2. DETERMINE THE TYPE OF FASTING YOU WILL DO

- If you will perform a regular fast of food, (taking only water and clear liquids) start for a few with a reasonable goal. Only someone with experience should consider a total fast of 40 days
- If you are starting, consider in prayer fasting one day a week for 40 days (Six single day fasts)
- Another idea is to fast one of the meal times during the next 40 days.

- Since the purpose of this fast is to take time for prayer, Bible study, and keeping a journal, you can consider these other ways:
- Abstain from excessive television or movies that do not build your faith during these 40 days and use this time for spiritual activities.
- Refrain from regular daily activities (going to the gym, having coffee with friends, etc.) and use this time for God.

3. PREPARE AN APPROPRIATE AMOUNT OF TIME.

Fasting is simply a tool that allows you to hear from God and live a deeper dimension of His grace and His love for you. Especially in the beginning, an essential part of your fast will be to renew your personal commitment to holiness. Usually, this requires repentance review times, so schedule time for this process.

DAY 1 - BACKGROUND OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Mark, who wrote this gospel, was a close friend of the Apostle Peter. Many theologians believe that this story is actually the "Gospel of Peter" dictated by Peter to Mark at the end of his life. Mark is recognized as the first written gospel and the first to be read by members of the early church.

The writers of the other gospels could have used it as reference material for the story of their gospels. Seeing the first part of Mark's life, one might not have expected this man to become a spiritual icon. When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, young Mark escapes naked (Mark 14: 51-52). Later Mark (also known as John Mark) leaves Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:13), and his return leads to Paul and Barnabas separating (Acts 15: 37-39). Eventually, Paul considers Mark to be a ministry collaborator and a helpful companion (Philemon 1:24, 2 Timothy 4:11). Finally, God uses this imperfect man to relate the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Read about Mark in the previously mentioned passages to see that the Lord can use weak and imperfect people for His purposes. Ask God to show you how He can use you despite your weaknesses and shortcomings. Take time to worship Jesus because He alone is worthy - what better way to start our 40 days!

"Never lose heart in the power of the Gospel. Do not believe that there exists any man, much less a race of men, for whom the Gospel is not fitted." Charles Spurgeon

DAY 2 - MARK 1: 1-6

Mark begins his gospel account by citing the prophecy of Isaiah in which God prepared the world for the coming of the Messiah, sending a messenger to proclaim that the Savior is coming. The messenger wore camel hair clothes and fed on locusts; he was John the Baptist, cousin of Jesus. Many times when we see people proclaiming Jesus, we think they are a little strange, but this kind of passionate proclamation has distinguished men of God throughout history. Think of Noah

crying out to his neighbors or the Apostles, crying out to the people in every place they traveled. What motivates you to make those brave statements? They believed in the message and gave themselves faithfully to divulge it.

Ask the Lord for such great love for Him that you cannot remain silent. When you meditate on who He is and the great need that this world has for Him, you will find yourself "exclaiming" to the lost world (your home, your office, your friends) that they need to "prepare the way" because our Savior is returning.

"I can safely say, on the authority of all that is revealed in the Word of God, that any man or woman on this earth who is bored and turned off by worship is not ready for heaven." AW Tozer

DAY 3 - MARK 1: 4-8

John the Baptist preached outside of Jerusalem to some of the same people who three years later would crucify Jesus. John heard their confessions and baptized them in the Jordan River as a sign of their repentance. In verse seven, John points out to the multitude of his hearers the supremacy of Jesus and not himself:

"After me comes one mightier than I; I do not even deserve to bend down to untie the strap of his sandals."

Memorize this little verse to remember that Jesus is almighty and perfectly holy. As you pray, declare that Christ is worthy and you yourself are not.

"All that I am, I owe to Jesus Christ, revealed to me in His divine Book." David Livingstone

DAY 4 - MARK 1: 8-15

John the Baptist disappears as soon as Jesus enters the scene. He made an impact like no other (Matthew 11:11, Luke 7:28). The Gospel of John describes John the Baptist as a "lamp that burned and gave light", and then the focus is on Jesus (John 5: 33-36). John is clear about his role in the great story of Jesus. This is the role of every man or woman of God. Our role is to live in such a way that we bring light to this dark world so that they can see Christ more clearly.

Today, remember your role and rejoice that you were also chosen by God to shine as a light for Christ Jesus. It is His grace that allows us to be part of His work. Thank him not only for saving you for eternity but also because you were called to tell your story so others may know him.

'It was strictly forbidden to preach to other prisoners. It was understood that whoever was caught doing this received a severe beating. A number of us decided to pay the price for the privilege of preaching, so we accepted their [the communists'] terms. It was a deal; we preached and they beat us. We were happy preaching. They were happy beating us, so everyone was happy.'

Richard Wurmbrand, Tortured for Christ (Prisoner for Christ in Romania for 14 years).

DAY 5 - MARK 1: 16-44

In this passage, Jesus invites humble fishermen to follow him. He preaches in Galilee. He expels demons and heals various diseases. He even breaks the rules when, with all compassion, he touches and heals an "impure" leper. Marvel at the way Jesus lived His life. We think we are busy; but it was He who broke the record of being busy. He did not have ample time to eat, be alone, or sleep - although he took time to pray. What love! What a savior! He sacrificed himself completely for those who came to Him.

Take a moment to review your agenda. Are you focusing on the affairs of Christ? Ask the Lord to show you if there is something in your daily life that you need to leave or reduce to allow you to have more time with Him. Continue to the end.

"I have one passion. It is Him, He alone." Count Zinzendorf

DAY 6 - MARK 2: 1-22

As people hear about Jesus, they want to approach Him. He is completely incredible. Have you attended church and read the Bible for so long that you no longer marvel at it? Losing that wonder is certainly a great spiritual loss. If you are not totally amazed by Jesus, how can you focus your life on Him? Our world is full of distractions, problems, and badness that want at every moment to distract us and at all times to divert our worship from the Lord. Whatever it is that has taken you away from your passion for Christ, needs to be eradicated from your life. The more focus and dependence you have on Jesus, the greater your awe for Him.

Commit yourself to read the Word of God, hoping to be amazed again. Pray according to His Word, expecting incredible results. Keep a diary to affirm your amazement for the Lord, write the wonders that you have seen him do. *"However, as it is written: 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no human mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love it.'" 1 Corinthians 2: 9*

DAY 7 - MARK 2: 23-3: 6

Jesus has greater authority than any religious rule or requirement. God created the Sabbath (Sabbath), and Jesus is "Lord of the Sabbath." These words proclaim that Jesus is God. Jesus is angry and suffering because of the way men corrupt the pure law of God. They care more about complying with hundreds of laws instead of

-serving the God who created the law for their welfare. They see Jesus as a breaker of the law, a threat to those who carefully preserved ordinances and responded to Jesus' healing miracles by conspiring to destroy him. Imagine the irony of that moment. His anger should evoke adoration and amazement. Take time to praise Jesus as the Lord of the Sabbath, the One who is good and merciful every day of the week.

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Corinthians 3: 6

DAY 8 - MARK 3: 7-30

Many people thought Jesus and his followers were crazy. When he expelled demons, they accused Him of being a demon. Certainly, the demons recognize Jesus as the Son of God. They know because He is Lord of all.

The purpose of this 40-day study is to know Jesus. The main purpose of our lives is to know and believe in Jesus and respond by glorifying Him in all things. As you continue to read the book of Mark, realize how He understands and cares for people - physically and spiritually. Think of how many pass through this life and miss the opportunity to meet the One, the most important of all.

Take a moment to pray for those you know who are missing the great truth of Jesus.

"The apostle Paul perfectly expresses the most earnest desire of every true follower of Christ: 'that I may know him' (Philippians 3:10)." John MacArthur

DAY 9 - MARK 3: 31-35

For many, the family is the most important thing in this world . They would reject anyone who wanted to interfere with their strong family ties. But Christ puts aside the love He himself has for his own biological ties and calls family "anyone who does the will of God." Sometimes you may feel insecure about the love that Christ has for you. The enemy will do everything he can to dissuade you from believing that Jesus loves you so much that he gave His life on the cross to save you. There is no love that surpasses His love! Believe you are precious to Him. Take time to meditate on Him and the love He feels for you. Read Psalm 139 and thank God for the ways he reveals how much he loves you.

"God loves each of us as if there was only one of us." Augustine

DAY 10 - MARK 4

Maybe you've heard it say, "Preach the Gospel all the time. Use words when necessary." Most of the time these words are attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. Although it is wise to live in a manner in which the Gospel is demonstrated, nothing can replace the teaching of the Word of God. In reading Mark 4, we note that Jesus' priority and the example he gives us is teaching, teaching, teaching.

The kindest thing that Jesus does is not to heal the sick, but to teach the message of the Gospel to the multitudes of people who follow him. Pray today for those who need you to teach them what the Word of God says about Jesus. And continue to be a student who listens to godly preachers, reads the Scriptures, and looks for books that inspire us to focus on our Lord Jesus.

"When a man is filled with the Word of God you cannot keep him still. If a man has got the Word, he must speak or die." Dwight L. Moody

DAY 11 - MARK 5: 1-20

So far in Mark we see that people are surprised, stupefied and fearful. They marvel. Certainly those who knew Jesus marvel. In verse 20, we see that people marveled at the simple fact of hearing news about Jesus! Oh, that we could be like the one who lived among graves: before bound by demonic oppression, but liberated by the power and grace of Jesus Christ and then sent to share the incredible news with everyone. Sounds familiar? This is in a certain way, the story of every Christian. Captives of evil, enslaved in our sins, without hope and then, Jesus frees us! The natural desire of this man is to go with Jesus on the ship. However, Jesus sends him to proclaim the mercy of God and all that Jesus has done for him. When he obeys, those who hear this news marvel. We have the same good news. We can talk about the same mercy. We can proclaim all that Jesus has done for us.

We have opportunities to see the same wonders when others hear about Jesus. Evangelism does not have to be complicated. Share what God has done and see how people marvel!

Ask God to remind you of a person you need to share the gospel with, and be obedient. Make a plan and commit yourself to Jesus with whom you will share the wonder you have experienced in meeting him.

"What causes more joy in this world is winning souls." Charles Spurgeon

DAY 12 - MARK 5: 21-34

Mark shows us that Jesus has absolute authority and uses it to show his wonderful mercy to those who suffer. He does not exercise authority as an earthly ruler, he is not capricious or someone who can not be trusted. He has power over all things and uses it for the good of those who trust him. We have all this throughout the Gospel of Mark, but especially with three striking examples from chapter five: He exercises authority over demons by liberating a possessed man; shows authority over the sick by healing a woman who has been sick for a long time; and demonstrates his authority over death by resurrecting a girl from the dead. At the same time, verse 34 shows the great power of Jesus and his tenderness towards his "daughter". Jesus does in a moment what a group of doctors had not done in 12 years. How incredible is God!

Rest assured that through faith in Jesus' death and resurrection, he is using his authority to be merciful to you today. Thank him for the mercy that extends to us because we so quickly overlooked it.

"God's mercy is so great that you may sooner drain the sea of its water, or deprive the sun of its light or make space too narrow, then diminish the great mercy of God."
Charles Spurgeon

DAY 13 - MARK 5: 22-24, 35-43

Jairus pleads with Jesus to heal his seriously ill daughter, but he stops to heal and bless another person on the way. During this delay, Jairo's daughter dies and it seems that all hope has been lost. People advise Jairo not to bother Jesus anymore. At that moment, Jesus looks at this man with a broken heart and says: "Do not fear, believe only." The delay is not an accident. Jesus is not surprised by the death of Jairus's daughter. He does not retreat before death or apparent hopelessness. In perfect control of the situation and with a heart full of mercy, Jesus arrives at Jairo's house, says two words to her and raises her from death! Jesus is the absolute authority expressed in a surprising mercy.

Death is not an obstacle for Him. With two words Jesus does what Jairus would never do with all his resources of the main synagogue. Are you suffering? Does it seem that all hope has been lost? Look carefully at this wonderful Jesus and trust him when he says: "Do not be afraid. Just believe." In what areas do you need to surrender your unbelief in Jesus? Confess these areas and recognize that He is in control of everything: your health, interpersonal relationships, finances and your future. Praise Him because He is faithful in all things.

"The future is as bright as the promises of God" - Adoniram Judson

DAY 14 - MARK 6: 1-44

Jesus and his disciples were trying to take a well-deserved rest. They had been so busy that they had not had time to eat or rest. Even before they could accommodate themselves, a large crowd gathered. Jesus does not feel frustrated or disappointed. He sees the needs of the crowd and sympathizes by teaching and feeding them. The fantastic story of Jesus feeding the five thousand is as much about his compassion as about his power. What a wonderful Savior! As you present your needs to Jesus today, remember that He feels compassion for you and his resources are endless.

Thank him and ask him to tell you in what area you need to extend the same kind of compassion to others.

"No matter how low down you are; no matter what your disposition has been; you may be low in your thoughts, words, and actions; you may be selfish; your heart may be overflowing with corruption and wickedness; yet Jesus will have compassion upon you. He will speak comforting words to you; not treat you coldly or spurn you, as perhaps those of earth would, but will speak tender words, and words of love and

affection and kindness. Just come at once. He is a faithful friend - a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Dwight L. Moody

DAY 15 - MARK 6: 45-56

As the disciples continue to understand more about Jesus, their responses increased in magnitude. Mark has run out of ways to express his surprise and stupor, so he adds adverbs to his adjectives. Even those words are not enough to express those moments or express the depth of those feelings. Jesus is doing so many wonders with an impressive speed that the human vocabulary can not go at the same speed.

He feeds five thousand, walks on the water and then heals each and every person who even touches the edge of his cloak. All who do it! Life with Jesus was not boring then, and should not be today.

Pray that God will continue to renew your admiration and help you remain extremely surprised about who Jesus is and what he can do. And feel encouraged, because it is never out of His reach. Trust Him today.

Make a list of all the names scriptures uses for Christ that you can remember. Praise him because each of these names reveals His character.

There are two hundred and fifty-six names given in the Bible for the Lord Jesus Christ, and I suppose this was because He was infinitely beyond all that any one name could express" Billy Sunday

DAY 16 - MARK 7: 1-23

Do you honor Jesus with your lips or with your heart? Is your heart set on Him or is your religious fervor simply external, defined by your attendance at the church, by following the rules and trying to be a decent person? This text raises good questions to reflect on and evaluate our own spiritual life. God wants your heart and not your performance. Could it be that he has it?

Ask God to search your heart to see what separates you from HIM, ask for forgiveness and pray with your whole being to give you a heart totally dedicated to Him?

"I realized that my life was to be one of simple, childlike faith, and that my part was to trust, not to do. I was to trust in Him and He would work in me to do His good pleasure. From that time my life was different." C.T. Studd

DAY 17 - MARK 7: 24-37

Jesus "makes all things good". This is a truth that we need to know. "All things" means his actions and his motives. Never have bad intentions, or double intentions. He never encounters something he cannot overcome. He is never unfair to anyone; he does everything well. This principle is true in the full extent of its meaning; it is

also true of every detail of our lives. Jesus does all things well and, for those who are in Christ, He makes all things work for good. (Romans 8:28) Encourage yourself: Jesus is in control and he does everything well.

Stop and thank Jesus for all the things he has done well in your life. Do not forget the most basic: your sight, your hearing, your ability to taste and enjoy food. Every aspect of creation was made by Him, and well done. Never ignore the blessings that are in front of you.

"This is strength, this is peace; to feeling, in entering on every day, that all its duties and trials have been committed to the Lord Jesus – that, come what may, He will use us for his own Glory and our real good!" John Paton

DAY 18 - MARK 8: 1-10

It seems silly that the disciples questioned whether Jesus had the ability to feed people, just after witnessing how he fed five thousand people with what was basically a snack. We are just like the disciples. We quickly forget what God has done! Even so Jesus is patient with us. Surprising and wonderfully patient with us. He does not reject the disciples because they are forgetful. But simply ask:

"How many pieces of bread do you have?"

Do you need faith? Are you uncertain about the course of things, wondering if God is going to intervene? Take a moment to remember the times you have seen God being faithful in your life. Keep a record and review it often. Thank God for what he has done for you so you can trust in Him today and in the future.

"The ever-enlarging pool of past grace is visible; and God means for the certainty and beauty and depth to strengthen our faith in future grace." John Piper

DAY 19 - Mark 8: 11-30

The Gospel according to Mark was written to answer this question: Who is Jesus? This is the most important question that any human being can answer. Nothing is more important in this life than your answer to this question. If Jesus is a simple prophet or a good man, his existence has no eternal consequences for us. But if he is the Christ, the Son of God sent to save the world, then it has infinite value for us.

Who do you say that I am? If your answer is not the same or with the same certainty as Peter's, you should continue reading the book of Mark and ask God to help you know who Jesus is.

"Christianity is Christ! No one ever lost out by excessive devotion to Christ. Christ is a substitute for everything, but nothing is a substitute for Christ." H.A. Ironside

DAY 20 - MARK 8: 31-38

At that time, Peter (and most others) could not understand the way of the cross, or the need for a suffering savior. The idea that following Christ means denying oneself and taking one's own cross, must have left them completely amazed to hear it. While Jesus continues to speak, he reveals this great contradiction: "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but he who loses his life for my sake and for the gospel will save it." Jesus explains that earning the best of what the world offers does not provide a lasting benefit if you ignore your eternal soul in the process. The only real gain is knowing Christ and being able to be with him in heaven for all eternity.

Ask God to show you the way he calls you to take up your cross. Keep asking. Ask him to increase the desire to take your cross every day.

"The world says love yourself, grab all you can, follow your heart. Jesus says deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me." Francis Chan

DAY 21 - MARK 9: 1-13

The supernatural transfiguration of Jesus clearly demonstrates to the three disciples that Jesus is God, is divine. Moses, Elijah and Jesus are a truly amazing scene! Peter's first reaction is to start "talking" and "doing." Both are normal reactions. How often do we approach God by presenting ourselves with a string of religious words or a series of petitions? Stop. See what God says in verse 7

"This is my beloved son. Listen to him!" Listen. Just listen to Him.

The next time you attend a service, before you start reading your Bible or praying, try something new: listen. Let the Word of God shape how you live and think. Resist the urge to fill the silence or do something without first attending to God, listening and worshipping Him. How would your "talking" and "doing" affect your focus in this way? Do that right now. Stand still and listen without making any request.

"It is my desire to show my attachment to the cause of him who died for me, by devoting my life to his service." David Livingstone

DAY 22 - MARK 9: 14-50

Here Jesus intervenes after his disciples are unable to heal a child with an unclean spirit. Can you imagine how frustrating it must have been for the disciples as people watched their failed attempts? When the child is brought to Jesus, the deaf and dumb spirit causes the child to convulse and froth at the mouth. The crowds watch what Jesus does. Interestingly, instead of healing the child immediately, Jesus asks the father of the child for background information.

The father of the child no longer knew what to do and presses Jesus,

"... If it is possible for you to do something, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus responds, "... for him who believes everything is possible."

What is it that Jesus was looking for? Faith. Then the father who had very little asked for more-more faith: "I believe, help my unbelief." At the time of that prayer, the father of the child depends completely on Jesus. He believes that Jesus is strong enough and capable of helping him and his son.

Jesus makes the connection between faith and prayer when the disciples ask him why they were unable to cast out the demon: "*This kind of demons can only be expelled through prayer.*" When we pray, we believe (faith) that not only God hears us, but he also cares enough to answer our prayers. Stop reading right now and pray. When we pray, we choose to depend on God. In what area of your life do you need to depend on God? Pray. Pray. Ask to be able to pray with faith.

"True prayer is not a simple mental exercise nor a vocal performance. It is much deeper than that - prayer is a spiritual transaction with the Creator of heaven and earth." Charles Spurgeon

DAY 23 - MARK 10: 1-31

Wherever Jesus goes, he evokes intense reactions, even from the people who have time to see him work, like his disciples. They do not get bored of Jesus. They live in a constant state of amazement. This must also be our experience as we learn more of what Jesus says and does. In today's reading Jesus says: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

The disciples could not believe this, which is clear from their answer, "*Then, who can be saved?*" "

Instead of softening his teaching, Jesus recognizes that what is impossible for man is possible for God. God does the impossible and therefore you can be saved! This is an amazing statement full of life and hope. Although salvation (and a thousand other less important things) may be impossible for us, nothing is impossible for God. When our God does the impossible, people should respond in an "extremely amazed" way.

What are you trying to do in your own strength? Pray for God to do the impossible in specific situations in your life or with family and friends who need him.

DAY 24 - MARK 10: 32-52

While Jesus is focused on His sacrifice, on His imminent death and resurrection, James and John apparently believe that Jesus will go to Jerusalem to establish the kingdom of God on this earth. Naturally, they want to make sure they have a special place (of honor) in this kingdom. When the other disciples realize, they get angry. Do you see how Jesus' death contrasts with the ambitions of James and John? This episode illustrates how a spirit of competition threatens the kind of healthy Christian community that Jesus wants us to have - one in which we feel free to serve one another in His name.

Take time to ask God to show you how to live a life of service and sacrifice WITH the people of God, FOR the Kingdom of God. What are the specific ways in which He wants you to invest in the Christian community? Do it!

"The ways society measures success differs from the way in which Jesus leads us."

Eugene Peterson

DAY 25 - MARK 11: 1-11

Hosanna means salvation has arrived. Jesus is certainly the Son of God, the promised descendant of David, the Savior of the world! Salvation arrived, salvation came! The crowd shouted with as much enthusiasm and emotion as possible. This is how we should be. Salvation has come in Christ and for those of us who know him by faith, we should shout praises at the top of our lungs.

Whether you have come to faith in Jesus as a child or through a dramatic conversion experience, reflect on the circumstances of your salvation. Praise God for drawing your heart to Him and pray that He will continually renew the joy of your salvation.

"God hold us to that which drew us us first, when the cross was the attraction and we wanted nothing else." Amy Carmichael

DAY 26 - MARK 11: 12-25

This passage takes place in the largest area of the temple, the court of the Gentiles. When Jesus entered the temple, he was intensely disturbed when he saw the purchase and sale of sacrificial animals and the exchange of money under the approval and supervision of the priests. It was customary to put the market tables outside the Temple, but these tables were inside the Temple. By filling the court of the Gentiles with a market for the convenience of the Jewish people, the "insiders" did not supply the Gentiles "from the outside" to worship God. Jesus accuses them by exclaiming, "My house will be a house of prayer for all nations..." The house of God is designed (by its very architecture) to help the Gentiles to become children of Abraham. On a symbolic level with this act, Jesus indicates that there will be a trial against the religious leaders for preventing the access of the Gentiles to the Temple but it also predicts the judgment that would soon fall on the Temple, the city and the Jewish leaders who would crucify the Messiah.

Can you see how jealous Jesus is for us? For you? Do you feel passionately motivated to see the gospel accessible to today's nations? Ask God to show you which of your attitudes or behaviors may be preventing nations from praising the Lord freely in the church.

What is the role you must play for the gospel to reach people who have never seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?

"You have one business on earth – to save souls!" John Wesley

DAY 27 - MARK 11: 27-33

Jesus and his disciples enter the Temple once again where they meet the priestly leaders, the teachers of the law and the elders (together the 70 members of the Sanhedrin). The opponents of Jesus question his authority, *'By what authority do you do these things? Or who gave you authority to do them?'* Jesus answers with another question - a rhetorical instrument to rebuke and teach.

The counter question of Jesus puts religious leaders in trouble because in any case the answer will damage their reputations and their authority in front of the people. Therefore, because of the hardness of their heart, they refuse to respond to Jesus by saying, "We do not know." How often do you find yourself in a situation where you must admit that you were wrong and must repent?

When reading the scriptures, how often does obeying offend your sensibilities because it will be costly to do so? Pray that God will soften your heart so that he wishes to obey his word in faith. Who of the people in your life has not yet confessed that Jesus is Lord and has not believed that God raised them from the dead for his salvation? Pray that they will not harden their hearts toward Jesus as religious leaders did.

"When I cannot read, when I cannot think, when I cannot even pray, I can trust."
Hudson Taylor

DAY 28 - MARK 12: 1-34

In two commandments Jesus summarizes the whole purpose of the Christian life. When you ask what God's will is in your life, start here. When you ask what your focus should be, start here. If you follow these two commandments, everything else will fall into place. Let's examine it a little more thoroughly. Love God with all your heart: Focus all your affection, be completely satisfied in Him. Love God with all your soul: Depend completely on Christ for salvation, surrender every part of your life to Him.

Love God with all your mind : Study the Bible to understand it, use your mind to think only about things that please God. Love God with all your strength: Use your energy to spread the gospel, seek the glory of His name. Love your neighbor as yourself: Consider the needs of others before yours, take every opportunity to serve others to the best of your ability.

Do you really love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? What can you do to focus your love more on God in these areas? Do you love your neighbor as yourself? What can you do to put the needs of others before yours? Humbly and honestly repent for not loving God and others as you should. Pray that God will increase your love for Him and for others. Ask him for specific opportunities to love your neighbor as yourself today.

"The world has yet to see what God will do with a man completely consecrated to Him. With God's help, I aim to be that man." Dwight L. Moody

DAY 29 - MARK 12: 35-40

In this passage, Jesus finished answering a series of questions from religious leaders. Now He gives his adversaries a question about the correct interpretation of Psalm 110. Jesus' question reveals the ineptitude of Jewish religious leaders as teachers and the ignorance of what the Old Testament teaches about the true nature of the Messiah - the anointed one, promised by God for a long time.

Unfortunately, because the religious leaders were convinced that the Messiah would be no more than a man, they did not understand the meaning of the title "Son of David."

Contrast the reaction of the people to the teaching of Jesus. Verse 37 says, "And the people listened to Jesus gladly." Can you imagine what it must have been like to hear the Word of God in human flesh while teaching? Consider the following: In the Bible, we have the very words of Christ to be able to meet the risen Lord every day. What a glorious thing!

Pray that God continually reawakens in you a burning desire for His word to guide you to treasure the Scriptures as your life itself. In the Bible we have everything we need for life and devotion. (2 Peter 1: 3) Do you believe it? Does your life show that conviction?

"Fight for us, O God, that we drift numb, and blind and foolish into vain and empty excitement. Life is too short, too precious, too painful to waste on worldly bubbles that burst. Heaven is too great, hell too horrible, eternity is too long to putter around the porch of eternity." John Piper

DAY 30 - MARK 12: 41-44

While Jesus sees the activity of the people in the Temple, He observes many rich people giving great contributions and then observes a poor widow giving a tiny gift of two copper coins. She gives the equivalent of a sixty-fourth of a day's pay.

This story highlights the contrast between the false religious piety of the leaders and those who truly embody the faith (such as the widow). Jesus uses this episode to illustrate the radical difference between the world and the kingdom of God. While Judaism tended to emphasize the external demonstration of piety, Jesus urged the disciples to worship God internally (the heart) and externally (the hand). The widow in giving of her poverty shows that she loves God with all her heart, soul, mind and strength. It has a cost, but she happily gives everything she has. Are you willing to give everything you have, everything God asks of you? If it costs you the job, your lifestyle, ambitions, family, friends, your comfort? Could you consider praying to God to use you, your children and grandchildren to take the gospel to the 2.8 billion people who DO NOT have access to the gospel?

Writing to his parents from London before leaving for Africa, missionary Robert Moffat explains:

"Oh, that I had a thousand lives and a thousand bodies! All of them should be devoted to no other employment but to preach Christ ... I do not repent in becoming a missionary and, should I died in the march and never enter the field of battle, all would be well."

During his first license in England, David Livingston asked Mr. Moffat if he thought that maybe he could also be used in the mission field in Africa. Moffat replied, "Yes, particularly if you do not go to an old station but rather to unoccupied fields." And then he added, "In the north I have seen in the morning sun, the smoke of thousands of villages where no missionary has arrived."

DAY 31 - MARK 13: 1-2

Jesus prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, which happened in 70 AD, some 35-40 years after Jesus gave his sermon. Jewish believers heard this warning and were able to escape from the city before the Roman army arrived at full capacity. The believers relied on the prophecy of Christ and tried to convince the unbelieving Jews. People had forgotten, had not believed or were too busy to heed his warning. Very few listened, remembered and were ready. Brothers and sisters, it is our joy to serve a God who controls the future. Only Jesus, the God of heaven and earth, can predict these events.

As you read the rest of Mark 13, you will have the opportunity to believe the prophecy that has yet to be fulfilled in our day. Take time and encourage yourself to think about the proof of the deity of Jesus, also consider ways you can believe him both today and in the future. Today as you pray, ask God for more faith.

"We must allow the word to confront us, to disturb our security, to undermine our complacency and to overthrow our patterns of thought and behavior." John R.W. Stott

DAY 32 - MARK 13: 3-36

Watch out then! There are so many crazy people out there saying they know when the end will come. They give exact dates and make everyone see and wait and in the end they laugh. As a result, many laugh when preachers warn of the Lord's coming. The current events in the world and the scriptures that describe the signs of the second coming of the Lord are ignored, and we live as if there is no need for urgency or preparation. His word warns us against this! Here Jesus tells us clearly what we should do. No matter what you believe or what you think about the end times, you are asked to live a life ready for his coming:

"Be alert! Be on guard! Because you do not know when that time will come. ... What I say to you, I say to everyone: Watch! ... Therefore, keep watch."

This is Jesus who speaks, and not a crazy person on television very late at night. "If you live your life anxiously waiting for the return of Christ at every moment, how does it affect your plans, your routines, and your thoughts? What changes do you need to make to get ready for His coming? Begin your preparations. Ask God to give you the strength to die to yourself and live for Him.

"Bible teaching about the Second Coming of Christ was thought of as "doomsday" preaching. But not anymore. It is the only ray of hope that shines like an ever brightening beam in a darkening world." Billy Graham

DAY 33 – MARK 14: 1-9

Mary of Bethany represents us all. We come to God with a miserable gift. We are sinners, rebels, and we are far from Him. Even so we offer our life and in His mercy he saves us and preserves us from the judgment that comes, which we read in chapter 13. From Mary's gift, Jesus says "He did what he could."

Brothers and sisters, as you pray today, ask God to help you understand what you have to do to please Him. He is not asking you to do something that goes beyond your means, he tells you to do what you can. Others may be more skilled, richer, or physically fitter. This can be discouraging when you feel that no matter what you do, it will never reach the extent expected of you. We all fall short when we compare ourselves with others. Instead, be like Mary of Bethany and do what you can. Pray today for courage and determination to give your life as a gift to the Lord. Ask Him to show you what He wants you to do with everything you have, whatever you have.

"I wasn't God's first choice for what I have done in China ... I don't know who it was ... it must have been a man ... a well-educated man. I don't know what happened. Perhaps he died. Perhaps he wasn't willing ... and God looked ... and saw Gladys Aylward ... and God said, 'Well, she's willing.'" Gladys Aylward, missionary in China

DAY 34 - MARK 14: 10-52

The trial and execution of Christ was the greatest injustice in the history of mankind. However, as always, the sovereignty of God remained intact during all this. Can you imagine arresting and crucifying God in human flesh? It sounds very silly! Even so, Jesus explains everything to us, "That the scriptures be fulfilled." This whole horrendous story was planned. Almighty God had willingly offered His son to be arrested, tortured, and executed by the very men Jesus loved and came to save, rebellious men who loved sin more than God. We are not so different. We may not have personally crucified Jesus, but we are part of the story. Jesus died to fulfill the scriptures that say the gospel would reach people like us thousands of years later. It is true, many unjust things happen in the world every day. Disasters, diseases, and other afflictions affect us and those we love.

One day there will be perfect justice and there will be no more pain or tears. For now, surrender your problems to Jesus knowing that He cares and understands. Praise him for being sovereign in all things and thank him for the countless ways in which he has shown him His grace and mercy.

"The afflictions are light when compared to what we really deserve. They are light when compared with those suffered by the Lord Jesus. But maybe its real lightness looks more. It is clearly when compared to the weight of glory that awaits us." Arthur W. Pink

DAY 35 - MARK 14: 53-72

Even after Jesus warned Peter that he would deny it (Mark 14: 26-31), Peter slept in the garden, kept his distance in the judgment, and then denied even knowing Jesus. Probably we would lose Peter's trust and we would resolve to be far from Him, but Jesus is not like us. In fact Jesus instructs Peter to teach, feed, and care for his sheep (John 21: 15-19). God used Peter to reach thousands and thousands of believers. Peter's ministry led to the formation of the church, the primary way that Christ reaches people today. Jesus is not discouraged by his failures. Redemption is his specialty!

Admit your faults to Him and ask Him to use you as He did Peter. Remember that God is the Redeemer!

"My hope lives not because I am not a sinner, but because I am a sinner for whom Christ died; my trust is not that I am holy, but that being unholy, HE is my righteousness. My faith rests not upon what I am or shall be or feel or know, but in what Christ is, in what He has done, and in what He is now doing for me. Hallelujah!"
Charles Spurgeon

DAY 36 - MARK 15: 1-5

Pilate probably never found an accused man who did not deal to defend themselves, even when the charges were justified. Pilate had definitely never met anyone like Jesus. Peter writes in his first epistle that Jesus :

"committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2: 22-24).

Jesus, who had authority over everything, including Pilate and those who falsely accused him, closed his mouth and set his eyes on the cross. He does not react, he does not respond; Just keeps going with what he has to do. This is a God of great love! Jesus suffered the greatest pain without defending himself in order to offer you eternal life with him. Have you trusted him for your salvation? There's no other way.

Pray rejoicing in the good news that Jesus gave His righteous life for you, a sinner.

"The only works of justice that serve to justify a sinner are the works of Christ." R.C. Sproul

DAY 37 – MARK 15: 6-37

Today contemplate the indescribable suffering of Jesus. The pain of the cross, the indignity of slander, and the worst, the abandonment of his Father. Jesus was totally alone carrying the sin of the whole world and the pain of the moment. This is no small thing. Allow it to penetrate your head. This is a love that has not been seen or heard. The horror of the moment should make us feel much more grateful to Jesus for what He did for us. He endured being separated from God so that we could be accepted by God. He endured pain that cannot be named so we can gain eternal life with God in a place without pain. What mercy! What love! As you pray, consider what He suffered for you and allow your heart to be filled with thanks with humility because Jesus died for you.

"My sin in the past: forgiven. My current problems: covered. My future faults: paid in full, all for the wonderful, infinite, incomparable grace found in the redemptive work of the cross of Jesus Christ." Matt Chandler

DAY 38 – MARK 15: 37-47

Even in his death, Jesus marvels the people and proves his deity. His last breath and the events that accompanied it were so significant that the centurion who led the crucifixion proclaimed, "Certainly this man was the Son of God! The death of Christ moved the world; the rocks literally trembled and split (Matthew 27:51). The curtain that separated the Most Holy Place in the temple was torn from top to bottom, noting that Jesus is not only the Son of God, but also through Jesus we have access before God. No more sacrifices, no more circumcision, and no more human priests interceding for us. Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice, the ultimate mark of acceptance of God, the eternal mediator between God and man. What a great gift! Truly Jesus was, is and will forever be the Son of God!

As we have seen in Mark, there is much to praise and thank Jesus for. As we approach the 40th day of prayer, let us commit ourselves to praising him and thanking him each day for each of the wonderful things he has done.

"The gospel is this: We are even more sinful and flawed than we ever dare believe, yet we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope." Tim Keller

DAY 39 - MARCH 16: 1-7

He is risen! Jesus, the Christ, the Savior of the world, is alive today and reigns forever! Jesus, who showed his authority over all sickness, over all demons, and even over death, has proven once and for all that He is God in human flesh. The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of the Christian faith. In that you must put your trust today. Not in your circumstances, not in what you feel, not in another person or in a figure, but only in the risen Christ.

Set your eyes on Him, put your hope in Him, because He is alive and reigns at the right hand of the Father for the sake of those who love Him. The lyrics of this song are well summarized:

"Death could not hold you, the veil tore before You, You silenced the boast of sin and grave. The heavens are roaring, the praise of Your glory, for you are raised to life again. You have no rival, you have no equal, now and forever God you reign. Yours is the Kingdom, yours is the glory, yours is the Name above all names" (Hillsong, What a Beautiful Name)

Take a moment to praise his holy name! Finish your prayer time today with a song of praise.

"Outside of the cross of Jesus Christ, there is no hope in this world. That cross and the resurrection at the core of the Gospel is the only hope for humanity. Wherever you go, ask God for wisdom of how to get the Gospel in, even in the toughest of situations."
Ravi Zacharias

DAY 40 - MARCH 16: 8-20

The theme of amazement continues to the end of Mark. The resurrection of Jesus from death is the most wonderful thing of all. Even his closest followers had difficulty believing it. Before going to heaven, Jesus commands his disciples to go and share the wonderful story of salvation through him. He empowers them to do wonderful signs on his behalf so that others can believe the amazing news that He died the death that we deserved, rose from the grave on the third day to conquer death and sin, lives forever interceding for us, and offers life and salvation freely to all who believe in Him.

Pray for being able to feel daily for Jesus, so that others may come to know him through your words, attitudes, and actions. Take a moment now and thank Jesus for His word, his main method of communication with us. Thank him for these past 40 days and for what you have learned about his character. Now, more than ever, join others to declare His good news by encouraging other saints and by interceding for those who are lost. May you live your life only for His glory.

"Life is about Jesus. We are not here to tell our story, but His." Francis Chan.

AMEN.
