



My Faith and **FITNESS**
Devotional

40 Days to
Spiritual and Emotional
Prosperity

Crystal L. Cochren

"Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

JEREMIAH 8:22 (KJV)

The inspiration for me to write the ***40 Days to Spiritual and Emotional Prosperity Devotional*** occurred a few months after I created the My Faith and Fitness Blog (<http://My-Faith-and-Fitness.com>). I began writing this devotional in August of 2012. However, other pressing assignments prevented me from giving my full attention to continuing my writing until March 2013. God's timing is perfect. The purpose of this devotional is to focus on the spiritual and emotional fitness that only God can provide. When I was in seminary, one major issue that I noticed about my ministerial colleagues and myself was that many of us rarely made time to take good care of ourselves. Additionally, we did not eat right. Consequently, our physical health suffered. Writing the My Faith and Fitness Blog is a way to encourage my Christian brothers and sisters, especially my colleagues in ministry, to participate in self-care by making health and fitness a priority.

The format of this devotional is clear. Each day, I present a concept, a scripture and a few paragraphs discussing the topic. I conclude by encouraging you take steps to secure emotional and spiritual prosperity for yourself. My desire is to encourage you on your Christian journey. We have so many forces in our lives that seek to tear us down and demoralize us. While you are taking good care of your physical self, I pray that the ***40 Days to Spiritual and Emotional Prosperity Devotional*** will help the spiritual and emotional aspects of you prosper, as well. I pray that the entries in this devotional assist you while you engage in spiritual warfare. Be blessed.



40 Days to Spiritual and Emotional Prosperity Devotional
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<http://My-Faith-and-Fitness.com>

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~ Psalm 119:105 (KJV)

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Day 1: God Wants the Best for Us



“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”
~ John 10:10 (KJV)

Usually, we lack spiritual and emotional prosperity because we distrust God and God’s Word. Several places in the Word inform us that God wants the best for us. Yet, many of us cannot get to the place where we trust God. People in our lives who we have trusted have hurt us physically, emotionally or sexually. We are still dealing with the consequences of that abuse, neglect and rejection. We doubt that we have the discernment to trust the right people, so we trust no one, not even God. We have found that it is risky to trust, so we do not do it. We cannot achieve spiritual and emotional prosperity until we learn to trust that God wants the best for us.

This transformation does not occur overnight or in a week or two. This growth process of trusting God and believing the promises which are contained in the Bible is slow and methodical. We can begin the process by studying the Word daily. We should highlight or underline the promises contained in the Bible. When we read a promise with which we do not agree, we must analyze why we do not agree with that promise. The revelation about why we cannot believe the promise may not come immediately. If we pray and ask God to reveal why we do not believe, God will show us. The key is that we must be sincere and want to grow. Otherwise, we are just spinning our wheels and going through the motions and accomplishing nothing.

In today’s scripture, Jesus stated that He offers us an abundant life. Jesus is not referring to material goods. Jesus is not solely referring to life in heaven after we die. We, believers in Christ, can experience living abundantly on earth. Spiritually, abundant living involves peace, joy, and love, among other things that will be covered in the remaining 39 days. Today, let us begin the growth process of trusting God. Meditate on today’s scripture. Be blessed.

Day 2: Lord, Teach Me How to Pray



“Pray without ceasing.”
~ I Thessalonians 5:17 (KJV)

Prayer time is the occasion for God to talk to us. Prayer is interaction with God. Spending time in prayer is central to a believer’s life. Prayer time is not the time for a long monologue with us giving God a catalog of things that we want or think that we need. Prayer time is also the occasion for us to do intercessory prayer, where we pray on behalf of others.

A wonderful colleague and sisterfriend of mine, Rev. Dionne P. Boissiere, has the gift of intercessory prayer. She leads prayer on Monday mornings from 6:00 – 6:15 Eastern Time. Hannah’s Hour, as it is called, has been a tremendous blessing to me in a variety of ways. Getting up early while the house is quiet helps me to focus on prayer and hearing clearly from God. Spending more time in prayer with other women has given me more strength for my journey in ministry. I share this information because it is important for believers to pray together. In Mathew 18:20, Jesus said that where two or three are gathered in His name, He is there with us.

If you have the gift of intercessory prayer, I encourage you to share your gift as God leads. There is power in prayer. The effectual fervent prayers of the righteous avail much. (James 5:16) If you want to experience Hannah’s Hour, dial (712) 432-0080 and when prompted, use access code 384300# on Monday mornings from 6:00 – 6:15 Eastern Time. God will meet you there. Be blessed.

Day 3: Learning to Forgive Yourself



“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”

~ Psalms 103:12 (KJV)

One of the main reasons that we cannot prosper spiritually and emotionally is because we continue to abuse ourselves for the mistakes and errors in judgment we have made or the sins we have committed. When we begin to follow Christ, our sins are forgiven. We are a new creation. (II Corinthians 5:17) We still must deal with the consequences of our actions, but those consequences are separate from God’s forgiveness.

The adversary enjoys reminding us of the past. The enemy reminds us of the people we hurt and the lies we told. The consequences of our bad behavior must be addressed. We must seek the forgiveness of those who suffered, directly and indirectly, because of our misdeeds. Once we have sought that forgiveness, we must not wallow in the sins of the past. When we fail to forgive ourselves, we help the adversary in the attacks. We do damage to ourselves. We cannot move forward with God’s blessings if we do not know God’s promises to us. We cannot achieve prosperous living because we do not feel worthy of receiving God’s promises.

In our text for today, we see one of God’s many promises to us. Our sins have been removed from us when we give our lives to God. Our sins are erased from our lives when we repent and begin leading a life that pleases God. When we start to believe that God has forgiven us completely, we can begin to forgive ourselves. Forgiving ourselves is a vital part of the journey towards spiritual and emotional prosperity. We cannot reach our destination without forgiving ourselves. Start this process today and encourage others to do the same. Be blessed.

Day 4: Quiet Time with God is Necessary



“Be still, and know that I am God.”
~ Psalms 46:10 (KJV)

The 2013 season of Lent was a time for significant spiritual growth for me. During Lent, it is important that Christians place additional focus on our relationship with God. Many people “give up something” during Lent. I sometimes ask, “Will giving up _____ strengthen your relationship with God?” or “After Lent is over, are you going to stay away from _____?” If the answer to either or both is “No” then giving up _____ does not bring about spiritual benefits.

I decided that I would not “give up” anything, but rather, I would spend more time praying and studying God’s Word. That decision was a wise one. Consequently, I received much needed clarity on several areas of my life. For example, my career and ministry paths were clearer to me. I developed a greater appreciation for Jesus’ ministry. Studying the Gospels during that Lenten season gave me deeper insight and new perspectives on Jesus’ teachings. I grew in my knowledge and understanding of the Word. My faith in God increased. I was excited about other revelations God would make during the remainder of Lent! I decided to be still...with anticipation.

Although Lent is a fantastic time to focus on your spiritual growth, I want to challenge you to incorporate working on your spiritual health into your daily routine. Reading this devotional is a good start. However, as a Christian, studying God’s Word daily is imperative. Whether you are able to devote 15 minutes or several hours to study or able to study one chapter or several chapters, the key is to be consistent. Study everyday. If you miss a day, double your time or length the following day. Study with the goal of gaining a greater understanding. For instance, studying the Gospels at different points in your life may reveal different lessons. God will reveal lessons that you would not have been able to receive during your first or second or third readings. Your walk with God is a marathon, not a sprint. At the end of your journey, you do not want Jesus saying, “I never knew you.” (Matthew 7:23) Be blessed.

Day 5: Hearing God's Voice



“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”
~ John 10:27 (KJV)

Sometimes, it is difficult to hear God’s voice. Many distractions exist that prevent us from hearing and making sure that we have heard correctly. Strangers may speak a specific word to us that confirms what God has said to us in private. That specific word allows us to know that we did, in fact, hear God clearly and correctly. Oftentimes, God speaks to us directly during our times of prayer and fasting. In the midst of our busyness, God may tell us to “slow down” or use our energy in a more efficient manner. God also speaks to us indirectly through a series of events that God orchestrates to get our attention. Once God has our full attention, we can receive the message. Then, we must be obedient to the instructions.

During other times, God’s message to us comes during a dream. I make sure that I keep a pen and paper on my nightstand in my bedroom expressly for those moments. Even when I stay in a hotel, I make a point of placing a pen and paper on the nightstand. “Be ye also ready.” (Matthew 24:44) There have been numerous occasions where a dream has caused me to wake up in the middle of the night. Sometimes, I just need to write a sentence or two on the paper. That may have been all that God allowed me to remember. Perhaps, that was all that I needed to remember. On other occasions, I needed to recount the entire dream in my journal. The revelations are not immediate. I am still waiting for revelations on some dreams that I have had several years ago. One thing that I am confident about from the various messages is that God has a plan for my life. I do not fully understand the process or this journey, but I trust God. I know that God wants the best for me. I want you to know that God wants the best for you. God’s best for you is better than your best for you because God can see what you cannot see. Today, make a point to listen for God’s voice. What does it sound like? How does God speak to you? Does God ask you questions? Give you commands? What language is God using? Having the ability to discern God’s voice allows us to know when the adversary is attempting to distract us from the plans that God has for us. Enjoy your time getting to know God’s voice. Be blessed.

Day 6: *We Will Not Faint!*



“If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.”
~ Proverbs 24:10 (KJV)

In life, adversity is a certainty. Giving our lives to God is not a guarantee that we will live a carefree life. In fact, some of our problems will come *because* we follow Christ. When we become saved, the adversary becomes our enemy. The adversary wants to destroy us literally, by killing us, and figuratively, by killing our influence with others. We know from 1 Peter 5:8 that the adversary is as a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour. So, we must remain vigilant in the war for our lives and our souls.

God wants to use our lives and testimonies to attract more people to turn away from living sinful lives. The adversary attacks us so that our witness to the world is compromised. A compromised lifestyle or testimony makes our ability to convince people of the benefits of living a Christian life much more difficult. Our credibility is nonexistent. The adversary will attempt to convince us that the life we experienced before Christ is better, happier, sexier, etc. than a life with Christ as the center. To a new Christian, the adversary's lies can be appealing. However, several tactics can be used to combat those lies.

Consistent prayer, fasting and studying the Word are the foundation of building the strength for dealing with the adversity that is certain to arise. When we experience a problem or attack and our first thought is to worry, we will probably not achieve victory in that situation. When prayer is our last resort during hard times, we will have an even more difficult time being victorious in that circumstance. When the adversary lies to us, but we do not recognize the lie because we have not studied the Word, the fight is that much more taxing. Be the wise person and build your house on a sure foundation to withstand the rain, the floods and the wind (Matthew 7:24-27). They will come. Be blessed.

Day 7: You are More Important than Your Ministry



“And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” ~ Genesis 2:2-3 (KJV)

Even if you are not a member of the five fold ministry listed in Ephesians 4:11-12, as a follower of Christ, you have an assignment, which is your ministry. Most clergy members are “bi-vocational.” I was in seminary when I heard that term for the first time. Essentially, ministers who are bi-vocational have a secular job in addition to fulfilling their calling from God. This bi-vocational status leads to hectic schedules and little down time to relax. Despite the identity of working in the secular world and the religious world simultaneously, God requires us to make time to rest. No work. Additionally, we must refrain from activities that are not “work” but those activities prevent us from resting. When we burn the candle at both ends, soon we will have no candle.

When we fail to rest from our work and activities that keep us busy, we suffer. We suffer not only physically, but also spiritually and emotionally. Physically, lack of rest makes us more susceptible to becoming ill. Our body is not able to fight the germs because our immune system is at a disadvantage. Similarly, our spirit and emotions are not able to withstand attacks from the adversary when we have not gotten adequate rest. Consequently, our ministries suffer. Setting aside rest time every seven days may not be easy in the beginning. However, we must become vigilant in not only making the time to rest, but also protecting that time from activities and people who would prevent our much needed rest from occurring. We need to say “No” more often to those people and activities that would seek to rob us of our rest. Take a nap. Lie down and listen to calming music. Take a “mental health” day from work, if you are able. Review your schedule and make rest a priority during your week. God requires it. You will reap the benefits of being obedient. Be blessed.

Day 8: Seeking Wisdom



“For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.”
~ Ecclesiastes 1:18 (KJV)

Intuitively, one would think that increased wisdom would not equate with increased sorrow. Such is not the case. Wisdom opens our eyes, ears and understanding to events, situations and circumstances that we had not been aware of previously. When we actually see the emotional, spiritual, mental and physical states of our brothers and sisters, those both in Christ and not, the sorrow becomes palpable. Wisdom is a requirement for faithfully completing the assignments that God gives us. Without wisdom, we will repeat tasks over and over until we learn what we need to know. Without wisdom, we cannot move forward in life and receive the many blessings that God has set aside for us. There is always more wisdom to obtain. God is infinitely wiser than we could ever be. God does reveal wisdom to us and increases our capacity to receive more wisdom. We must want wisdom. We must want it for the right reasons.

The book of Ecclesiastes is attributed to Solomon. When Solomon became king of Israel, God appeared to Solomon and told Solomon that he would receive whatever he asked. Solomon asked for wisdom and knowledge so that he would have the ability to judge the people. (II Chronicles 1:6-12) Solomon wanted wisdom for an honorable reason.

One reason that I welcomed the opportunity to write this devotional is because I care about my people. I want all of my unsaved sisters and brothers to establish and develop a strong relationship with God. I want my saved brothers and sisters to develop a stronger relationship with God. Going to church one day a week with no Bible Study at home or at church in the interim does not bode well for having a strong relationship with God. I encourage you to study Jesus' doctrine, which is contained in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to begin your journey of gaining wisdom. Be blessed.

Day 9: We Need Joy



“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”

~ John 15:11 (KJV)

Joy is not happiness. Joy is a spirit. Happiness is temporary. Joy is long lasting. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23) We can only get joy from God. Oftentimes, we seek happiness in earthly things and beings and we think that we are seeking joy. Many of us shop, eat or participate in self-destructive activities in an effort to fill the void we have because we lack joy. Sometimes, our conduct results because we realize that something is missing in our lives. Another reason for our awful behavior is that we do not know what joy is and is not.

People can fake happiness. Joy can only be real. I know a woman from college who, by most accounts, was happy. In public, she always had a smile on her face. She always had a kind word for everyone who she encountered. Years later, I learned that she had been battling the spirit of depression while in college. She was faking happiness and faking it quite well, actually.

In the text, Jesus is teaching the disciples about Himself. Jesus explains that our joy can only be full when we possess joy from Jesus. Without Jesus' joy, we will have a void that cannot be filled by any substitute. We have so many issues with which to contend. We have to fight the adversary's attacks. We must fight the attacks on our personhood. For instance, the media's portrayal of Black women can constitute a daily assault on our spiritual and mental health and fitness. Additionally, we must heal from the damage done to us before and during our walk with Christ. I encourage you to pray about how you can receive joy. Analyze your life and the people in it. What impediments exist that prevent you from experiencing the fullness of joy? Only God can give us the tools so that we can receive the healing and joy that we need. Be blessed.

Day 10: Increase My Faith



“But without faith it is impossible to please [God]: for he that cometh to God must believe that [God] is, and that [God] is a rewarder of them that diligently seek [God].” ~ Hebrews 11:6 (KJV)

Many of us are stuck in spiritual and emotional immaturity because we lack faith in God. We either do not know God’s promises or we do not believe the few promises that we know. We do not recognize God working in our lives. We would rather give credit to the people in our lives for the good things that happen to us. Some of us believe in “being lucky” as opposed to being blessed.

When we place our faith in people, invariably, we will get disappointed, hurt or betrayed. God is the only one who will always work on our behalf. God is the only one we can depend on to never leave us or forsake us. (Psalms 27:10) Family members, spouses and friends are not guaranteed to be in our lives forever. People can, and will, leave us. Sometimes, we will mourn the loss of relationships. Other times, we will rejoice when a relationship ends because it had been toxic. When we mourn the loss of a relationship, we must ask ourselves why we wanted the relationship to continue. What benefits were we reaping? Why did God allow the relationship to end?

We must make a concerted effort to understand why those people are no longer in our lives. Perhaps that person’s presence stunted our growth. Maybe we stunted that person’s growth. Only God can reveal the reason for the separation and whether the separation is temporary or permanent. We should find solace regardless of the answer, because God wants the best for us. Be blessed.

Day 11: Much Prayer, Much Power



“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”
~ Matthew 17:21 (KJV)

Prayer is communication with God. Spending time in prayer is crucial. Prayer time is not the time for a long monologue with us giving God a list of things that we want or think that we need. Prayer time is the occasion for us to pray on behalf of others. Prayer time is for God to speak to us. It is a time where we can receive revelations and assignments. We cannot know exactly what God wants us to do in our ministries if we do not make the time to learn what our assignments are. The more time that we spend in prayer, the clearer the assignments become. When God gives us an assignment, God also equips us and gives us the capacity to complete the assignments successfully. Our aim should be not only to complete our assignments, but also to succeed in achieving God’s desired results. God will get the glory.

We can also receive godly power through prayer. We must pray for God’s power to work through us so that the people can be healed and become productive members of God’s community. Many of our sisters and brothers are dealing with brokenness. Broken hearts. Broken spirits. Broken lives. God wants to use us to heal the people. However, a lot of us cannot be used because we refuse to pray and spend time with God. We cannot be used because we cannot recognize God’s voice or direction. We cannot be used because we refuse to take instruction from the leaders that God has placed in our lives. To be clear, God has not placed everyone in our lives. Some of the people in our lives are placed there by the adversary. God can reveal those people to us so that we can discern how they are conspiring to harm us. A plan to harm us is definitely in effect, but we must be able to recognize their schemes to bring about our demise.

I encourage you to make the effort daily to spend more time in prayer with God. You are living below your potential by being distant from God. God has a lot to say to you. Be receptive to the messages and the assignments. Get clarity. Be blessed.

Day 12: Fasting is a Spiritual Discipline



“But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.” ~ Matthew 6:17-18 (KJV)

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that must be scheduled as a regular part of our lives. Many of us refuse to fast because we do not want to give up eating for any extended period of time. Some of us do not see or understand the benefits of fasting. Others of us do not study our Bibles to know what God requires of us. Because fasting is a spiritual discipline, the purpose of engaging in a fast is to develop a stronger relationship with God, to get our spirit aligned with the Spirit of God. We do not fast in order to gain a house, job or spouse or whatever else we may desire. The word tells us to “seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33)

We do not fast in order to refrain from unrighteous activities temporarily. I have heard people say that they are “fasting from cursing (or gambling, etc.)” That gives the impression that when the fast is complete, they will resume cursing or gambling or other unholy activities. We can fast in order to *stop* cursing or gambling, etc. The benefits of fasting are spiritual. When we incorporate fasting as a substantial part of our lives, we grow spiritually. We become eligible to receive the fruit of the Spirit of God, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. (Galatians 5:22-23) We can receive godly wisdom, discernment, knowledge and understanding. Additionally, the power of God can flow through us so that we can work to contribute to the Kingdom building process.

Jesus taught the disciples how to fast. When some people finally decide to fast, they broadcast that information to anyone and everyone who will listen. I always wondered, “*Why is that person telling me that he/she is fasting?*” At this point, I have come to realize that the person was not taught to keep the fast a secret. If the pastor declares a fast, anyone who is not participating in the fast does not need to be privy to that information. That over-sharing nullifies the benefits of the fast. You might as well go get something to eat because you “have received your reward.” Be blessed.

Day 13: When We are Angry with God



“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”
~ John 11:21 (NIV)

There have been times during my Christian walk when I have been angry with God. After careful reflection, God revealed to me that the anger stemmed from disappointment. I was disappointed that my life was not going in the direction that I had planned for it to go. I was disappointed because I was involved in relationships, familial, professional and personal, that were detrimental to my spiritual and physical health and emotional well being.

In today’s scripture, Martha is angry at Jesus for not arriving sooner. Martha and her sister, Mary, sent word to Jesus that their brother, Lazarus, was sick. Jesus did not come immediately. In fact, Jesus stayed where he was for two more days. With the messenger’s travel time to Jesus, Jesus’ two day wait and Jesus’ travel time to Bethany, Lazarus had been dead four days by the time that Jesus arrived. Martha expressed her anger. Disappointment in Jesus was one source of Martha’s anger. Martha knew that Jesus had the power to fix the situation. That knowledge is why she and Mary told Jesus that Lazarus had been sick. Jesus took that opportunity to teach Martha about the resurrection and show her Jesus’ power to resurrect the dead.

Maybe you have also been angry with God, once or twice. You cannot share your anger with everyone. Sharing with the wrong person could lead to that person giving you awful advice. Your relationship with God would suffer as a consequence of following that bad advice. Talk to God about your anger during your prayer time. Be honest with God. Tell God why you are angry. Cry. Lament. Get it all out. Then, wait. Wait for God to reveal the sources of your anger. The discovery may not come during your first session. It may not come for months. The revelation will come as long as you continue to seek the source of your anger. You will realize why you are angry with God. After the realization, you be able to remedy the problem. God will take the opportunity to teach you some things. Be blessed.

Day 14: Healing from Emotional Pain



“Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.”

~ Jeremiah 17:14 (KJV)

Many of us have experienced abuse, neglect and rejection. The abuse may have taken the form of a physical, emotional, spiritual or sexual assault. The perpetrators were usually someone we knew and trusted. For instance, statistics show that most sexual assaults on women are committed by a person who the woman knows. Others of us have lived with domestic violence during our formative years, either as victims or witnesses. Our mothers may have gotten beaten by our fathers or father figures. Our fathers may have gotten beaten by mothers or mother figures. Perhaps, our parents used to fight each other, both of them equally culpable of giving out the violence. We may have been involved in intimate relationship where we were abused. Maybe as children, we were abandoned and rejected by those we loved and trusted. We grew up in one or more foster homes with no one to love us.

After we become adults, after the bones heal and the physical damage fades away, we are left to deal with emotional scars on our hearts, minds and spirits. In our attempt to self medicate, we abuse alcohol, drugs and other substances. We may have even attempted suicide on one or more occasions. If we do not believe in God, one of the reasons that we do not is because we think that if God existed, God would have prevented those horrific things from happening to us. If we believe in God, we wonder why God allowed those horrible things to take place. I cannot answer that question. Christians like to quote scripture and tell us how “all things work together...” That scripture is true. However, we need more than a scripture quoted to us in passing to enjoy emotional healing and restoration. Only God can heal us of such deep emotional wounds.

I encourage you today to seek God to begin or continue the process of receiving complete healing and restoration. God wants us to be whole in all aspects of our beings. God loves us and wants best for us. Place your faith and trust in God. Be blessed.

Day 15: A Person Seeking After God



“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.” ~ Psalms 27:4 (KJV)

How thirsty are you for a strong relationship with God? What are you willing to give up in order to cultivate a strong relationship with God? Although God wants to be first in our lives, God will not force us to establish and maintain a relationship. God gave us free will. We are free to start, or not, any relationship that we desire with any person. How we exercise our freedom speaks volumes about what is important to us. How much time and energy we spend seeking after God and the things of God demonstrates how important God is to us.

Today’s text is one of my favorite scriptures. Everyday, I am seeking after what I desire of the Lord. My desire is to be in God’s will. When God called me to preach, I was not happy with the assignment. I did not want to do it. Despite my initial lack of desire for that assignment, I have been obedient to God and God’s call on my life. I am humbled to know that God has assignments for me. Additionally, my desire is to be in the presence of the Lord as often as possible. There are several blessings that can only be found when we behold the beauty of the Lord and enquire in God’s temple. We can receive the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23) We can receive gifts of the Spirit. (I Corinthians 12:4-11)

Life is about choices. We make choices constantly. You chose to download or print this devotional. You know what you are seeking from this devotional. Some choices are mutually exclusive. Sometimes, we can exercise multiple options simultaneously. However, we cannot be lukewarm towards God and expect to prosper emotionally and spiritually. God would rather us be hot or cold. (Revelation 3:15-16) Seek after God today and every day. Be blessed.

Day 16: Doing Ministry in the Midst of Mourning



“He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.” ~ Matthew 14:19-21 (KJV)

Even if you are not a member of the five fold ministry referred to in Ephesians 4:11-12, as a follower of Jesus, you have an assignment, which is your ministry. Outside forces seek to distract us from fulfilling God’s will for our lives. Times of mourning will come. We may mourn the loss of a life, a relationship or an opportunity for advancement in a career or with education. Sometimes, our most powerful contribution to kingdom building occurs during a process of mourning. Sometimes, our largest growth spurt happens when we perform ministry in the midst of our mourning.

In today’s text, Jesus has performed the miracle of feeding five thousand with two fish and five loaves of bread. Arguably, this miracle is one of Jesus’ most famous miracles. All you have to say is “two fish and five loaves” and most people know the reference. Christian cooks name their restaurants “Two Fish and Five Loaves” or “Five Loaves and Two Fish” because they want to send the message that they follow Jesus. We see from Matthew 14:10-18, that Jesus has just learned about the death of John the Baptist, who was his relative (Luke 1:24-36) and the person who baptized him (Matthew 3:13-17). After Jesus learned about the death of His dear friend, He went to a deserted place, but the people followed Him. Despite His state of mourning, Jesus “was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick” (Matthew 14:14). Later that evening, Jesus continued to minister to the crowd and fed them with the two fish and five loaves of bread.

Today, I challenge you to allow God to use you and your ministry, even in the midst of your mourning. Allow God to increase your contribution to the kingdom of God and the kingdom-building process. You may be surprised by what God can accomplish through you, if you are willing. Be blessed.

Day 17: Be Bold for God



“As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”
~ Joshua 24:15 (KJV)

We must be bold for God and God’s business if we are going to increase the kingdom. Becoming bold for God is a process. I am an introvert by nature. When I reflect on the assignments that I have completed, I notice an increase in speaking up and speaking out for God. I remember specifically during my first semester of seminary in the Fall of 2006 that a woman in my class was speaking so passionately about an issue of injustice. I said to myself at that time, “I’m not that bold.” By the time that I reached my final semester in the Spring of 2010, I was speaking quite forcefully and sincerely about the class readings and the injustices that we discussed in class. I did not notice the change until after graduation when I reflected on my time in seminary.

I did not decide to become bold. Rather, I decided that I wanted to be in God’s will. I wanted to be obedient to God’s direction. When we are submissive and obedient to God, we can be bold like Joshua was. In the text for today, Joshua gathered together the tribes of Israel and told them what God told him to say. Afterwards, Joshua declared that he had made his decision. He, and all those in his household, would be faithful and serve the Lord.

When we are bold for God, we can stand in front of anyone and everyone for God’s divine purposes. I encourage you to submit yourself to God’s will for your life, so that you can grow in boldness. Pray and ask God to reveal that divine will to you. You may be surprised when you learn God’s plans for your life. Be blessed.

Day 18: The Mind of Jesus



“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”
~ Philippians 2:5 (KJV)

We need to elevate our thinking. When we think about our lives, what comes to mind? What items, issues, situations and circumstances do we dwell on during the day? If we are concerned with worldly things or committing sin, we are thinking about the wrong things. If lying, cheating and gossiping are on our minds more than what we can do to increase God’s community, we need to take corrective action quickly.

Jesus’ mind was on teaching, preaching and healing. Jesus taught and preached about the kingdom of God and the characteristics necessary for a citizen of the God’s kingdom to possess. For example, we must do good works so that God will be glorified. (Matthew 5:16) We must exhibit righteousness. (Matthew 5:20) We must know how to engage in reconciliation with those from whom we are estranged. (Matthew 5:23-24) Possessing these traits will also help us navigate the troubles that we will face, the troubles that are guaranteed to enter our lives. Doing good works on behalf of God’s kingdom and for God’s glory strengthens us for the battles. When we know what God is capable of doing through us, we increase our faith in what God can do for us. The adversary will attack our faith in God by attempting to get us to doubt God’s power and authority. The enemy will try to block our good works in an attempt to weaken our faith in God’s call on our lives.

In encourage you to study the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to learn what Jesus considered. What did Jesus preach and teach about? What did righteousness look like from Jesus’ perspective? How does Jesus want us to live? The answers to these and many other questions that will develop as you study, will begin to transform your mind into a mind like Jesus had. Be blessed.

Day 19: I Will Bless the Lord at All Times



“I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.”

~ Psalms 139:14 (KJV)

We were created in God’s image and likeness. (Genesis 1:26) When we were still in our mother’s womb, God poured into us unique talents, skills and abilities so that we can carry out our tasks to enrich the kingdom. Sometimes, we need to remind ourselves of our uniqueness. Many of us have low self-esteem, which prevents us from realizing how wonderful we truly are. Abusive people in our lives have devalued us to the point where we have begun to believe their views. We do not love ourselves and cannot imagine why God would love us.

Some of us want to be like others. We want to do other people’s assignments. We want the blessings that others have because we either do not recognize our blessings or, in our minds, we see those other blessings as “better” than ours. We insult God when we do this. In essence, we are telling God that God was wrong when we were created. We are saying that God did not know how to handle God’s business.

Everyone is not meant to be in the spotlight and speak in front of thousands of people. Many of us must toil in the background. The background workers are just as important as the foreground workers. Some of us must write books, articles or blogs. Others of us are called to support the people in the spotlight with our talents for organizing, creating, managing, etc. Some of us may *want* to be in the foreground, but God’s plan is for us to work in the background. Likewise, others of us may *want* to be in the background, but God has called us to be in the foreground. In Scripture, Paul reminds us that we have many members in one body, the body of Christ, but everyone does not have the same assignment. (Romans 12:4) Praise the Lord for your distinctiveness. Be blessed.

Day 20: How to Talk to Yourself



“For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.”
~ Matthew 9:21 (KJV)

Some of us will not admit it, but we talk to ourselves. I can admit it. The issue is the content of the speech. Problems arise when we demoralize ourselves because we have low self-esteem. Our view of self may stem from internalizing the harmful media portrayals of people who look like us. In the United States, in particular, the media celebrates thin women of European descent with blond hair and blue eyes. If you deviate from this image, in any manner, you are treated as other and less-than. Additionally, abusive people in our lives, whether they are family members or romantic relationships, have verbally, physically or sexually assaulted us. Consequently, we do not feel worthy of God’s love and affection. God loves us and wants the best for us. We, however, struggle with believing it.

In our text for today, a woman is talking to herself in an effort to reach Jesus. This woman had a physical ailment of excessive bleeding from which she suffered for twelve years. Despite her pain, and seeming hopelessness, something within her knew that Jesus could provide relief. She could no longer endure the sickness. Although the text discusses a physical ailment experienced by this unnamed woman, the healing she received from Jesus can apply to spiritual and emotional pain and suffering, as well.

We must know in our hearts that if we can get to Jesus, we can be whole. We must begin to believe that God loves us and wants the best for us. As you talk to yourself today, make your way to Jesus for your healing and restoration. Make your way to Jesus so that you can learn the correct way to talk to yourself. Receive the healing that only God can provide. Be blessed.

Day 21: Dealing with the Consequences of Our Choices



“Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways.”
~ Proverbs 3:31 (KJV)

Oftentimes, our relationship choices are a source of pain. If a person is being abused, mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc., that is not godly. That’s a bright line rule. Abuse is cause for dissolution of a relationship. This is not a “cross to bear.” In marriage, for example, Ephesians 5:28 says, “In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.” This goes both ways. If a woman is abusing her husband mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc., that is not godly. Secondly, a wife who does not submit to her husband does not submit to God. If you do not submit to your husband, who you see, you will not and cannot submit to God, who you do not see. If God gives you clear direction and you either refuse or move slow or obey partially, you are not submissive to God. Partial obedience is still disobedience.

Aside from the abuse scenario, we women must take responsibility for the active role that we play and have played in our romantic relationships. Yes, God has forgiven us for our bad decisions. However, we must still deal with the consequences and repercussions stemming from our poor choices. I am not trying to be harsh. I know from experience. Yes, some people are not worthy of our time and energy. It goes both ways. If we see the signs, yet ignore them, we have no one to blame but ourselves. At some point, we gave the person our telephone number, email address, etc. At some point, we welcomed the communications. At some point, we allowed him/her to court us, however that courtship manifested itself. If we did not see the signs, we need to pray for wisdom and discernment and WAIT for God to reveal the person who was created to be a mate for us. We cannot be truly liberated until we are honest enough to say to ourselves, “That was a bad decision. I cannot do that again.” Once we say that, we are ready to deal with the consequences of those bad choices. If we pray, God can give us the wisdom and strength to move forward in victory. Then, we can make wise choices and we will be ready to deal with the consequences in an emotionally stable manner. Be blessed.

Day 22: Mourning in a Healthy Way



“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”
~ Matthew 5:4 (KJV)

We will each experience loss in our lives. Loss of life of the people we love. Loss of relationships. Loss of opportunities. How we deal with those losses is a reflection of the strength of our relationship with God. When we are in a period of mourning, God wants us to receive comfort. God can comfort us if we allow ourselves to be honest about how we feel about the loss. God can send people into our lives to comfort us and help us grow while we work through our state of grief. Discernment will enable us to identify people who are working with our best interest in mind.

We must be honest with ourselves and God about what we feel during these periods of mourning. Perhaps we had been the primary caregiver for loved ones who were terminally ill. When they die, we mourn the loss on one hand. Yet, we may feel relieved on the other hand. That relief may be a source of guilt. Take those guilty feelings to God. We may have been in a relationship, whether it was familial, personal or professional that we thought was mutually beneficial. When the relationship ends, we often wonder why the relationship ended and attempt to re-establish it. Only God can reveal to us the reason for the separation. Once we receive the answer, we must work through the process of acceptance that the association is done. The length of that process will vary based on the individual who is grieving and on the quality of the relationship that was terminated. When opportunities to advance in our careers or with education are gone, we often think that another similar chance is far away on the horizon. This is not necessarily the case. My experience has been that God blesses me with another prospect that was far greater than the opportunity that was lost. I had to learn how to wait on direction from God.

I encourage you to cast your cares upon the Lord because God cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7) You will grow stronger spiritually while you are in your period of mourning. You will grow in ways that may surprise you. Be blessed.

Day 23: Filling God's Space with God



“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers.” ~ Psalms 1:1-3 (NIV)

God wants to spend quality time with us. By spending time with God consistently by praying, fasting and studying God's Word, we grow spiritually. When we do not study, fast or pray or when we give a half-hearted effort to those endeavors, our relationship with God suffers. Also, we become stagnant in our growth and our walk with God. God does not want us to view this quiet time as a chore. We should want to grow spiritually. We should want to deepen our relationship with God. Our relationship with God is our most important relationship. Spending time with God must be a priority. Our success and effectiveness will be limited as long as we fail to make a point of investing quality time into our relationship with God.

Today's text lists some of the benefits of wanting to spend time with God and actually spending the necessary time to cultivate this important relationship. Just like the tree, we will be fruitful and be an asset to God's community. We will be able to carry out the assignments that God has given us. I have made a point of downloading a Bible app onto my iPhone and iPad. I wanted to make sure that I always had access to the Word without having to bring my hardcover Bible with me. Studying God's Word is that important to me.

I encourage you to analyze the quantity and quality of time that you spend with God. What impediments prevent you from increasing the quantity or quality of the time that you spend in praying, fasting and studying? How difficult would it be for you set aside a significant amount of time every day to developing your relationship with God? Make the effort for a daily investment into this relationship. Be blessed.

Day 24: Meditate on the Good News



“Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” ~ Philippians 4:8 (KJV)

In the age of over-sharing on reality television, social media venues and traditional media outlets, our senses can get bombarded by harmful images and events. We need to stay abreast of current events, but we cannot ingest so much damaging material that our spirits and psyches get weary. We should use a variety of resources for our education and edification. For example, going to church just on Sunday and hearing the sermon without taking notes will not assist in the process of spiritual growth. Spending time during the week without Bible study, either alone or in a group, is not going to contribute to us growing spiritually. Reading the Bible without the goal of studying it in order to apply it to our lives will not help us grow spiritually.

The text lists several items on which we should meditate. Without wisdom and knowledge from God, we will find it difficult to identify things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report. If we have only been exposed to deception and lies most of our lives, how could we know truth and honesty when we see it? If we have been victims of injustice, are we likely to exhibit justice? Perhaps we could. How would we know what justice looks like if it has not been modeled for us? In several passages in the Gospels, Jesus teaches us how to identify the items on this list.

I encourage you to study the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to learn what Jesus says about the things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report. Put your knowledge into action by sharing the good news with those who do not know it. Be blessed.

Day 25: Grow in the Word



“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
~ John 8:32 (KJV)

In many ways, the Bible is a sealed book. If we read a scripture passage when we are new to the faith, our understanding of that particular passage will change and become richer. As we continue to spend time with God in prayer, and the more often that we fast, the better equipped we will be to receive God’s revelations. God wants to know that we are trustworthy with the wisdom and knowledge that will be revealed from the Word. God wants to make sure that we can handle the truth. God wants to know that we can and will keep the secrets of the Kingdom. Some of the discoveries will surprise us. Other messages may dismay us. One thing that will be certain is that God will reveal truth to us.

The truth will make us free. So many people misquote this scripture and say that the truth will set us free. Being set free and being made free are two completely different constructs. My husband Dean preached this text once and used the following illustration. When the Civil War ended in the United States, the people who were enslaved were set free. They were no longer required to toil on plantations for no pay. However, for many of them, their minds were still in bondage. They continued to possess a slave mentality, however, as a result of generations of indoctrination. They resisted the efforts of others who attempted to liberate them mentally and physically. Many even joined with the oppressor to eliminate any potential liberators.

Jesus wants us to be made free. This freedom can only come from God’s Word because God’s Word is truth. If we pray and ask for revelation knowledge, God will reveal the particular method that we must use to obtain the truth that God wants us to know. God’s truth is not for the faint of heart. We must prepare ourselves through prayer and fasting for what God has prepared for us. Can you handle the truth? If you think so, God will determine whether you can or cannot handle the truth. If you can, God will prepare you to receive the truth. Enjoy the revelations. Be blessed.

Day 26: Be Made Whole



“When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?”
~ John 5:6 (KJV)

Jesus wants us to be whole. Wholeness cannot exist apart from God. Without God, we will constantly search for something that is missing from our lives. We will always experience the feeling of needing “more” but we will be unable to say what that “more” is. When God created us, God set aside a part of our beings that only God can fill. We attempt to fill that space. However, unless we fill that emptiness with God, we will continue seeking “more.” Before we know it, we will have spent years looking for fulfillment, yet finding none.

In the text for today, Jesus is speaking to a man who had been sick for 38 years. The man spent a large part of his life waiting to be the first person to get into the pool after the angel stirred up the water. The man could never be first to get into the pool. Jesus wanted to know if the man wanted to be made whole. Just because the man had the problem for 38 years does not necessarily mean that he wanted to get rid of the problem. Just because the man was near the pool does not necessarily mean that he wanted healing. Perhaps he wanted pity. Perhaps he wanted company in his misery. Jesus asked the man a direct question. Yet, the man did not give Jesus a direct answer. The question required a “yes” or “no.”

Jesus knows the state of our lives. We may be able to impress people with appearing to have it all together. Yet, we cannot give that impression to God. Jesus is asking, “Do you want to be made whole?” Make sure that your answer is “Yes.” Be blessed.

Day 27: *We Need the Holy Ghost*



“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” ~ I Corinthians 2:12-13 (KJV)

God is a spirit. We are spirits existing in fleshly bodies. Demons are spirits. We are engaged in spiritual warfare. It is possible for a demon to take up residence in a person’s body. We see many examples of demon possession in the New Testament. The demons did not take a break when Jesus ascended into heaven. In contemporary times, people we know, people we love, can house a demonic spirit. We need the Holy Ghost so that we can recognize the evil spirit in the person. Those people do not have to behave like Linda Blair did in “The Exorcist.” The situation is much more complex than that movie depicts. Just as there are different levels of angels, there are different levels of demons. When we were out in the world, before we received salvation, we were on the adversary’s team. We were not a threat to the adversary. When we received salvation, a low-level demon was assigned to us. We became a threat, but not a big threat because we did not know anything at that time. The more we study the Bible, fast and pray the greater threat we become to the adversary. Consequently, higher level demons get assigned to us. Why do you think people decide to talk about food around you when you are fasting? Why do you think that people who barely speak to you will offer you food when you are fasting? These are just two examples of how the adversary tries to prevent us from receiving spiritual benefits.

We need the Holy Ghost to dwell in us so that we can receive all that God has for us. The Holy Ghost will not dwell in an unclean place. If we possess a demon, we cannot receive the Holy Ghost. Many of us have given our lives to the Lord. We are a new creation, yet we have not been delivered. We need deliverance from unclean spirits so that we can receive the Holy Ghost. We cannot become spiritually mature without the Holy Ghost. Pray and ask God to give you the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Be blessed.

Day 28: Breaking Free from the Bondage of the Past



“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

~ Romans 8:2 (KJV)

Before we received salvation, we lived a life of sin. After we received salvation, we were in a position to receive the Holy Ghost indwelling. Among other powers, the Holy Ghost has the power to break strongholds and generational curses. One of the reasons that many of us engaged in sin was because of a spiritual stronghold in our lives that prevented us from living a victorious life. Even after we obtained salvation, many of us had the desire to live a holy and righteous life, but we continued to fall into sin. The spirit was indeed willing, but the flesh was weak. (Matthew 26:41) Without the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, we will not be able to live a holy and righteous life. Without the Holy Ghost, we will not become spiritually mature. Without the Holy Ghost, we will continue in the bondage of our past. We will continue to make the same mistakes and errors that we made prior to being saved. Yes, we are saved, but we need to be delivered.

The power of the Holy Ghost is the only power strong enough to keep us from falling into sin. The adversary does not want the Holy Ghost to dwell in us. The enemy will tell us that the power that was exhibited during the days of Jesus, the twelve disciples and the church in the book of Acts no longer exists. The adversary will have us believe that the gifts of the Spirit and the power of the Holy Ghost are things of a bygone era. If we do not study God's Word, we would believe that proposition. That is one reason why the enemy will attempt to distract us when it is time to study the Bible. The enemy would rather us be ignorant to the power that is available to us, if we simply ask God for it. In our asking, we must have the proper motives, however. We must want to receive Holy Ghost power and spiritual gifts so that God's people will be edified and God will be glorified. If we want spiritual power and gifts for selfish or improper reasons, we will be held accountable for any damage that we wreak to God's kingdom. Make sure that you have pure motives when you seek spiritual power and gifts from God. Be blessed.

Day 29: Keeping the Secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven



“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”
~ Matthew 7:6 (KJV)

When we spend time studying God’s Word, fasting and praying, God will begin to reveal things to us. Some things should be shared with other believers. Perhaps, you were given a word of knowledge to say. God will direct you. This is why discernment is so vital to the Christian walk. Most messages, however, are only for you and a select few. Some messages may require you to keep silent about what you have learned.

In the today’s text, Jesus is teaching His doctrine. Jesus warns us that if we share the secrets of the Kingdom of heaven with the wrong people, people who are unworthy of holy things, those people will belittle the information. Those people will also attempt to assassinate our character, thereby lessening our influence with others. I made the mistake once of sharing too much. Notice that it only happened one time. The pushback from the people that I shared with was immediate. I learned that there are some things that I need to keep close to the vest. Let my experience be a cautionary tale for you. Jesus’ doctrine, as contained in Matthew chapters 5-7, gives us important lessons about functioning in the world. This particular text is a warning to which we should heed.

I am not attempting to scare you. Many Christians fail to realize that we are engaged in spiritual warfare. People are dying daily, literally and spiritually, because the adversary has succeeded in destroying them through various means. Those who deny that spiritual warfare exists are either blind (they do not study the Word) or they are knowledgeable, but they are attempting to keep you blind and in bondage. We discussed on Day 25 that God’s Word will make us free. If you want the freedom that only God can give, continue reading this devotional. If not, you should stop reading today. The choice is yours. Make a wise decision. Your spiritual fitness depends on it. Be blessed.

Day 30: Weapons of Warfare



“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” ~ Ephesians 6:13-17 (KJV)

The adversary uses demons to attack us spiritually. Those demons will inhabit the bodies of people who will do the adversary's bidding. When we fight against the attacks, we are not fighting those people. Rather, we are fighting the evil spirits. Thus, we must use our spiritual weapons. In the natural, it is difficult to comprehend how truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and the Word of God can serve as our weapons. In the natural, we have guns, knives, bats, fists, etc., which serve as weapons for some people. Natural weapons inflict pain and injure other people. Some of us have seen and experienced the damage that is inflicted by people who use dangerous weapons.

Generally, we do not see the damage inflicted by the use of our spiritual weapons. If we do not see the results, we may wonder whether or not we are effective. First, we must have faith that we are using the weapons correctly. If we do not know the Word of God, we cannot wield our sword with finesse. Consequently, we may end up stabbing ourselves and damaging vital organs. Second, we must discern what actions we will take. Will we always be on defense or will we institute offensive measures so that we will operate from a position of strength? We must be able to do both.

I encourage you to become familiar with truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and the Word of God. Learn what God has to say about them. Learn how to acquire and use them to your advantage so that you will be victorious. Be blessed.

Day 31: Accessing the Gifts of the Spirit



“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.”
~ I Corinthians 12:4 (KJV)

God wants to give us spiritual gifts. Everyone does not have the same gift. Some people have more than one gift. The purpose of these spiritual gifts is to benefit the common good. We must put ourselves into a position to receive those gifts. Without the Holy Ghost, we cannot operate in these gifts. First Corinthians 12 lists the different gifts: word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking in different tongues and interpretation of tongues. God determines which gift or gifts we will receive.

From the day of Pentecost to the present, we have been living in the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. If the Holy Ghost dwells within us, we are in a position to have these gifts operate through us. We do not receive the Holy Ghost automatically upon salvation. At salvation, many of us still must be delivered from addictions. Many of us still need strongholds and generational curses destroyed. Additionally, none of these gifts can operate through us if we are spiritually and emotionally immature. None of these gifts can operate through us if we do not allow God to have the power and authority to work through us. God gave us free will when God created us. God will not force us to cooperate. God can attempt to work through us, but we can shut down the process. We can quench the Spirit.

As you seek to increase the Holy Ghost's presence in your life, pray and ask God to reveal which gifts God wants to give you. As you continue to seek emotional and spiritual prosperity, pray and ask God to use you and your gifts so that the people will be edified and God will be glorified. Enjoy the revelations. Be blessed.

Day 32: Producing the Fruit of the Spirit



“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”
~ Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV)

When the Holy Ghost dwells within us, we will exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. For instance, God’s definition of love is different from the world’s definition of love. Jesus admonished us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. (Mark 12:31) Some of us, however, do not love ourselves. This lack of love is evident in how we behave. We do not get enough rest. We do not eat healthy and nutritious food. We do not exercise. Self-care is one way that we show love to ourselves. If we do not invest in appropriate self-care, we will not be in a position to show love to our neighbor.

For some people, peace means the absence of war. For others, peace is equal to silence. For believers in Christ, we are always engaged in spiritual warfare. Clearly, peace for us cannot mean the absence of war. Sometimes, silence results because of tension in a relationship. If we are in a conflict with someone, we may decide to stop communicating with that person. In that case, the silence is not the result of peace, but rather, the silence is the consequence of strain.

Temperance, which is self-control, is important during those times that we are under attack. Our initial response may be that we want to lash out at our attackers. Sometimes, we must refrain from reacting immediately and wait for directions from God. Without self-control, our negative retort would be automatic and the situation would escalate.

I encourage you to learn God’s definition for each of the fruit of the Spirit. The more time that we spend seeking to produce the fruit of the Spirit, the stronger our relationship with God will be and the closer we will become to being more like Jesus. Be blessed.

Day 33: Exhibiting the Spirit of Peace



“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

~ Philippians 4:7 (KJV)

The ability to exhibit peace in high stress situations is a gift from God. We can have the ability to not only demonstrate this peace but also help others possess this peace. This peace can be obtained by knowing God’s promises and believing those promises. God promised to never leave us nor forsake us. When people leave our lives, we will not fall apart because we will know that we will always have God with us to comfort, keep and console us. When people betray us, we will not seek revenge because we will know that vengeance belongs to God. When individuals break our hearts, we will not think that the world is over because we will know that God is the lover of our souls.

We will surprise many people when we express the peace of God. Those who do not have a strong relationship with God will wonder why we are able to remain calm and unruffled. When confronted with a traumatic situation, we will choose to pray. Others will choose to worry. I know a woman who worries about everything. She has not established a relationship with God. She has not learned that she can cast her cares upon the Lord. She does not know that God is trustworthy. She does not know that God wants the best for her. Consequently, she does not have peace. Her spirit is restless.

I encourage you to reflect on how you have reacted to tense circumstances. When others are in your presence, do they see you exhibit the peace of God? The more time that we spend in God’s presence, the more likely we are to receive the peace of God and exhibit it during times of high pressure and urgency. Increase the depth of your study of God’s Word. Study God’s promises and receive them into your heart. Be blessed.

Day 34: Destroying the Stronghold of Self-Destruction



“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” ~ Romans 12:2 (KJV)

Sometimes, Christians participate in self-destructive behavior. Some of us continually spend more money than we earn. When we spend, we are not investing for our futures. We are consuming products that have a rapid rate of depreciation. Others of us enter unhealthy relationships despite knowing that we are making a bad decision. Still others of us sabotage ourselves from moving ahead professionally, financially, educationally or otherwise. A lot of us do not see that we have a problem. Many of us see that a problem exists, yet we are paralyzed as to how we can break the cycle. God wants us to break the cycle. God can break the cycle, but only if we allow God to have control over the problem areas of our lives.

Part of the problem lies in the fact that we may not see ourselves as worthy of moving ahead in our careers, financial life or academic life. Others have told us, that we are unworthy of God’s blessings. Sometimes, we tell ourselves the same things. When we study the Bible, we cannot identify with the individuals whose stories are featured. We have been brainwashed into believing that we must struggle constantly. Trials do exist. However, when the pain is self-inflicted, the pain is avoidable.

Another source of self-destructive behavior is external abuse from which we have not healed. In our attempt to self medicate, we indulge in dangerous activities. We want to fill a void that only God can fill. We are attempting to heal a wound that only God can heal. Although we are saved, we are not delivered. God wants us to be delivered. God wants us to walk in victory. We have to want victory for ourselves, too. If we actually want the victory, we will make every effort to be victorious. Nothing will be able to stop us. Let us renew our minds and get our minds focused on living a victorious life spiritually and emotionally. Be blessed.

Day 35: Rebuking the Spirit of Envy



“For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”
~ James 3:16 (KJV)

Before I discuss the way to rebuke the spirit of envy, I want to put jealousy and envy into proper perspective. Jealousy causes someone to be resentful of another’s success or blessings, whether real or imagined. That person does not necessarily act on the resentment. Envy, however, is an extreme form of jealousy. Envy can cause someone to actively seek the destruction of the object of the envy. It is important for us to know the distinction. When the spirits of jealousy and envy possess someone, we need discernment in order to recognize the problem. After we recognize the problem, we will be in a position to address the situation. When someone is jealous of blessings or perceived advantages that person thinks that we possess, we may not have to do anything at that moment other than pray for God to deliver that person from the spirit of jealousy. We must watch to see whether or not the jealousy morphs into envy. If the jealous person becomes envious of us, we must take a more active stance and rebuke that spirit. We must use the power of the Holy Ghost to rebuke that spirit. The spirits of jealousy and envy will also attempt to possess us. The enemy will speak to us about the blessings or advantages of others. The adversary will also attempt to use us to harm others by using thoughts, ideas and suggestions. In those cases, we must rebuke those attempts, in the name of Jesus.

In the text for today, James is giving instructions to his fellow believers for how to live a prosperous life in Christ. Confusion and evil are the results when envy is present among the believers. James encourages us to conduct ourselves different from how people who are in the world conduct themselves. In order for us to live in the manner that James discusses, we need the Holy Ghost to empower us with discernment. When we recognize the envy, the Holy Ghost will lead us in the appropriate way of rebuking that spirit. Watch and pray. Be blessed.

Day 36: *Victory in the Spiritual War*



“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” ~ Ephesians 6:12 (KJV)

We are spirits living in earthly bodies. In spiritual warfare, the adversary will possess people and cause those people to conspire to destroy the children of God. We must be clear that the fight is not with those people. Rather, the Holy Spirit that dwells in us fights the evil spirit that dwells in them. The Holy Ghost must dwell in us in order to achieve victory in spiritual warfare. Without the Holy Ghost, God cannot use us to cast out demons. Without the Holy Ghost, God cannot use us to break strongholds and destroy generational curses.

In the Gospel of Matthew 8:28-32, Jesus cast multiple demons out of two men. Jesus used one word, “Go.” Jesus did not touch the men. Jesus was able to achieve victory in that spiritual battle by His words. With the Holy Ghost, we can also win spiritual battles with our words. Praying, fasting and studying God’s word consistently will cause the power of the Holy Ghost to increase in us. When we have a controversy with people who seek to destroy us, we do not have to yell and scream at them. We do not have to curse at them and “fight fire with fire.” We fight this fire by asking God to rain on the demon that is within that person. We fight by rebuking those demons in the name of Jesus. We cannot fake spiritual warfare. Without the Holy Ghost, the demon may reply by saying “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” and cause that person to attack us. (Acts 19:15-16) That is not a good place to be.

We will win more battles when we learn to fight correctly. We will win more battles when we possess the proper weapons for spiritual warfare. I encourage you to keep your spiritual weaponry close to you. The battles are continuous. The war is always raging. Do not be a casualty. Achieve victory. Be blessed.

Day 37: Escaping Temptation



“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” ~ I Corinthians 10:13 (KJV)

God does not bring temptation into our lives. The adversary does. The adversary does not know everything about us. Oftentimes, we give the adversary more credit than the adversary deserves. Only God is omniscient. However, if the enemy knows our weaknesses, desires and yearnings, the enemy will attempt to use those issues to cause us to sin. God knows that the adversary will seek to tempt us. God, however, provides ways for us to escape those temptations. We must possess wisdom so that we can discern the trap and recognize the escape. This is a two-step process. If we do not discern the trap, we can fall. If we do not recognize the escape, we can fall. We must succeed in both steps.

Although the specific details of our lives vary, the same general themes can be found in our current situations and in the circumstances of the biblical figures. For instance, betrayal, adultery, lust, murder, etc. are all topics that are featured in the Bible. Loved ones betray one another. People cheat on their spouses. Individuals lust after the spouses and possessions of others. People kill one another using various methods.

When we are faced with temptation, we should study the Bible to see what lessons we can glean from the biblical figures that had to contend with a similar situation. We may not necessarily need to behave like the person in the Bible behaved. That person's story could be a cautionary tale to let us know what *not* to do. Some of the events in the Bible are lessons for us to learn from, not to imitate. We need discernment to know the difference. Pray for discernment so that you will know which action to take during your times of temptation. Be blessed.

Day 38: Let the Spirit Bear Witness of Us



“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” ~ Romans 8:16 (KJV)

When the Holy Ghost dwells in us, we have the ability to discern the spirit that dwells in the people we encounter. If the spirit in the other person is holy, the Holy Ghost will let us know that the other person is similarly situated. If the spirit in the other person is evil, the Holy Ghost let us know that must be on guard around that person. That person would harm us if given the opportunity. These are the only two options. There is no middle ground. We are either on God’s side or we are in bed with the enemy.

Once we receive the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, consistent praying, fasting and studying the Bible will increase the power of the Holy Ghost in us. Our discernment will be sharper. We will grow in wisdom and knowledge. People and events that used to fool us will no longer be able to dupe us. The enemy will no longer be able to trap us with the same pitfalls. The more that the Holy Ghost increases in our lives, the more subtle the adversary becomes. When we are new to salvation, we lack discernment. The enemy does not have to work too hard to get us distracted from our salvation journey. The more we grow in Holy Ghost power, the more difficult it is to sway us from the assignments that God has given us. The enemy must be more subtle and cunning in the efforts to destroy our witness and effectiveness.

Once you have received the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, pay attention to what God tells you when you travel. Be mindful when you meet new people. Pay attention to how people treat you. Just as the Holy Ghost will lead you, the Holy Ghost will lead others who are also filled with the Spirit. When you cross paths with other Holy Ghost-filled people, pay attention to what the Spirit says. Be blessed.

Day 39: Your Letter Will Be Greater than Your Past



“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”

~ I John 4:4 (KJV)

As we continue the work of strengthening our relationship with God, we will realize that our work is a life-long project. We can always draw closer to God. In so doing, God will draw closer to us. The more time and effort that we put into our spiritual and emotional maturity, the more attacks from the enemy that we must face. God has given us the manual for fighting these spiritual attacks. We know that we need the Holy Ghost to dwell within us so that we can begin to be equipped for spiritual warfare. We also know that the more that we study the Word, the more that God will reveal to us. Consequently, our wisdom and knowledge will grow. We know that despite our past sin and unrighteousness, we became new creations when we gave our lives to Jesus Christ.

The world will not be able to comprehend what is going on in our lives as we engage in spiritual warfare. There will be people in our lives who will mock us for what they view as our defeat. They will not understand that our “passive” stance is actually us allowing God to handle the situation and trusting God that the circumstance will resolve in our favor. As sure as you are reading this devotional, there will be folks who do not know Jesus from a hole in the wall, who will attempt to give you advice on how to proceed on your Christian journey.

Stay in prayer about your journey with God. Every event that you experience with God is not for public consumption. God will give you the victory over the forces that seek to bind you, deny you and delay you. Trust God. God is faithful to continue the good work in you until the day of Jesus Christ’s return. (Philippians 1:6) Be blessed.

Day 40: Building God's Kingdom



“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

~ John 7:38 (KJV)

As long as we are emotionally and spiritually deficient, the kingdom building process is not operating as efficiently as God wants it to operate. God needs mature workers to preach, teach and strengthen the saints. The people must be edified. Each of us must give an account of what we have done, and not done, in our service to God. What report will you give?

God can use us in mighty ways when we are spiritually and emotionally mature. Souls can be saved. Strongholds can be broken. Generational curses can be destroyed. People can be healed, delivered and set free from addictions. In the process, God will be glorified.

In the text, Jesus is speaking of the Holy Ghost that believers should receive. The Holy Ghost gives us power to perform the tasks that God has given to us. We cannot preach, teach and minister effectively without the Holy Ghost giving us power and revelation knowledge. The Holy Ghost will teach us all things and bring all things to our remembrance whatever Jesus has told us. (John 14:26) If we do not spend any time with Jesus, there is nothing for the Holy Ghost to bring to our remembrance. We have not listened for Jesus to speak to us.

I encourage you to continue the process of becoming spiritually and emotionally prosperous. God will honor your efforts to become the best that you can be so that you will be able to do God's work for God's glory. God will use you to do great things for God's community. Signs and wonders can follow us when we are spiritually mature. (Mark 16:17-18) Be blessed.

Contact Me



“We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.”
~ John 3:11 (KJV)

Please share your growth process with me. I want to know your testimony.

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