



FASTING GUIDE

Start the new year
by joining us in
21 Days of Fasting and Prayer.

January 1 - January 21

WHAT IS FASTING?

Simply stated, fasting is refraining from food or something you enjoy, for spiritual purposes.

According to the Bible, there are three duties of every Christian: give, pray and fast. Biblical fasting takes a lot of discipline and strength—strength which you can only receive from God. Your private discipline will bring you rewards in Heaven, says Matthew 6.

When you give God your first through fasting, prayer and giving at the beginning

of the year, you set the course for the entire year.

TYPES OF FASTING

Full Fast - Drink only liquids.

The Daniel Fast - Eat no meat, no sweets and no bread. Drink water and juice. Eat fruits and vegetables.

3-Day Fast - This fast can be a Full Fast, Daniel Fast or give up at least one item of food.

Partial Fast - A partial fast is from 6:00 am to 3:00 pm or from sun up to sundown. You can select from any type of fasting (a Full Fast, Daniel Fast or give up at least one item of food).

Specific Fast - You can also Fast from anything in your life that you enjoy on a regular basis such as social media, coffee, sweets, television, etc.

Remember to replace that time with prayer and Bible study.

Scripture References for Fasting

Matthew 6:16-18, Matthew 9:14-15, Luke 18:9-14

Relation to Prayer and Reading of the Word

1 Samuel 1:6-8, 17-18, Nehemiah 1:4, Daniel 9:3, 20, Joel 2:12, Luke 2:37, Acts 10:30, Acts 13:2

Corporate Fasting

1 Samuel 7:5-6, Ezra 8:21-23, Nehemiah 9:1-3, Joel 2:15-16, Jonah 3:5-10, Acts 27:33-37

Preparing Spiritually

Confess your sins to God. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of weakness. Forgive all who have offended you and ask forgiveness from those you may have offended (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3-4). Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ and reject the worldly desires that try to hinder you (Romans 12:1-2).

How to Begin

Start with a clear goal. Be specific. Why are you fasting? Take some time to consider the questions on the next page. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and write down what you hear.

Remember that it is the attitude of a heart sincerely seeking Him to which God responds with a blessing (Isaiah 58, Jeremiah 14:12, 1 Corinthians 8:8).

May God greatly bless you as you fast!

WHY SHOULD I FAST?

1. Are you in need of healing or a miracle?
2. Do you need direction on a particular matter?
3. Do you need restoration in your marriage or family?
4. Are you facing financial difficulties?
5. Is there a dream inside you that only God can make possible?
6. Are you in need of a fresh encounter with God?
7. Do you desire a deeper, more intimate and powerful relationship with the Lord?
8. Are you ready to have heightened sensitivity to the desires of God?

9. Do you need to break away from bondages that have been holding you hostage?

10. Is there a friend or loved one that needs Salvation?

11. Do you desire to know God's will for your life?

GALATIANS DAILY DEVOTIONAL

We invite you to take part in this daily devotional that coincides with January's message series, "Galatians." Read them on your own or with your family throughout this month and be inspired to draw close to God and each other through studying His Word. You will grow in your faith and discover more of God's freedom for your life.

**Join us on the Res Life Facebook Page
for further discussion!**

www.facebook.com
Search: Resurrection Life Church - Cadillac

January 1

Read Galatians 1:1-5

God's Rescue Plan

“Jesus gave his life for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live.” Galatians 1:4 NLT

When I was younger I used to imagine rescuing the damsel in distress. I would picture myself jumping onto a wagon and fighting off the bad guy and rescuing the girl. And of course, riding off into the sunset with her in my arms. Some of my favorite movies are the ones where the good guy saves the people from an evil dictator. Why do I love this concept? Because it is written on my heart.

The Bible is written on my heart. And the heart of the Bible is rescue. God speaks clearly through different stories of His heart to rescue people. From Abraham to Moses to Esther to Jesus, Gods heart is to rescue people.

God developed the perfect rescue plan for all people. He sent His one and only Son to save us from destruction.

“When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.” Romans 5:6-8 NLT

Aren't you thankful for God's perfect rescue plan found in Jesus?

Have you realized your need for a rescuer? If not, call on His name right now. He will come quickly and reveal Himself as the One Who rescues.

January 2

Read Galatians 1:6-10

What News Are You Hearing?

“I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to himself through the loving mercy of Christ. You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News” Galatians 1:6 NLT

Have you ever been off track? Have you ever followed the voice of the world rather than the voice of the Lord? It is so easy to get distracted by the world, all its news, all its teachings, all its misconceptions. The world is full of news and that news can be very convincing. A twisting of the truth (bad news) is more difficult to spot than an outright lie. The news is brought by radio, TV, social media, word of mouth; which all start with man. You see, we are the ones bringing the news, sharing the news and believing the news!

Paul writes to the church of Galatia because bad news was creeping into the early church. A different gospel was being preached amongst the people and trying to undermine the truth of the good news that salvation is a gift and not a reward for deeds. We cannot fall prey to the bad news, we must stay focused on the good news of Christ. We need to understand that no deeds must be done and there are no strings attached to the simple fact that we are sanctified (set apart and made holy) by the blood that was spilled on the cross.

What news has been distracting you from the Good News of Christ? Is your news feed full of the world or is it full of Christ?

January 3

Read Galatians 1:11-14

A Heavenly Message

“I received my message from no human source, and no one taught me. Instead, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.”

Galatians 1:12 NLT

Paul himself wrote those words and he didn't hold back in pointing out that he wasn't always a good guy. But things drastically changed in his life and now the creator of the universe itself is speaking to him and through him!

God wants to do the same with you. He wants to speak to you and through you. Are you giving Him that chance? To hear God, you need to spend time with him. There aren't rules on how much time, but it needs to be consistent. Any relationship that you want to develop needs that. You need to spend time in the Bible reading God's Word, getting to know Him and His character. As you know God better, you will learn how He speaks. While it's good to talk to God as you pray (He loves to hear your voice!), it's also important to take time to listen if you want to hear His voice.

God will begin to speak to you and you will probably realize that He already has been. Maybe He will speak through creative ideas, maybe through dreams and visions, maybe through promptings to do things (or not do something). As God speaks, He will also use you and the things He 'speaks' to you to bless others too. Just like he did with Paul.

Tell God that you want to hear from Him today. Spend time with Him. Get to know Him. Take time to listen.

“But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask.” John 11:22

January 4

Read Galatians 1:15-17

The Power of Grace

“But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by His marvelous grace....” Galatians 1:15 NLT

God knew what He was doing when He designed and created Paul... a driven, intellectual, over-achiever. Although the beginning of Paul's life was used to destroy the gospel, the power of God's unrelenting grace won! God always had an intentional plan for Paul's life. The very characteristics that made Paul a Christian's worst enemy, God intended to use as one of the most influential leaders in developing the Christian church after Jesus.

Just as with Paul, God didn't make a mistake when He created you! Every piece of you was designed and orchestrated with purpose. As God promised in 1 Corinthians 2:9, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him.” All it takes is surrendering your heart to God, whose motive is bathed in love. God isn't waiting to shame you for the choices you have made in your past. He certainly didn't shame Paul, a man who did far worse than you or I could fathom. Instead Jesus forgave him, accepted him, and gave him the honor of preaching the gospel all over the world.

One of the things I love most about Paul's story is after he had the most radical God-encounter, he followed the prompting of the Holy Spirit to seclude himself where the Holy Spirit could do a complete transforming of his mind. It was just him and God! It says in James 1:5, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”

Is there an area of your life you need God's wisdom and grace to do a transforming power? Don't hesitate. God is waiting with arms wide open, and like Paul, your life will never be the same when you fully surrender to the powerful love of God's grace!

January 5

Read Galatians 1:18-24

Extreme Makeover

“All they knew was that people were saying, ‘*The one who used to persecute us is now preaching the very faith he tried to destroy!*’ And they praised God because of me.” Galatians 1:23-24 NLT

Often times when I look at my life before Christ I think to myself, “That feels like another life...” I often wonder if Paul felt that same way. Christ radically transformed his life in an instant and Paul revealed it for all to see.

What better example of transformation than a man known for persecuting anyone who believed Jesus was the Messiah? And if a man like that can receive Christ’s forgiveness *and* be used by God to bring freedom to the world, imagine what He can do for you in your life.

You’re never too broken, too weak, too sinful, or too young to be used by God. Galatians 1:24 says they praised God *because* of Paul. They were compelled to know the grace of God and to be radically transformed by His love simply because of Paul’s testimony.

I hope you will share your story, too. Imagine how your testimony could minister to someone. Share it so others can draw closer to God more than ever before. Allow God to do it *again* in another person’s life.

Whom will you share your story with today?

January 6

Read Galatians 2:1-5

Protect Your Freedom

“Even that question came up early only because of some so-called believers there —false ones, really—who were secretly brought in. They sneaked in to spy on us and take away the freedom we have in Christ Jesus. They wanted to enslave us and force us to follow their Jewish regulations. But we refused to give in to them for a single moment. We wanted to preserve the truth of the gospel message for you.”

Galatians 2:4-5 NLT

What is central to you as a believer? Do you live your life trying to “do the right things” and merely focus on the external, or “works”? I believe that what needs to be central in every believers’ life today, central in the church, is Freedom in Christ! This freedom doesn’t mean we do whatever we want, but sets us free from bondage, our past, religious mindsets, and gives us the freedom to worship and live our lives sold-out for Jesus!

God desires for us to get to the place of knowing Him so deeply that we can walk as sons and daughters, with hearts that burn for Jesus. No longer slaves to law or religion.

As you go deeper in your relationship with God, the more free you will become in Him. Through this freedom comes peace, joy, patience, self-control etc.... because walking in true freedom is being led and filled by the Spirit. Don’t let anyone take this freedom from you.

Ask God for freedom today. He wants you to experience it!

January 7

Read Galatians 2:6-10

Created Equal

“And the leaders of the church had nothing to add to what I was preaching. (By the way, their reputation as great leaders made no difference to me, for God has no favorites.)” Galatians 2:6 NLT

When I read through this verse the first time I couldn't help but think that Paul was being indignant with his position compared to Peter, James and John (the “pillars” of the church). If we focus on verse six apart from the whole passage it is easy to miss that the focus of this passage is unity, not comparison.

The leaders of the church were able to recognize that Paul's gifts, style and talents would be more suited to spread the gospel to the Gentiles, while their gifts, style and talents were more suited for the Jews. They chose to “divide and conquer.” The division did not separate them from the same mission. It made them more efficient in accomplishing a common goal.

Sometimes we compare our Christian lives or ministries with others. When we divide into different areas of ministry, such as pastor, kids, youth, ushers, worship, missions, etc., we can get focused on what we are accomplishing individually instead of the Church as a whole. We must remain focused on the common goal of spreading the gospel of Christ using the gifts and talents God has given us.

If you are unsure of the gifts and talents God has given you, ask Him! Then ask Him to place you where you will best serve Him.

January 8

Read Galatians 2:11-13

Fearing People Is Dangerous

"When he first arrived he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy." Galatians 2:11-13 NLT

"Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the Lord means safety." Proverbs 29:25

"For they loved human praises more than the praise of God." John 12:43

I am reminded of a time where I needed the praises of man to be accepted. I wasn't accepted throughout my childhood (at least not for who I really was), so being accepted was a very big deal. It was difficult trying to make sure everyone liked me and I soon became exhausted and looked to God. He was calling me to stand out when I was trying to fit in. My whole life I had tried to fit in and I was created to stand out. When I received this revelation I couldn't get enough of my King. His praises were all I really longed for. The void had been filled. I was accepted by the only one who really mattered. The trap of needing man's acceptance had caused me to live like the world. I can't stand for Jesus while living for man! It doesn't matter who is around. I'm called to be like Jesus! He served everyone equally. He loved equally. People's lives are at stake and I can't afford to be like everyone else. He needs me to be the me He created from the very beginning! I am an original work of art, fearfully and wonderfully made! I don't need man's acceptance to be accepted by God! In fact rejection from people in the world IS acceptance by God.

Let's be like Jesus and serve everyone, without favorites and without reserve!

January 9

Read Galatians 2:14-16

Just Believe

“Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law.” Galatians 2:16 NLT

When Adam and Eve chose, in their own freedom, to open their understanding to “good and evil” at the fall of man, God set into motion a long journey of showing humanity that we can’t do it alone. I believe that was the primary intention of the many laws given throughout the Old Testament. Secondly, I believe that many of them were things God was warning us to stay away from, simply for the well-being of our lives. After all, He is the one who designed and created us. I think He probably knows what will benefit our lives best.

Fast forward to the passage we are reading today. The audience Paul was writing to was to the churches in southern Galatia, who were struggling to wrap their minds around the new conversion of Gentiles, by trying to make them conform to Jewish regulations. We know, today, that what Jesus did on that cross, nearly 50 years before this moment, met every requirement that the Jewish laws failed to attain. I can only imagine how difficult it may have been to shift gears from obeying strict guidelines, to having a personal relationship with God. But the struggle is one that we as believers may still battle with today. It would be so much easier to know exactly what to do or not to do, but God’s heart is to connect with ours in a relationship built in love and connection. That’s right. God loved you and opened His arms to you far before your heart desired to love or know Him. Now, His only requirement for our salvation is to believe the sacrifice Jesus paid for us to have access to this freedom.

Spend some time thinking about your own heart. Are there areas in your life where you are striving to gain extra points by “doing” instead of just “being with” our amazing and loving God?

January 10

Read Galatians 2:17-21

Alive In Christ

“My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20 NLT

Sometimes we live with the misconception that our lives should be perfect after we have received new life in Jesus. If our old self has been crucified with Christ, why do we still struggle with sin and old habits?

The answer is found in Galatians 2:20. “So I live in this earthly body....” Even though our hearts and minds have chosen to live God’s way, we still live in earthly bodies that struggle with sin. The verse continues on to say we live in our earthly bodies *by trusting in the Son of God*, who loves us and gave himself for us. This verse not only answers the question of why we still struggle, but also shows us how to overcome it.

We overcome the temptation of sin by trusting in Jesus, acknowledging that His way is better than our own, and asking Him for help.

“This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.” Hebrews 4:15-16

Every time we choose to follow Jesus’ example, we put our trust in Him. When we choose to react with kindness and patience instead of anger, we choose His way. When we put others needs ahead of our own, we choose His way. When we choose to love regardless of the circumstance, we choose His way.

Making the choice to live Jesus’ way will always lead us to peace in our own hearts *and* in our relationships with others.

What will your choice be today? Your way? Or God’s way?

January 11

Read Galatians 3:1-7

Don't Stop Believing

"Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you *believed* the message you heard about Christ. How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?" Galatians 3:2-3 NLT

And what was the message about Christ? It was simple. That the price was paid. They heard the good news of Jesus Christ, they believed, they received the gift of the Holy Spirit through simple belief. And now, performance/law keeping has crept in trying to convince them of the lie that they need to earn it. Relying on our works/performance quenches the Holy Spirit's ability to flow in our life. We receive because we believe!

It's simple. Childlike. Just believe. The gospel isn't complicated. The non-gospel of works/law keeping is hard, the burden unbearable. Hold onto simple faith. God gives you His Spirit, freedom, hope, grace... not because you work for it or deserve it, but simply because He loves you. The key to receiving this glorious gift is believing. Jesus told His disciples "Have faith in God...if you believe that you've received it, it will be yours." Mark 11:22,24.

It's easy to get caught up in doing. Fear tells us that we're not good enough, that we need to do more, or we need to do it better. In those moments, take a deep breath and just be. Be a child. Believe that you are loved, accepted, approved, justified, righteous, whole and complete, lacking nothing. Believe and you will open the door to wonder, freedom.

It was never about our doing, but always about what Jesus already did for you. Nothing more could be done that what He already did and to try to do it ourselves is an insult to His perfect, completed work. In gratitude and love, we believe and receive. In fear and doubt, we lean on our own strength to perform and earn love. Just stop it! Just let Him love you. That's what it's all about. Love. The Father never would've sent Jesus, never would've given us the Holy Spirit if it weren't for love.

Let it soak into your heart today. Believe it.

January 12

Galatians 3:8-10

We Are Blessed

“So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.” Galatians 3:9 NLT

I love the word “blessed!” I consider myself to be very blessed in many ways. The dictionary defines blessed as holy and consecrated. We tend to define it as God’s favor & protection, which is actually the definition of the word “blessing.” When Abraham received the blessing it was defined as righteousness or made right with God. Remember, Abraham didn’t have Jesus the Savior to die on the cross for him/his sins (Jesus came much later, Abraham lived in Old Testament times). Old Testament times had a lot of rules and customs to follow under the Jewish law in order to be made right with God.

Those customs would bring about God’s favor—God’s blessing—in the way of provision, protection, health, abundant harvest, and many other things.

What is it that you are in need of today? As a believer you share in those same promised blessings. Remember, you receive these by faith, not by anything you do. Open your heart and be ready to receive God’s abundant blessings for you today.

“And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” 2 Corinthians 9:8 NIV

January 13

Read Galatians 3:11-14

Gotta Have Faith

**“So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, ‘It is through faith that a righteous person has life.’”
Galatians 3:11 NLT**

Faith. We could spend months trying to define and debate faith. What it is or what it isn't. How it works or how it doesn't. What it does? I like things simple. I think we think too much about it without just letting faith be faith. I feel bad for faith sometimes. I think faith gets a bad rap. It is miscommunicated, misinterpreted and misrepresented. Faith is just a simple guy! He wants to be understood but more than that, he just wants to be *believed* in. And he wants to be experienced. Faith doesn't want to be just another business transaction. Faith wants relationship.

Faith is all about having a simple relationship. Faith is putting my trust in a God that I can't see, but I still believe that He is with me. And as I believe that He is with me and that He loves me, then I begin to see the evidence of Him all around me.

*“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
Hebrews 11:1 NKJV*

When I believed in Jesus I began to see the evidence of God in my own life. I felt clean. I felt hopeful. I felt encouraged. I felt loved. I came alive! By simply surrendering to Jesus and believing in Him a changed life has followed.

As we put our trust in Jesus, our faith will grow and we will see the visible evidence of the invisible God.

What are some ways that you have seen the invisible God work in your life?

January 14

Read Galatians 3:15-18

God Keeps His Promise

“God gave the promise to Abraham and his child.’ And notice that the scripture doesn’t say ‘to his children.’ Rather, it says ‘to his child’ — and that, of course, means Christ.” Galatians 3:16 NLT

Numbers 23:19 says, “God is not a man, so he does not lie. He is not human, so he does not change his mind. Has he ever spoken and failed to act? Has he ever promised and not carried it through?”

When we receive a promise from God we don't get a timeline. We don't see how or when the promise will be fulfilled. In the waiting we could get discouraged, but keeping our eyes on Jesus will keep us focused! Look at the timelines in the Bible. They would hear a single word from the Lord and then 400 years would pass before they heard another word. They had to go on that one word!

It can be hard to trust God when He speaks a promise to us. We often want several confirmations before we will believe it. But what if we heard His voice (which we all do) and responded with a resounding, "Yes, Lord, I believe and receive!" What if we stopped doubting if we actually heard Him or not and lived in hope, because we know our Father's voice and we follow it?

God's promises will surely come to pass, but it won't be in our timing. That alone is God's job, and our job is to keep moving forward in hope and expectation of the promise spoken.

Is there a promise God has given you that you have lost hope in? Confess and repent for disbelief. Then simply believe once again! Your promise is coming! Just like Abraham, your promise IS coming.

January 15

Read Galatians 3:19-22

I Am Free

“But the Scriptures declare that we are all prisoners of sin, so we receive God’s promise of freedom only by believing in Jesus Christ.” Galatians 3:22
NLT

This is such an encouraging word for me, because I am naturally a task-oriented person, and I’ve always worked hard at whatever I do in life. So I have struggled with trying to perform for God, trying to do everything just right to get the result I longed for: freedom and abundant life for myself and others. But as you may know, trying hard is never good enough. It’s frustrating and fruitless. The freedom I wanted couldn’t be obtained by any formula of working at it.

Jesus said this to his disciples when they asked for his “formula” of what they should do to be able to heal and perform miracles like Jesus did:

“Jesus told them, ‘This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent.’” John 6:29 NLT

Jesus saw through their request, knowing their motive was good, they wanted to give freedom and life, but they were looking for a method that would never work. Our verse above tells us the same answer Jesus gave. The ONLY thing we need to do to obtain freedom is to BELIEVE in Jesus.

The freedom we really need is freedom from the “prison of sin” like our verse says. No amount of good works or trying hard will get us free from sin that rules us. In fact, trying hard to be free from sin, trying to do good things on the outside, will only keep you bound ever tighter to the sin inside your soul. The only remedy is to surrender completely to Jesus and *believe* that he has already come to set you free.

Say this with me, "I believe Jesus makes me free on the inside, so I believe I AM FREE!"

January 16

Read Galatians 3:23-29

You Belong

**"And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you." Galatians 3:29
NLT**

Stop and let the gravity of this passage sink in for a moment. We have been released from the law, become children of God, and heirs to God's promises to Abraham. Those promises include a blessing, a great name, protection from curses, and blessings on those who bless you. (Genesis 12:1-3) All of this is granted to us by our faith in Jesus.

God invites us to be heirs with Christ and the key to His kingdom is our faith. With that faith we belong to a unified body with Christ. As Paul implies, race, gender, or position no longer matter when we are united with Christ. We will be one unified body. In Galatians 3:28 Paul tells us, "For you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Faith makes us part of His church, the Bride of Christ. Jesus gave His life for the church and will return for us someday. Be ready for the wedding day. You want to be part of the great wedding feast!

January 17

Real Galatians 4:1-7

I Am a Child of God

“Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.” Galatians 4:7 NLT

A slave is defined as “a person who is the legal property of another and is forced to obey them.”

An heir is defined as “a person inheriting and continuing the legacy of a predecessor.”

Think of these definitions in spiritual terms. A slave represents religion – a mindset that is focused on rituals and performance. An heir represents relationship – continuous access to our Creator and the opportunity to continue the legacy of Jesus.

The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you. Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, “Abba, Father.” For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children. Romans 8:11-16 (NLT)

Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you are free! You are a child of God and He has made you his heir.

Remember your “spiritual status” today. You are not a slave, bound by performance. You are a child of God, an heir. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, you will continue the legacy of Jesus, outlined for us in Matthew 28.

Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge: “God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20 (MSG)

As you go about your day, be aware of the people around you. Ask Holy Spirit for creative ways you can reach out to them and share the Good News of Jesus.

January 18

Read Galatians 4:8-11

Don't Go Back, Go Forward

"But now that we truly know Him and understand how deeply we're loved by Him, why would we even for a moment, consider turning back to those weak and feeble principles of religion, as though we were still subject to them?" Galatians 4:9 The Passion Translation

Nothing alarmed Paul more, than to hear that his beloved children who had been born of the Spirit, brought into the Kingdom of God, and made righteous, were now turning back to performance to try to earn the status they already had received as a free gift. Generations and generations of people trying their hardest to keep the law to earn righteousness with God (and failing miserably) should have shown the Galatian church that all of their best efforts would get them nowhere. It seems they were blinded to the goodness and the greatness of God's grace, and love and grace for a season, as we often are as well.

How often do we try to earn the love and acceptance that has already been freely given to us through our performance? Performance, whether it be for God, others, or ourselves, will never earn us a better spot than we already have. We are not homeless orphans standing on the street corner playing a tune to earn a few coins tossed in a bucket so that we can buy a crust of bread to fill ourselves. We are royalty, seated at a loaded table with the King of Kings, our Father. There is no better place or position than the one we have access to. We can sit down at the table and eat our fill with no shame, having full assurance that we belong there. Or we can stand off in the corner feeling like the orphan child and believing we must change our clothes, sing a better tune and have better manners to be able to sit at the table with this great King and His royal family.

We are the righteousness of God in Christ. (See 2 Cor. 5:21) We have been adopted, accepted, and given our own place at the table which no one else can fill. It is never God's plan or desire for you stand off in the corner, ashamed and disgraced, until you perform well enough to earn a seat at the table. His desire is to see you grow into the crown that He has placed on your head and own your position as a member of the royal family. Do you see Him smiling at you? You bring joy to His heart, just by being you. He made you on purpose *for a purpose*. And that purpose is love. Not performance. Not rules and keeping the law. Just pure love, poured out on you and flowing through you to the world around you.

Prayer: Father, let me see myself the way that You see me. Renew my mind so that I can know Your will and know who I truly am. Thank You for bringing me into the family and giving me my own special place at Your table where I can be filled. Let Your truth be planted in my heart and grow so that I can share it with others and bring more people to Your table. Amen.

January 19

Read Galatians 4:12-16

Have You Lost That Lovin' Feelin'?

“Where is that joyful and grateful spirit you felt then? I am sure you would have taken out your own eyes and given them to me if it had been possible.” Galatians 4:15 NLT

In verse 13 of our passage, Paul is reminding the Galatians that he had been sick when he first came to them to preach the gospel. But that didn't bother them, they were just happy to receive the Good News that Jesus died to wash away their sins.

Whenever someone receives the simple gospel with an open heart, the result is a “joyful and grateful spirit” like the Galatians showed to Paul. Difficult circumstances didn't change their joy.

But in verse 15, Paul is saying the Galatians are not joyful and grateful anymore - somehow they had started adding certain works and performance to the simple gospel of Jesus, and their freedom and joy started slipping away. The expectations they felt they had to fulfill for God became heavy and joyless. Instead of gratitude, bitterness crept in.

Whenever you start noticing life getting heavy and joyless and you're not grateful anymore, check your soul, because it usually means you are trying to perform for God and people. Trying to win approval through doing the “right things.”

The simplicity of the Good News (with no other expectations added to it) will always result in joy and gratitude and freedom.

Today, bring your heart to the Lord and release every burden and expectation and lack of joy or gratitude. He will take it from your shoulders and renew your joy and freedom in Jesus!

January 20

Read Galatians 4:17-20

The Motive Behind the Actions

"Those false teachers are so eager to win your favor, but their intentions are not good. They are trying to shut you off from me so that you will pay attention only to them. If someone is eager to do good things for you, that's all right; but let them do it all the time, not just when I'm with you." Galatians 4:17-18 NLT

I'm so thankful for the Holy Spirit! He leads us in the right direction. When we stay in relationship with the Holy Spirit we aren't easily deceived by the false teachers who only want us for their benefit. When we do good things we need to be doing them out of our response to Jesus' love for us, not just because certain people are around. That is not who Jesus was and that is not who we are called to be. We are to be like Jesus and do greater works than him and we can't do that when we are trying to use people for our benefit instead of valuing who they are.

James 3:13 says, "If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom." You are wise and you understand because you have a relationship with God! Out of this relationship you know the Father's voice and you will also know when a different (false) voice is speaking. You'll not be led astray by the false teachers because you stay connected to Jesus. Hold tight to him and you will not follow a false voice. Keep doing good out of love for Christ.

"So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up." Galatians 6:9

Keep your hearts right, serve only Christ, and your motives will be right in doing good. You can't go wrong when you keep Jesus at the forefront of all that you do. Let your motive always be Christ and your actions will follow. Keep going, you're doing great. Your heart is in the right place!

January 21

Read Galatians 4:21-27

A Joyful Heart

“As Isaiah said, ‘Rejoice, O childless woman, you who had never given birth! Break into a joyful shout, you who had never been in labor! For the desolate woman now has more children than the woman who lives with her husband!’”
Galatians 4:27 NLT

In the story of Abraham and his two children we see a woman who is barren and fearful because the promise of God was not being fulfilled. So Sarah took matters into her own hands to make sure Abraham's promise was fulfilled. However, it did her no good forcing it to happen, because God had his own perfect plan to multiply their descendants.

This is similar to the way we live our lives today. In the days of the Old Testament they had to follow the Law and this often required them doing things in their own strength to be “right” with God. However, we can now rejoice because we are no longer bound to the religious law, but instead we hold the grace and power of what Jesus has done for us all.

We no longer have to be perfect in our own strength because God sent us a perfect sacrifice. We don't need to be shameful of the mistakes we've made. God knew that sending Jesus to die for us wouldn't change us and make us perfect, but he did it

anyway. He did it to have relationship with us with no strings attached. He *a/ways* fulfills his promises in His perfect timing. It took thousands of years to fulfill the promise of the Messiah, but the reward of eternal life with our Heavenly Father has made that waiting worth it.

Trust God for his promises to you. Trust that you are holy, righteous and redeemed. Not because of anything *you* have done, but because of everything that Christ has done for you.

January 22

Read Galatians 4:28-31

The Power of the Spirit

“But you are now being persecuted by those who want you to keep the law, just as Ishmael, the child born by human effort, persecuted Isaac, the child born by the power of the Spirit.” Galatians 4:29 NLT

The power of the Spirit is a game changer. The Holy Spirit comes to live in us when we believe in and accept Jesus as Lord of our lives. But the Holy Spirit is so much more in our lives! It is like that still small voice in our everyday lives, comforting us, leading and guiding us.

Through the power of the Spirit our eyes are often opened to the everyday, unexpected miracles that happen in our daily lives. There have been many times where I have narrowly missed hitting a deer with my car, or having someone in a parking lot almost back up into me and I think, “Thank you Lord they didn’t hit me!” I often wonder how many other and perhaps larger things have I avoided? How often in the natural world we KNOW someone would never change their mind on an issue...and then they do. Or when there are so many reasons that something is not going to happen and then it does, and you really need it to or want it to....those unexpected miraculous things are a

direct result of the power of the Spirit moving! Your very own prayers can and will move mountains, I've seen it time and time again.

What are you praying and believing for? John 10:13-14 says, "You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!"

And keep praying. Remember to thank God for all the ways He has watched over you today, maybe even in miraculous ways that you aren't even aware of.

But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently. And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.
Romans 8:25-27 NLT

January 23

Read Galatians 5:1-6

Faith Expressed in Love

"For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, there is no benefit in being circumcised or being uncircumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love." Galatians 5:6 NLT

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:35

Throughout my life I've discovered that whether I am truly walking in freedom or still trying to do things in my own strength, the most important thing is how I am relating to people. We could be a people of great faith - healing the sick, influencing thousands of people, moving mountains, setting people free. We could give everything that we have to charity; but if the motive of ALL of this were not divine love, it means nothing in the sight of God. God *is* love. (Read John 4:7-10 and 1 Corinthians 13.)

Ask God to examine your heart. Then begin making LOVE your number one motive. Faith without works is dead, but faith without love is meaningless and ineffective. To know God is to truly know love. He wants you to experience His love so that you can give it to others!

January 24

Read Galatians 5:7-15

Serving to Love

“For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don’t use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.” Galatians 5:13 NLT

It is so profound to think that the God who created the universe is asking us to live in a relationship with him based on freedom (verse 8 & 13). Freedom can be a scary word for people who prefer lists to follow and laws to define how well they are performing. Not to say that these kinds of people are flawed, but what Paul was really addressing was the people who used this mindset to manipulate the truth, because their hearts were rooted in fear. They were unable to accept that “Christ had already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.” (Romans 10:4).

Just the same in the opposite direction, there is a fine line that the Holy Spirit led Paul to address: ‘not to use our freedom to satisfy our sinful nature.’ As we read earlier in

Galatians 5:1, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." I believe that this passage applies to both situations. The person who is burdened by the yoke of religion and the person who is burdened by making choices that cause emotional, physical and spiritual harm. What I love about this passage is the solution that God offers to help steer us away from the latter yoke of slavery. "Use your freedom to serve one another in Love." I believe this verse sums up God's intention of the 'true freedom' that Christ offers to us through his sacrifice - a freedom that is rooted in the desire to protect the heart of the one we love, our Creator and Savior. This verse is applied to the people around us in the same way. When our hearts are driven to protect the heart of our God, and then the people around us, we will make decisions that naturally reflect the heartbeat of our Heavenly Father - heart of love and thoughtfulness.

Are there areas in your life where you could improve the way you serve and love the people around you? Ask the Holy Spirit for specific ways you can serve the people closest to you in a way that would speak love to them!

January 25

Read Galatians 5:16-21

We Are In a Real Battle

"The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions." Galatians 5:17 NLT

The fact that we are in a real battle should be quite obvious to anyone that professes Jesus as Lord. However, many people walk through the battle oblivious to what is really going on around them. Many Christians think that because no hardships are coming at them like sickness, broken down car or appliances, relationship problems, death, or other hard times, that they are winning the battle against Satan. In the most

comfortable times Christians become complacent in fighting against the enemy. That is right where the devil prefers us to stay, but God is calling us out. Yes, God does want His peace to rest on us, but He doesn't want us sitting on the sidelines.

Matthew 11:12 says, "And from the time John the Baptist began preaching until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and violent people are attacking it." God asks us to GO and spread the gospel, which is the desire the Spirit gives us. The devil would be happy in your complete destruction, but he will also be satisfied with someone who will seek the comforts of this world. The Christian walk requires action and advancement against the kingdom of darkness. Don't be fooled by the comforts of the world. GO!

January 26

Read Galatians 5:22-26

Follow the Leader

"Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives." Galatians 5:25 NLT

Our verses today from Galatians 5:22-26 tell us about all the amazing fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. How often do we look at this list and measure ourselves against it? It may seem impossible or difficult to measure up. All that goodness is supposed to be in us? The good news is that before that list starts, Paul tells us this "fruit" is from the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God given to each one of us when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Have you ever heard the phrase "to put off your old self"? Our old self refers to our sinful nature outside of God. We can be pretty rotten in our own flesh; but when Jesus is Lord, the old is gone and the Spirit of God indwells in us. All we have to do is follow Him and let Him break off that old sinful nature and replace it with all the GOOD fruit. The

pressure is off. It's not an impossible task or checklist. Our old self and sinful desires will die and God's spirit will make our fruit grow. The fruit of the Spirit is the evidence of Christ's love in us and an out-pouring to all those around us.

What does that look like? If you think about a healthy tree, you see growth, blooms, fruit, seeds. Our lives should look like that healthy tree as we follow the Spirit's leading and all those around us will be able to enjoy the fruit as well. We are all in process and we will never be overnight perfection, but we start by letting God's Spirit lead instead of our own, and walk in it.

Father, you are so good! Thank you for sending your Son to make me brand new. Thank you for your Spirit to help me grow. Lord, search my heart and show me where I need to give your Spirit full control. Let me walk in your leading and speak life to those around me by being a carrier of good fruit.

January 27

Read Galatians 6:1-3

Can You Help a Brother Out?

“Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2 NLT

Meeting people where they're at can sometimes be a difficult thing to do for most people. Most people want to critique or change somebody on their own. When a brother falls into sin, I naturally want to correct them or tell them what they've done wrong. God actually calls us to forgivingly restore our brothers, saving critical comments for ourselves. This is learning how to walk in God's grace. As the church, we need to GO out to people, meet them in their struggle, not expect them to come to “our level.”

Is there anyone in your life that you can think of right now that you should try to meet where they're at?

God wants to restore lives, not condemn people. Ask God to give you a heart for people - to have His heart.

January 28

Stay Focused On Your Own Work

Read Galatians 6:4-8

"Let everyone be devoted to fulfill the work God has given them to do with excellence, and their joy will be in doing what is right and *being themselves*, and not in being affirmed by others." Galatians 6:4 The Passion Translation

It's easy to look at someone else's life and compare it to your own. This inevitably causes us feelings of pride, shame or envy. "I'm not as great as they are." "At least I'm not like them." "I wish I had their...." Unfortunately, I've often found myself in this position. Did it help me? Not for a moment. Comparison always causes us to lose the joy of what God has given to us and how He made us.

The flip side of comparison is that we find fulfillment in Christ and satisfaction in doing the work that He gave us. This also enables us to celebrate other people who we have compared ourselves to in the past. "Staying in your lane" is a beautiful way that we can honor God and say "thank you for the way that You made me and for the work that You gave me to do."

If we're living our lives searching and hoping for the affirmation of others, we will continually be disappointed. God never intended for people to fill the space in our hearts that longs for approval, affirmation and acceptance. Not only can He fill that space, it is His pleasure and delight to do so! After all, He is the one who designed us in the

beginning and He made no mistakes! He didn't want you to be someone else or do the work that they're doing. He wanted you to be you and do the work that He gave you to do.

"You formed my innermost being, shaping my delicate inside and my intricate outside, and wove them all together in my mother's womb. I thank You God for making me so mysteriously complex! Everything You do is marvelously breathtaking. It simply amazes me to think about it! How thoroughly You know me Lord! You even formed every bone in my body when You created me in the secret place, carefully, skillfully shaping me, from nothing to something. You saw who You created me to be before I became me! Before I'd even seen the light of day, the number of days You planned for me were already recorded in Your book." Psalm 139:13-16 The Passion Translation

January 29

Read Galatians 6:7-10

Work for a Good Harvest

"So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up." Galatians 6:9 NLT

"Choose your words wisely" is a familiar saying to many people. There is so much power in our words. The ability to produce life or death with every word we say. However, even when we choose life-giving words we might experience situations where our words fall on deaf ears. Be encouraged that nothing we do for the Kingdom of God is a waste.

Our job, as Christians, is to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Whether that be giving a hug, an encouraging word, an act of kindness, or sharing the gospel. We do these things knowing that we might not always see the harvest right away. We don't do these things for our own reward; we do them to make Christ's name known and because we have *compassion* for those who need to experience the love and power of God in their lives.

The world today is so expectant of *instant gratification*, and sometimes we expect God to work the same way. However, God has His own perfect plan with a set timing for things. And sometimes the seeds we plant in people's hearts may not always grow a harvest right away. Sometimes it takes someone else to come and water that seed, and then God will grow it (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). Don't grow tired from these life-giving opportunities. Although you might not see it now, God is working behind the scenes.

If you keep sowing life and truth into others, you will reap life and truth back into your life. Be encouraged; your blessing is on its way!

January 30

Read Galatians 6:11-14

The Power of the Cross

“As for me, may I never boast about anything except *the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Because of that cross, my interest in this world has been crucified, and the world's interest in me has also died.” Galatians 6:14 NLT

This world we live in is not our home. We are only passing through. It's easy to get enticed by what the world promotes as good or true or acceptable. And if you live long enough, you may even see those social norms, practices or beliefs change over time. Does it ever seem to you to be difficult to stay true to the cross?

We want to please people with what we say or do, but our faith comes from the inside. Paul is preaching here not to be caught up in the “practice of faith” or rituals of it, but to be transformed from the inside out. God does not want a legalistic faith. He wants to see us made new in the freedom only given to us when we realize the POWER of the cross!

The power of the cross IS freedom to live in obedience to God's word and to boast in its authority over this world. If we remain loyal to our world we have not submitted our hearts fully, nor can we experience complete freedom from bondage, pride, shame, fear....EVERYTHING that our Lord died to set us free from in our lives.

So....do you want to rely on your own power or the power of the cross?

January 31

Read Galatians 6:15-18

He's Making Me New

"It doesn't matter whether we have been circumcised or not. What counts is whether we have been *transformed into a new creation.*"

Galatians 6:15 NLT

That statement above is the freeing truth that we don't have to accomplish amazing things or gather large crowds of followers in order to "matter" in God's Kingdom. At the time Paul wrote this, some temple leaders were boasting about all the disciples they earned, and the proof was the many Gentiles they circumcised. So they were telling new believers that it wasn't enough to believe in Jesus, they also needed to be circumcised to prove they really were followers of Jesus. In our day, it would be like telling new believers they needed to graduate from some Bible school classes before their new life was valid.

But Paul has God's heart when he insists in our verse above, that the ONLY thing that matters is the proof of a transformed life. You don't need any other document or good work or proof that you've been saved. Once you believe in Jesus as your savior, He changes your life from the inside out. You've become a "new creation!" And that is more than enough.

Prayer: Thank you Lord, for making me completely new, even though I didn't earn it and I didn't deserve it. Forgive me for trying to earn with good works, what has already been given to me. Jesus, you freely gave me Your life and that's more than enough! All glory to You forever. Amen.