



SCGCHURCH

21 DAYS OF

PEACE

ISAIAH 26:3

INTRO

21 DAYS OF PEACE

PEACE. We all say we want it. But what is it really? Is it merely the absence of commotion or conflict? But then, when conflict inevitably arises around us, what does that mean for our “peace”? As we often use the word, peace seems relatively temporary and changeable. Our peace largely depends on the events happening around us.

The word the Bible uses for peace is *shalom*.

Shalom describes the world as God intended it to be: God, mankind, and all creation working together in harmony. Complete. And whole. It implies something more profound - an inner sense of stillness, trust, and contentment. It is more of a worldview than just a word.

Sounds nice.

But our world isn't like that. It's broken and we're broken. Instead of peace, we're at war. We fight against God and His plans even as we fight against the brokenness within and around us. Our lives are filled with relentless noise - constant mental chatter, stimulation, and constant pressure that makes us anxious, worn out, and depressed. One in three adults (and nearly half of all young adults) have experienced symptoms of anxiety and depression in the last year. Many of us bring a biological predisposition to worry with us into the world at birth, and some of us have had it trained into us by our families of origin and culture. Or maybe our life experiences have spun us up to a fever pitch where worrying is all too common.

Jesus has good news for us. Shalom—the peace He intends for us—is attainable. Here and now. We can have peace (the Biblical, unchanging, shalom kind of peace) in the middle of this broken world. We can come to a place of peace with our creator and because of that shalom we don't have to live anxious, worried, overstimulated, stressed-out lives. He changed all of that.

But just because Jesus changed everything doesn't mean He will come in and automatically fix it. Our journey towards peace is not just about ideas, it's about practice. He has work for us to do. And that shalom kind peace in a frantic world? It's not going to come easily. We're gonna have to fight for it.

He loves us. He created us for something better. He has given us everything we need to get there. And (this is the best news of all) He will be with us every step of the way. But, again, we've got to work, to fight, to rewire our brains and calm our souls. We've got to take the steps, build the habits, and actually USE the tools He's given to put us in tune with His rhythm for our lives.

You can experience shalom. Let's use the next 21 days to take the first steps of this lifelong journey together. With Jesus at our side, let's fight for peace.



PREPARING TO FAST

WEEK 1

ISAIAH 26:3

WEEK 1

We hope that the next 21 Days are the beginning of a lifelong journey towards peace for not just you, but everyone at SCG. Such journeys are nearly impossible to do alone.

That's why we're doing it together.

Before you start this journey, please take about an hour to consider and commit.

CONSIDER:

Use the following pages and activities to reflect. Each page will help you assess your physical, mental, relational, and spiritual health. What habits and practices do you need to either fully or partially eliminate (fast) from? What habits and practices can you add to build your health? That's what these activities are designed to help you figure out.

There are a few practices that we are encouraging **EVERYONE** to commit to (Digital Rest, Daily Time With God, and Social Media/Entertainment Fast), but we would also like you to consider additional habits and practices that are unique to your journey that can help you move away from anxiety and towards peace. We will explain all of this more clearly in the following few pages.

COMMIT¹:

Commit together with the rest of SCG to putting the rhythms of peace to work in your life. Many of your chosen practices will impact your immediate family and close friends. Let them know what you are doing, ask for their support, and maybe even invite them to join you on the journey.

The following activities will take about an hour to complete. You can do them all at once or spread them out over a few days this week.

Before you turn the page and dive into this time of preparation, please take 5 minutes to pray. Ask God to give you an open heart to fearlessly assess where you are and where He wants to take you over the next few weeks.

¹ If you are currently under the supervision of a health professional for a mental or physical issue that any one of these eliminations or additions could impact, we strongly advise you to discuss your plans with them before making the commitment.

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT: *PHYSICAL HEALTH*

CONSIDER:

Start with the following exercise. Close your eyes or focus on an object across the room. Take two deep breaths, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Become aware of your body. Start by actively becoming aware of the sensations emanating from your toes, then your feet, then your ankles. Move your attention up your body till you finish with the crown of your head.

How do you feel? Are there any body parts that are not working correctly or causing you discomfort or pain?

How is your health? Are you experiencing any sickness (either temporary or chronic)?

What routines (including diet and exercise) are you practicing that might be *negatively* impacting your health?

What routines (including diet and exercise) are you practicing that might be *positively* impacting your health?

COMMIT:

Below is a list of suggested practices. Please choose one or more that you can commit to doing or eliminating for the next 21 Days.

Eliminate:

Each item below can negatively impact your mood, sleep patterns, and overall health.

- ☐ Caffeine
- ☐ Specific unhealthy food
- ☐ Alcohol
- ☐ Other:

Add:

When applied appropriately, each item below can positively impact your mood, sleep, and overall health.

- ☐ Consistent bedtime
- ☐ Consistent wake time
- ☐ Specific food/diet
- ☐ Stretching and/or exercise routine
- ☐ Other:

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT: *MENTAL HEALTH*

CONSIDER:

How has your mood primarily been in the past two weeks (e.g., happy, sad, irritable, anxious, etc.)?

How has your mood affected your physical health? How about your relationships with others and with God?

On a scale of 1-10, mark your opinion of your mental health below
(1= Mentally Drained/Fragile, 10=Mentally Strong/Resilient)

$$\begin{array}{ccc} 1 & 5 & 10 \\ x & \text{---} & x \end{array}$$

Why did you rate yourself this way?

How much time have you spent on digital entertainment in the last week (social media, streaming videos, video games, YouTube, etc.)? How does it impact your mood when you spend time doing these activities? In what ways does it benefit you? In what ways does it detract from other important things in your life?

What are your cell phone habits? Where does your phone “live” during the day (ex., in your hand, pocket, or purse)? At night? Do you have consistent periods away from it?

COMMIT:

Below is a list of suggested practices that might bring you a few steps closer to being mentally strong/resilient. Please choose one or more that you can commit to doing or eliminating for the next 21 Days.

Eliminate:

Each item below can negatively impact your mood, sleep patterns, and overall health.

- ☐ Digital entertainment
- ☐ Nighttime phone use
- ☐ Other:

Note: We are asking EVERYONE to eliminate all digital entertainment (including all Social Media, Video Games, Television/Movies, and Streaming Apps) for the next 21 Days. We know. This is a BIG ask. It is going to be VERY challenging. You're going to have to let your social media contacts know they're not going to be hearing from you for a while. They're going to miss you. You're going to miss them. But we really think God can use this to change your life. We wouldn't ask you if we didn't think it was important. If you are not able to commit to a complete digital entertainment fast, please consider what limits you can put in place (i.e., only use one platform or type of media, or limit to 30 min per day). It's only 3 weeks. Make the sacrifice. You can do it!

Add:

When applied appropriately, each item below can positively impact your mood, sleep, and overall health.

- ☐ Downtime routine for phone/all tech
- ☐ Daily time of prayer and meditation
- ☐ Weekly 24-hour period of rest (Sabbath)
- ☐ Schedule regular times to talk with someone who is supportive
- ☐ Other:

Note: We are asking EVERYONE to set aside daily time to pray and meditate with God. The daily guide that follows includes instructions for each day.

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT: *RELATIONAL HEALTH*

CONSIDER:

Spend a few moments thinking about your relationships. Below we have listed four categories of relationships. In each category, list 0-5 people you talk with (either digitally or in-person) regularly (daily or weekly). If you have nobody that you interact with in a particular category, that's okay, just leave it blank.

Next to each person write a few words to describe the relationship (i.e., Lifegiving: That person makes me feel energized, respects my boundaries, is trustworthy, helps me achieve my goals, is present when I am struggling; Draining: That person drains my energy, is unsafe to be around, not trustworthy, manipulative, hinders my daily tasks, disrespects my boundaries).

Family Relationships

Work Relationships

Social Relationships

Church Relationships

Which of these people do you want to spend less time with? How come?

Which of these people do you want to spend more time with? How would that benefit you and them?

Which of these relationships do you consider to be most important (MIP=Most Important People)? How could you grow in each of these important relationships?

COMMIT:

Below is a list of suggested practices. Please choose one or more that you can commit to doing or eliminating for the next 21 Days.

Eliminate:

Each of the below is a suggestion for removing distractions that may be negatively impacting your relational health.

- ☐ Turn phone off or put it away while with your MIP's
- ☐ Turn phone off or put it away during meals
- ☐ Unwanted alerts from people who are not on your MIP list
- | | Other:

Add:

Each practice below has potential to positively impact your relational health.

- | | Schedule meals or trips to visit family/MIPs
- | | Schedule meals/coffee with close friends/MIPs
- ☐ Tech boundaries for communication with those who are not on your MIP list
- ☐ Tech alerts for MIPs and close friends
- ☐ Other:

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT: *SPIRITUAL HEALTH*

CONSIDER:

What are you currently doing to grow in your faith?

On a scale of 1-10, mark your opinion of your spiritual state below
(1= Far from God, 10=Close to God)

Why did you rate yourself this way?

Look at the list below. Are you more _____ than you were a year ago?
Check all that apply.

- ☐ Loving
- ☐ Joyful
- ☒ Peaceful
- ☐ Patient
- ☐ Kind
- ☐ Gentle
- ☐ Compassionate
- ☐ Self-Controlled

Why do you think you have grown in these areas you marked? In which areas do you want to grow in the next year? Why?

Spiritual habits: Please fill in the statements below with what you *actually* do, not what you *think* you should do.

I read my Bible _____ times per _____

I pray _____ times per _____

I serve _____ times per _____

I share my faith _____ times per _____

I give _____ % of my income annually.

Other: I _____ times per _____

How are the above habits impacting your spiritual health? Which do you want to change?

What other habits are you practicing that may be damaging your spiritual health?

COMMIT:

Below is a list of suggested practices. Please choose one or more that you can commit to doing or eliminating for the next 21 Days.

Eliminate:

There are many unhealthy habits or addictions that damage our spiritual health. If this applies to you, fill in the blank below.

- ☐ Habit that is harming my spiritual health _____
- ☐ Other:

Add:

Each of the below is a great way to grow in the area of spiritual health.

- ☐ Daily time in prayer and meditation with God
- ☐ Serving in a ministry or the community
- ☐ Write out your testimony and memorize your key points so you are ready to share
- ☐ Give 10% of your income (try it for the next 3 weeks)
- ☐ Spend an extended time in worship and prayer weekly
- ☐ Attend services in person at church weekly
- ☐ Gather with fellow believers for support on this journey
- ☐ Other:

Note: We are asking everyone to commit to spending time daily in prayer and meditation with God. The guide that follows will walk you through specific exercises for this. *IF YOU ARE IN ROOTED*: Your Rooted homework will replace the daily activities in this workbook. You can do the activities in this workbook and your Rooted homework if you choose!

COMMITMENT TO 21 DAYS OF PEACE

REVIEW YOUR ANSWERS ON THE PRECEDING PAGES. PRAYERFULLY CONSIDER EACH ITEM YOU WANT TO COMMIT TO AND THEN REWRITE YOUR COMMITMENTS BELOW.

For the sake of peace with my community at SCG Church, for the next 21 Days I commit to:

ELIMINATE

Physically:

Mentally:

Relationally:

Spiritually:

ADD

Physically:

Mentally:

Relationally:

Spiritually:



BEGINNING YOUR FAST

WEEK 2

ISAIAH 26:3

WEEK 2

DAY 1

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

Ground yourself in the goodness of God by sitting in silence and stillness for 5 minutes and practicing an ancient Christian practice called “Breath Prayer.” (See *prayer guide in back of booklet for Breath Prayer steps and instruction.*)

READ:

After opening your time in prayer, read the below:

Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalms 139:23-24

There's a saying, “You don't know what you don't know until you know that you don't know it.” Many of us walk around feeling anxious, stressed, or depressed, and we have no clue why we are feeling that way. Because we can't even identify the cause of our problem, we haven't got the slightest clue as to how to fix it! This week we will try, with God's help, to take some tiny steps towards identifying some of the sources of stress and anxiety in our lives.

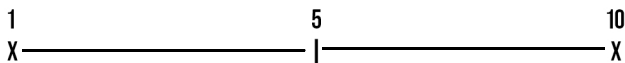
Warning: as you begin your fast, you may experience MORE discomfort than usual—LESS peace rather than MORE. This is NORMAL. As your body, mind, relationships, and soul detox from what you are eliminating and adjust to what you add, you will experience some growing pains. Don't give up. Keep taking the next step. If you falter or fail, pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and start over again.

It's Day 1. Let's get going.

THINK:

On a scale of 1-10, mark the level of peace/anxiety you have experienced in the past two weeks below.

(1= Extremely Anxious/Worried, 10=Extremely Peaceful)



Why do you think you are experiencing this level of anxiety or peace?

What have you done (either now or in the past) to decrease your anxiety and increase your peace?

APPLY

Make a conscious attempt to observe anxiety and stress when they arise today in a nonjudgmental way. Your only job today is to make a mental note when they come, not to feel worse for having anxiety. When you feel anxious, try to notice and observe what happens in your body (e.g., rapid breathing, clenched hands, sweating, increased heart rate, rapid thoughts). Notice when you feel stressed or anxious. Pay attention to the environment in which it happens and the contributing factors to the feelings. Record your thoughts in your evening reflection journal tonight.

Start practicing your commitments to eliminate and add for your physical, mental, relational, and spiritual health.

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with a time of prayer and reflection. We have included a simple guide at the back of this booklet. This practice is optional, but a HIGHLY recommended part of each day of this 21-day journey.

WEEK 2

DAY 2

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

Set a timer and take 5 minutes for Breath Prayer. If you need a reminder of how to do it, see the prayer guide in the back of this book. Choose a word/word pair today that differs from the one you chose yesterday.

READ:

After opening your time in prayer, read the below:

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Romans 12:1-3

Neuroplasticity. That’s a big word that means that YOUR brain *can* change.

We all have thoughts that occur routinely in our brains. If we have them often enough, these recurring thoughts actually make a physical “groove” in our brain: the cells in our brains physically connect to each other to make a pathway for a specific series of thoughts we routinely entertain. This means that our own brains can work against us to lock us into the negative thoughts we so desperately want to avoid.

But, neuroplasticity. God made us so that we can actually change our brains. We can learn to catch those negative thoughts BEFORE they embark on their merry journey through our brain cells. We can stop them before they go down their habitual path. And, just like an unused path through a meadow, new life (new thoughts and neural networks) will begin to grow over the old groove.

With God’s help, we can literally and physically “renew” our minds. What an incredible thought!

THINK:

The negative thoughts that lead to “grooves” of anxiety generally stem from one of 15 lies (or cognitive distortions) our brain tries to tell us. Place a check mark next to the distortions from the list below that you most commonly experience.

- ☐ **Filtering:** Ignoring the positive and only focusing on the negative.
- ☐ **Polarized Thinking:** Having an all-or-nothing mentality without any nuance.
- ☐ **Control Fallacy:** You think that you should be able to control every possible scenario
- ☐ **Lack of Control Fallacy:** absolutely nothing is under your control.
- ☐ **Fallacy of Fairness:** You assume that life should be fair.
- ☐ **Overgeneralization:** Because something happened once, it will now always happen.
- ☐ **Globalization:** Extreme overgeneralization. Makes an absolute law out of a single event.
- ☐ **Emotional Reasoning:** Interprets your feelings as TRUTH. “I feel this, so it is true.”
- ☐ **Fallacy of Change:** Expects (and demands) that others will change.
- ☐ **Shoulds:** You judge yourself or others if they fail to comply with your standards of behavior.
- ☐ **Catastrophizing:** Assuming the worst possible outcome.
- ☐ **Reward Fallacy:** Expecting repayment for self-sacrifice.
- ☐ **Always Right:** You must be correct. You are unable to admit or recognize being wrong.
- ☐ **Personalization:** You assume you are responsible for anything that happens or goes wrong.
- ☐ **Blaming:** Fault-finding. Your problems are all someone else's fault.

What are some recent examples of you “buying into” these fallacies and how did they affect your mood?

APPLY

Pay attention to your thoughts today. Try to “catch” any of the above cognitive distortions when you notice them. It might be helpful to jot down a note on your phone or in a journal when they pop up. When you feel anxious, observe your mental statements to yourself (self-talk). These thoughts are often short statements (e.g., “I’m not doing a good job, things will never improve”). Are there specific thoughts that come up more frequently than others? Write those thoughts down and just observe them when they come without judgment. Not judging yourself is very hard to do so take it a day at a time.

How did your first day go? Did you stay away from everything you’re working to eliminate? Have you done the things you want to add? If your answer is no, that’s ok. Today is a new day! Try it again.

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with a time of prayer and reflection. See guide at back of booklet.

WEEK 2

DAY 3

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

Set a timer and take 5 minutes for Breath Prayer. Try using a word/word pair that is different from the one you used yesterday. If you need a reminder of how to do it, see the Prayer Guide in the back of this book.

READ:

After opening your time in prayer, read the below:

"In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness."

Romans 6:11-13

Today might be one of the most challenging days of this 21-Day journey, especially if something in your "eliminate" category has been a significant part of your daily life. Day 1 was exciting. Day 2, the excitement began to fade. Today? Ugh. It's looking a little grim.

In the passage above, Paul describes a RADICAL, supernatural change. Jesus has taken something dead in us and made it alive. In living with Him, we are also taking something alive...and making it dead. As our souls come alive, our sin is being put to death. But sin has a hold in our bodies. It won't go down without a fight. *This is war.*

And the way we win the war? Offering. We take each part of our body that is a slave to sin, be it our eyes, our hands, or our brains, and offer them to God. Each part of you is dying. Each part of you is becoming.

Your body is dying to sin. Your body is becoming a live instrument of righteousness.

Pleasant? No. Worth it? Absolutely.

THINK:

You have been paying attention to your thoughts for the past few days. Have you noticed any patterns (look back at your journal if you've been keeping one for a refresher)?

Do you have recurring thoughts about yourself, others, or the world that your mind continually returns to? Notice them as they come up without judgement and build your self-awareness.

APPLY

Continue to notice cognitive distortions as they arise throughout your day. Today, however, when they arise, take a moment to pause and deliberately name them. Ex. You make a mistake at work, and your brain tells you, "Agh, I'm such an idiot! My boss will hate me and I'm going to get fired!" Pause. Look at this thought. Say in your head, "My brain is telling me a lie. I am catastrophizing. I am human and made a mistake I will learn from."

How are you doing in each area of your fast: physical, mental, relational, and spiritual? Are there any areas that are especially hard for you? Is there anything you need to adjust for today to stay on track?

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with a time of prayer and reflection. See guide at back of booklet.

WEEK 2

DAY 4

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

Set a timer and take 5 minutes for Breath Prayer. Try using a word/word pair that is different from the one you used yesterday. If you need a reminder of how to do it, look in the Prayer Guide at the back of this book.

READ:

After opening your time in prayer, read the below:

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

An athlete at the peak of their performance is simply beautiful. This is why we cheer when a hitter connects with a baseball and sends it out of the park, a diver enters the water without a splash, or a volleyball player smashes a kill. At the top of their game, an athlete is in complete control of their body. They assessed the situation and sent signals to each muscle. Every part moved precisely as they intended.

An athlete spends hours training their brain and body to get this response.

Why do we expect that mental and spiritual performance would be any different? Our souls are in our bodies. Our brains are in our bodies. We need to train our souls and our brains so that they can perform at their peak.

If we want them to do what we want, we must first connect with them. You've taken the first steps in connecting your soul to God with prayer. Today, we will learn a new exercise to better connect our mind with the body that God has given us.

THINK:

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

The first step in getting our bodies to do what we want is to connect with them. We need to pay attention to our body if we want our body to pay attention to our will for it. If we want our five senses to obey us, we first need to understand what our five senses are currently experiencing. The psychological term for this is called grounding. Right now, practice this simple exercise.

1. Take two deep breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth
2. Identify:

Five things you can see

Four things you can touch

Three things you can hear

Two things you can smell

One thing you can taste

How has this exercise helped you to become (even in this very brief timeframe) aware of your body and what it is currently experiencing?

APPLY

Practice 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding today. When you experience a strong emotion (negative or positive), take a moment to do the grounding exercise **BEFORE** you respond. Try to practice this at least 3 times today. As you practice it, notice how it impacts your thoughts and responses.

Continue with your eliminations and additions. It's Day 4, and you are well underway. Keep up the good work!

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with a time of prayer and reflection. See guide at back of booklet.

WEEK 2

DAY 5

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

Set a timer and take 5 minutes for Breath Prayer. Try using a word/word pair that is different from the one you used yesterday. If you need a reminder of how to do it, look at the Prayer Guide in the back of this book.

READ:

After opening your time in prayer, read the below:

"Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."

1 Timothy 4:7-8

Why are you doing this?

This week has been challenging. Did you find yourself staring at _____ (your empty coffee pot, your blank TV screen, the empty spot on your phone where your social media app used to live) and thinking, "WHY?!?"

One person walked the face of this earth and lived in perfect peace. In the middle of a feast? Peace. On a lake in a storm? Peace. Being mocked and beaten? Peace. Nailed to a cross? Peace.

Jesus lived a life of perfect peace and godliness. He wants to help us live that way too. And, He is **ABLE** to help us live that way.

Why are you doing this? Because you want to change. You want to become like Jesus. You want peace, even in the middle of a storm.

It's worth the effort. Under Jesus' direction, your efforts will pay off today, tomorrow, next week, next year, for your whole life, and for ETERNITY. The work you are doing right now will have an eternal impact.

That's why. Don't give up. *Keep going.*

THINK:

What thought patterns have you identified this week that you need to put significant effort into challenging? How are they impacting your life?

How did your grounding exercises go yesterday? Did they help you respond more positively in the moment? Why or why not?

APPLY

Continue to practice 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding. Aim to apply it 3-5 times as you encounter strong emotions throughout your day.

Continue with your elimination and addition commitments. If you've slipped up or forgot to do anything, pick yourself up, dust off, and try again.

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with a time of prayer and reflection. See guide at back of booklet.

WEEK 2

DAY 6+7

MORNING MEDITATION

Start your day off with 5 minutes of breath prayer. As you encounter the weekend, continue to use the tools we learned this week (notice and name cognitive distortions and practice grounding).

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with the evening reflection you practiced during the week. Take 5 minutes to reflect and journal the day's events that made you feel angry, sad, anxious, satisfied, and glad.



IN THE THICK OF IT

WEEK 3

ISAIAH 26:3

WEEK 3

DAY 1

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

This week we will learn a new prayer practice, called “Contemplative Prayer.” The point of this type of prayer is not to ask God for things or to accomplish anything other than simply being with God. You will learn to sit silently and calmly as you practice His presence. *(See Prayer Guide in back of book for Contemplative Prayer steps)*

READ:

After opening your time in prayer, read the below:

“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.”

Genesis 1:27-28, 31

Do you know why God forbids His followers to create and worship idols? An idol is an object that someone makes to represent their god physically. God tells us not to do this, because He’s already done it. He has created billions of images of Himself and set them loose in the world to be physical representations of Himself. People. All people are God’s image bearers. He made you. **In. His. Image.** YOU are made in God’s image to represent Him in the world.

Before going any further on this journey, we must remember this. When our brain feeds us unhelpful negative thoughts or cognitive distortions about ourselves, it is telling us lies about an image bearer of God. When our brain picks on us, it’s picking on someone God chose to represent Him in the world.

This is a big deal. Today, we are going to do an exercise in “Self-Compassion.” If you don’t like that description, call it “Self-Kindness.” Either way, we’d like you to approach it as an exercise in respect, empathy, and compassion towards one of God’s image bearers, who just happens to be YOU.

THINK²:

Mark the below statements with a numerical value from 1-10
(1=Never True of Me; 10=Always True of Me)

- ___ I try to see my failings as part of the human condition
- ___ When I'm going through a hard time, I try to keep my emotions in balance
- ___ I try to be understanding and patient toward those aspects of my personality that I don't like
- ___ When I fail at something important to me, I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy
- ___ When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier or better than I am
- ___ I'm disapproving and judgmental of my flaws and inadequacies

The first three statements are linked to high self-compassion, the second three to low self-compassion. How would you assess yourself overall in this area?

Respond to this statement: "People with low self-compassion are harder on themselves than on others." Do you think this is true of you? Why or why not?

APPLY

Start to treat yourself as a person made in God's image today. These three things are true of you, just as they are true of any other image bearer:

1. God wants you to be kind. God wants you to be kind to those He has chosen to bear His image. This includes yourself.
2. All humans suffer. Recognize that ALL image bearers suffer in a fallen world. You are not alone or unique in your brokenness; MANY are suffering alongside you. It is part of being human in a broken creation.
3. God wants you to be compassionate. Be compassionate to yourself in suffering. God wants us to pay attention to the suffering of those He has chosen to bear His image. This includes yourself.

How did you do with your elimination and addition commitments over the weekend? Are they getting easier to do or avoid? How are you feeling about your journey so far?

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with a time of prayer and reflection. See guide at back of booklet.

² This exercise adapted from Finding Quiet, (Chapter 3) by JP Moreland.

WEEK 3

DAY 2

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

Set a timer and take 5-10 minutes for Contemplative Prayer. If you need a reminder of how to do it, look at the Prayer Guide in the back of this book.

READ:

After opening your time in prayer, read the below:

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand— when I awake, I am still with you.

Psalm 139:13-18

Psalm 139 highlights three truths. First, God made you. Second, the way He made you should inspire awe. Third, God makes wonderful things.

You might doubt it, but God did a phenomenal job on you.

We show respect and love for the “selves” God has given us because we respect and love the God who made them.

Spend a few more minutes meditating on this thought by rereading Psalm 139:13-18 a few more times (slowly and thoughtfully).

THINK:

Your brain spends a lot of energy telling you what is wrong with you and your life. Let's pause on that for now and spend a few moments thinking about what God got right.

What are you good at doing? What are your best skills and talents?

What do you like about yourself?

What do you love to do?

Anything else you want to share (about how great God did on you)?

APPLY

Look at your above list. Take a few moments to compliment God on His work in making you. It will sound something like: "God, thank you for making me good at _____. You did a good job with that." Repeat for all the items you noted above.

Assess which things you're good at that you'd like to do more of and make a plan to do 1-2 of them this week. There may be some things that you haven't done in a while and it may take a few steps to re-engage with them, but take time today to make a plan and implement it.

Continue with your 21-Day commitments. If you get distracted, reset and try again without judgment. Remember that you're building a new muscle with these new routines, so it's normal to have some setbacks. What's essential is to reset and come back. You're doing great! We're in this together.

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with a time of prayer and reflection. See guide at back of booklet.

WEEK 3

DAY 3

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

Set a timer and take 5-10 minutes for Contemplative Prayer. If you need a reminder of how to do it, look at the Prayer Guide at the back of this book.

READ:

After opening your time in prayer, read the below:

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Psalm 139:1-6

So. It's Day 10 of our 21 Days of Peace. You've been working on your physical, mental, relational, and spiritual health through your elimination and addition commitments. You've been paying attention to your thoughts and recognizing cognitive distortions. Ready to try your hand at managing your thoughts? Today's the day.

First, let's understand what our thoughts are. Our thoughts are the stories our brain tells us about how the world works and our place in it. Our brain has one goal: to keep us alive and safe. It spends a lot of energy helpfully pointing out all the dangers that surround us, be they social (ex., "that person is angry with you, manage their anger so they don't cast you out of this community that provides you safety!") or physical (ex. "that car is about to hit you, run away!"). While many of the messages our brain sends us are both true and helpful, others are unhelpful and negatively affect our mood (be they true or false). We need to learn how to distinguish between helpful and unhelpful thoughts so that we can pay each the appropriate attention.

Helpful thoughts give you strength and motivation to live the good life God has called you to. Helpful thoughts are not always comfortable (ex., a thought that points out our sin may be both true and helpful, but it is not comfortable), but they move us towards God and a full and abundant life with Him. They inspire healthy forward movement in our spirit and relationships towards a life of peace and joy, and positively affect our physical and mental health.

Unhelpful thoughts are those that stand in the way of that. They are the thoughts that bind and trap us. They paralyze us, freezing us in fear, shame, and anxiety. They move us away from peace and joy. It is important to note here that some true thoughts can be unhelpful when we over-focus on them (ex., "I have a painful surgery coming up" may be true, but if it consumes our thoughts, it detracts from our life today).

Over the next few days, we will dive more deeply into a 4-Step Process that will help us better manage the energy we give to our thoughts. Here's a brief overview of the process:

Step 1: Acknowledge: Acknowledge and name the emotion or thought.

Step 2: Connect: Connect your mind to the physical sensations of your body. Seek to understand the story your brain is telling with the thought. Name the story.

Step 3: Engage: Move your attention away from the thought to the task at hand and fully engage your attention on that task.

Step 4: Review: Return your attention to the thought at a later time and examine how the strategies you used in Steps 1-3 worked. Plan for the next time the thought arises and make adjustments as necessary.

Remember this: God knows you. He knows your thoughts. He is familiar with them. He loves you, and He has a good plan that He is working out in your life. We cannot stop our brain from having thoughts, from telling us the stories it thinks will keep us safe. But we CAN manage the attention that we give to the stories it tells us. We can decide which stories deserve our full attention, which ones will move us towards God's plans for us, and which ones we simply need to acknowledge and move on from.

THINK:

What are some helpful messages that your brain routinely sends you?

What are some of the unhelpful messages it sends?

How capable do you feel of distinguishing between the two?

APPLY

Work to notice the stories your brain is telling you today. If you notice a repeated thought, see if you can classify it as helpful or unhelpful. Do this with 3-5 thoughts today. Record what you learn in your journal this evening.

Keep working on your addition and elimination commitments. You're doing great! Keep up the good work.

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with a time of prayer and reflection. See guide at back of booklet.

WEEK 3

DAY 4

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

Set a timer and take 5-10 minutes for Contemplative Prayer. If you need a reminder of how to do it, look at the Prayer Guide in the back of this book.

READ:

After opening your time in prayer, read the below:

My heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content. Israel, put your hope in the Lord both now and forevermore.

Psalms 131

There is a story about Jesus and His disciples you've probably heard. They're all in a boat and Jesus is sleeping as the disciples row across a lake. A big storm comes up, and the disciples panic. They wake Jesus up, He looks at the waves and wind, and says, "Peace. Be still." And the storm stops.

For some of us, there is a constant storm inside our heads. The waves threaten to overwhelm us and pull us under. Our most common response to this storm in our heads is to take it head on. To fight with our thoughts. We have a few "struggle strategies" we like to employ. These can include distraction (we lose ourselves in our social media feed, binge watch an engaging show, or numb with drugs or alcohol), avoidance (we consciously avoid the situations that bring up the negative thoughts and emotions), or we try to think the storm away (by worrying, endlessly strategizing, or fantasizing about a better life). The problem? These strategies have no impact on the storm or our place in it. The thoughts are still there. As soon as we stop struggling, they come back just as powerfully as ever.

Jesus has given us the ability to look at that storm and say, "Peace. Be still." Another way of thinking about Steps 1 and 2 that we introduced yesterday is called "Dropping Anchor." When we drop anchor, it's as if we've found a safe harbor in the middle of a storm. So even if our storm doesn't immediately go away, we can be at peace, even in the middle of it, knowing that our boat won't sink, He's in it with us.

DROPPING ANCHOR:

Step 1: Acknowledge

When you feel a strong emotion or have a recurring thought, don't immediately fight it or attempt to distract yourself from it. Look at it nonjudgmentally. Examine its parts. Name all the thoughts and emotions this "storm" is bringing up. Say things like, "I am having a thought that...." "I am feeling....." Once you've labeled one specific thought or emotion, move on to the next. Don't fight it. Don't employ any struggle strategies on it. Just look at it calmly (as if you are holding it in your lap) and acknowledge it. Do this until you have fully acknowledged the message your brain is sending.

Step 2: Connect

Connect your mind to the physical sensations of your body. Ground yourself. We taught you a tool for this last week called 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding. Do this. Connect your brain fully to your body. Then seek to understand the story your brain is telling with the thought. If it's a recurring thought or story, give it a name. Briefly describe the story's plot and give it a title. Something like, "Oh, this is the 'My co-workers are going to think I'm dumb' story. I recognize this one!"

This is a high-level overview of a simple exercise you can practice in hundreds of different ways. Try doing it as suggested, and as you gain experience with it, feel free to research other grounding and acknowledgement techniques. We have provided a list of suggested resources at the back of this guide.

THINK:

What "struggle strategies" do you routinely employ with unhelpful thoughts? In what ways do they help/hinder you?

Now that you've been paying attention to your thoughts for the past week, what is one recurring unhelpful thought or story your brain sends you regularly? What is the "plot" of this story? Write it below in one or two short sentences.

If you were to give a descriptive "title" to this thought or story, what would it be?

How does thinking about this thought or story in terms of its plot and title change its impact on you?

APPLY

Practice "Dropping Anchor" today. When you have an unhelpful thought, 1. acknowledge it by taking a moment, giving it your kind attention, naming it, and naming its parts. 2. Then connect by grounding yourself in your physical body and summarizing the plot of the thought. Give the story a title and acknowledge it. Do this for 3-5 unhelpful thoughts you experience today.

Continue with your 21-Day commitments. If you get off track, reset and try again without judgment

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with a time of prayer and reflection. See guide at back of booklet.

WEEK 3

DAY 5

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

Set a timer and take 5-10 minutes for Contemplative Prayer. If you need a reminder of how to do it, look at the Prayer Guide in the back of this book.

READ:

After opening your time in prayer, read the below:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:4-9

God has GOOD work for YOU to do in this world. He is working all around us all the time. God has a plan beyond our comprehension that connects all of humanity from the first person to walk the planet to the last one who will be born. And He has a special place set aside for you in that plan. You are a part of something huge.

And the tasks He has planned for you, since the foundations of the world, deserve your full attention.

This is why we must learn how to deal with our distracting (and sometimes crippling) thoughts. We're involved in important work (be it raising a child or fixing a car) and can only do that work well if we can focus our best energy on it. That's what the 4 Step Process is all about. It's about learning to give our thoughts appropriate attention and then returning our focus to the task at hand.

Today, we are going to focus a little more deeply on Steps 3-4:

Step 3: Engage

Move your attention away from the thought to the task at hand and fully engage your attention on that task.

Step 4: Review

Return your attention to the thought at a later time and examine how the strategies you used in Steps 1-3 worked. Plan for the next time the thought arises and make adjustments as necessary

Steps 1 and 2 taught us to “Drop Anchor” in a storm. Step 3 flows naturally from the first two. Once you have acknowledged your thoughts, labeled them, and grounded yourself, it’s time to move on. Turn your attention away from the thought. It may be helpful to speak to your mind (again, it’s trying to help you!), “Thank you for bringing that story to my attention. I understand your concerns. I’m going back to work now.” And then do it! Fully engage in the activity before you, whether reading a book or conducting surgery.

Step 4: Review is critical as you learn to employ this strategy. In this step, you return to the thought and how you dealt with it at a later time (maybe an hour or so after you’ve moved on). You examine the thought and the steps you took to address it. How did your strategies work? Do you need to change anything? Would a different approach to naming and labeling the thought work better? Is there a different grounding strategy that you could use? If it all worked great, stick with it! If not, figure out what you can change and try that the next time. Once the 4-Step Process becomes a habit, you may be able to skip Step 4. But in the beginning, you’ll need to include it every time.

Your unhelpful thoughts will most likely never go away completely, but they can become less “loud” with time and practice. Instead of allowing yourself to focus on them as you would if you were sitting in the front row of a movie theater (with the screen filling your vision and the surround sound drowning out all ambient noise), your brain can learn to treat the thoughts like a movie you’ve seen many times before, playing on the TV in another room of the house. It’s in the background. You can hear it, but it doesn’t occupy your attention as you focus on the important tasks God has set in front of you today.

THINK:

What does the statement, “God has a plan for the world, and He has a special part for you to play in it,” make you think or feel?

Why is it important to be able to fully engage in the tasks He has set in front of you?
What might be lost if you are distracted?

APPLY

Continue to “Drop Anchor” when you encounter unhelpful thoughts. Today, however, we need to add Step 3 (Engage) and Step 4 (Review) into the process. Apply the entire 4-Step Process today to 3-5 unhelpful thoughts/stories.

We are approaching the end of our second week of this 21-Day journey. How have your elimination commitments been going? Has there been anything in particular that it has been hard to give up? How about what you’ve added in? Has there been anything about it that you’ve particularly enjoyed?

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with a time of prayer and reflection. See guide at back of booklet.

WEEK 3

DAY 6+7

MORNING MEDITATION

Start your day off with 5 minutes of breath prayer. As you encounter the weekend, continue to use the tools we learned this week (notice and name cognitive distortions and practice grounding).

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with the evening reflection you practiced during the week. Take 5 minutes to reflect and journal the day's events that made you feel angry, sad, anxious, satisfied, and glad.



APPROACHING THE END

WEEK 4

ISAIAH 26:3

WEEK 4

DAY 1

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

This week we will learn to pray prayers of Gratitude. This may be one of the most transformative parts of this 21-day journey. Turn to the Prayer Guide at the back of this book to get started.

READ:

After opening your time in prayer, read the below:

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:12-13

"How are you doing today?" she asks.

"Good! How about yourself?" he replies.

This exchange is about as common as air. Nobody expects any answer other than "Good!" when we ask the question. Most of the time, we give it as a response without even thinking about it.

But what if it were true? Isn't that what we're aiming at? Being "Good?"

If you've thought about it, you know it's not a realistic or healthy goal to ALWAYS have a full belly, sit comfortably, and feel happy. A little (and even sometimes a lot of) stress, hunger, or discomfort is healthy for us. If we re-routed our lives every time an uncomfortable thought or situation arose, we'd find ourselves in a terribly unhealthy place. So if it's not discomfort itself that makes our lives "Bad" or "Good," what is it?

Some of it (a more minor part than you think) is our circumstances. You may be single and want to be married or sick and want to be well. These are difficult circumstances. But do they need to make your life "bad"? Can you still have a good life amid these circumstances?

The Bible tells us (and, no surprise here, science backs it up) that one of the most critical factors to life being "good" is how we choose to think about it. We can choose to be trapped by worry or our circumstances. Or we can choose not to.

There are countless stories of Jesus' followers experiencing "good" from life amid severe suffering. The Apostles thanked God for the privilege of being beaten. Paul wrote masterpieces of theology from prison, and a host of martyrs went to their deaths, SINGING joyful songs of praise. If you had asked them how they were doing, they would have said, "GOOD!"

Were they faking it? No. They were choosing it.

Smack dab in the middle of their circumstances, they were choosing to be "Good!" They did it. They were regular people just like us. We can do it too. That's why we're doing this—a little reminder for your journey today. Keep working at it. Keep practicing. Let's figure out how to really mean it when we say we're doing "Good."

THINK:

What are a few hard or uncomfortable things you deliberately chose to do because you knew they would be good for you?

Have you ever successfully chosen to feel "good" during difficult circumstances? How did it impact your journey through that circumstance?

APPLY:

Each day this week, we are going to practice gratefulness deliberately. Pause 1-2 times today (in addition to your morning and evening meditations) to notice something in your circumstances or surroundings that you are grateful for and thank God. Also, continue to practice the 4-Step Process on any unhelpful thoughts that arise.

We are walking into the last 7 days of this journey. Keep up the good work with your commitments.

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with a time of prayer and reflection. See guide at back of booklet.

WEEK 4

DAY 2

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

Start your day with the same Gratefulness Prayer we learned yesterday. Begin with a 2-minute breath prayer. Then, move to a room different from the one you were in yesterday, and thank God for the people/items you notice in this room. Look at the Prayer Guide in the back of this book if you need a reminder. Do this for 3-5 minutes, then return to the usual place where you do your morning meditation.

READ:

After opening your time in prayer, read the below:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7

The Bible tells us that our peace is inextricably linked to our choices to be joyful and grateful in the midst of our circumstances. UC Davis professor, Robert Emmons, notes:

“Gratitude has one of the strongest links to mental health and satisfaction with life of any personality trait—more so than even optimism, hope, or compassion. Grateful people experience higher levels of positive emotions such as joy, enthusiasm, love, happiness, and optimism, and gratitude as a discipline protects us from the destructive impulses of envy, resentment, greed, and bitterness.”⁴

Gratitude is an interesting trait. At its core, JP Moreland says:

“Gratitude or thankfulness is the heartfelt acknowledgment that I have received a good gift, that I recognize the value of the gift and know that at least part of the source of this gift lies outside of me, and that I express my appreciation to the donor for his good intentions toward me. Thus, gratitude involves acknowledging, recognizing, and appreciating. Gratitude is other-directed. One can be grateful to God or other people, but not to oneself. Gratitude both helps us and requires a willingness to set aside “the negativity bias”—the habit of seeing and feeling the world in a grumpy way—and replacing it with a positive outlook on life, indeed, with a positive worldview in light of which we see, feel, and think about the world.”⁵

⁴ Robert A. Emmons, Gratitude Works! A 21 Day Program for Creating Emotional Prosperity from Moreland, James Porter. Finding Quiet: My Story of Overcoming Anxiety and the Practices that Brought Peace (pp. 111-112).

⁵ Moreland, James Porter. Finding Quiet: My Story of Overcoming Anxiety and the Practices that Brought Peace (p. 112).

THINK:

How strong is your “negativity bias?” Is your natural tendency to respond to life circumstances positively or negatively...with the glass “half full” or “half empty?”

What are the benefits of choosing gratitude?

APPLY

Right now, take an extra 10 minutes in gratitude. Think about (then list) the Top 5 things you are grateful to God for in your life (the things you are ACTUALLY grateful for, not what you think you SHOULD be grateful for). Then think about (then list) the Top 5 things you are grateful to other people for in your life (again, the things you are ACTUALLY grateful for). Close this time by thanking God for each of these Top 10 items.

Keep plugging away at your commitments! Five days to go!

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with a time of prayer and reflection. Be sure to end with your gratitude list. See guide at back of booklet.

WEEK 4

DAY 3

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

Start your day with a Gratefulness Prayer. Begin with a 2-minute breath prayer. Then, move to a new room or space that you haven't yet practiced this prayer in (if you like, you can go outside). Offer thanksgiving to God for the people/items you notice in this space. Do this for 3-5 minutes, then return to the usual place where you do your morning meditation.

READ:

After opening your time in prayer, read the below:

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:8-9

Your mind is never going to stop. As we've mentioned, it is constantly at work, drawing your attention to what you need to know to stay alive and safe. And it is super helpful! If you're reading this, it's because it's done its job. Your brain has worked hard and will keep working hard for the rest of your life.

Have you ever heard the saying, "If you want to get something done, find a busy person and give them the job?" If your mind is going to be working so hard anyway, why not give it something useful to do?

Your mind is the key to your anxiety, AND it is also the key to your peace. You can't just empty it of worry, but you CAN begin to fill it with peace. You just have to give it the right job.

As today's passage directs, let's start thinking about the right things.

WEEK 4

DAY 3

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

Start your day with a Gratefulness Prayer. Begin with a 2-minute breath prayer. Then, move to a new room or space that you haven't yet practiced this prayer in (if you like, you can go outside). Offer thanksgiving to God for the people/items you notice in this space. Do this for 3-5 minutes, then return to the usual place where you do your morning meditation.

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Your mind is the key to your anxiety, AND it is also the key to your peace. You can't just empty it of worry, but you CAN begin to fill it with peace. You just have to give it the right job.

As today's passage directs, let's start thinking about the right things.

THINK:

Too often we spend our time thinking about things that are at best unimportant and at worst, harmful. The passage above gives us a number of categories of things we can think about to occupy our minds. Let's take this Scripture literally and try to come up with examples of things that are pure, true, and noble that we've encountered either through stories we've heard or in our daily life.

Think about each word in turn. Next to each, write 1-2 thoughts that the word inspires. For example, take the word, "noble." Think about what noble means (a person with high moral character). Think about the people you either know or have heard of that fit that description. Think of the stories you've heard about their nobility. Let your mind be encouraged by these thoughts. Do this briefly for each word on the list below.

True

Noble

Right

Pure

Lovely

Admirable

Excellent

Praiseworthy

APPLY

Continue to practice the 4-Step Process on any unhelpful thoughts that surface today. Try to pause at least once more during the day and run through the list above, naming one to two thoughts for each word.

You are so close! Keep at it! Keep eliminating the things you've chosen to eliminate. Keep adding in the things you've chosen to add. We're almost there!

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with a time of prayer and reflection. Be sure to end with your gratitude list. See guide at back of booklet.

WEEK 4

DAY 4

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

Start your day with a Gratefulness Prayer. Begin with a 2-minute breath prayer. Then, move to a new space that you haven't yet practiced this prayer in. Offer thanksgiving to God for the people/items you notice in this space. Do this for 3-5 minutes, then return to the usual place where you do your morning meditation.

READ:

After opening your time in prayer, read the below:

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:25-27, 31-34

So we know our brains are trying to be helpful. We also know that their default, "helpful" setting is to constantly point out danger. We appreciate this. We need this. It helps us live full lives and make good plans.

But there's helpful thoughts, thoughts that alert us to danger and lead us to plan accordingly, and then there's WORRY. Worry, as Jesus is using it here, is excessive rumination, our thoughts getting caught in the endless loop of anxiety, what-ifs, and fear. Worry, He says, is simply no good. It doesn't accomplish anything. Worry is a waste. When we allow our brains to settle into worry, we are wasting their very valuable time. A day we allow our minds to live in a state of worry is a day we won't ever get back.

As we said yesterday, we need to give our busy brains something more helpful to do with their time.

The Bible. The Word of God. It's really helpful. How about we train our brain to focus on that?

Scripture memorization has been a tool followers of God have used to train and safeguard their brain for thousands and thousands of years. Jesus did it. Jesus used it. It helped Him, when His body was at its weakest after 40 days of fasting, to overcome Satan himself in the desert.

We want Jesus to change us. Let's follow His example and start occupying our minds with the task of memorizing God's Word.

THINK:

What scriptures do you already have committed to memory?

What are your favorite verses (that you may not have memorized entirely)?

How have these verses (either the ones you've got fully memorized or not) helped you in times of need?

APPLY

Turn to the list of helpful verses in the back of this booklet. Choose one and begin to memorize it today. You have four days left in this journey—work to commit it to memory by Day 21. Return to the list after the fast and pick 2-3 more verses to memorize. Work to commit one verse (either from this list or beyond it) to memory each month.

All right! We're nearing the finish line. As you approach these last few days, assess how each item you have eliminated or added has impacted you. Consider which practices you want to continue (either as you have done in the past few weeks or in a modified manner).

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with a time of prayer and reflection. Be sure to end with your gratitude list. See guide at back of booklet.

WEEK 4

DAY 5

MORNING MEDITATION

CENTER:

Start your day with a Gratefulness Prayer. Begin with a 2-minute breath prayer. Then, move to a new space that you haven't yet practiced this prayer in. Offer thanksgiving to God for the people/items you notice in this space. Do this for 3-5 minutes, then return to the usual place where you do your morning meditation.

READ:

After opening your time in prayer, read the below:

Every time I think of you I thank God for you. I have joy in my heart every time I ask God to help you. I thank God for the joy we share in telling the good news from the very first day until now.

Philippians 1:3-5

Have we told you how thankful we are for you? We really are.

It has been an honor to join the thousands of people in our community and seek God's peace together. You have trusted us. You have done a few things that may have seemed a little silly. You have done a few more things that felt really hard. You have given up some things that make you comfortable, and added some that made you uncomfortable. You have worked faithfully at your commitments.

We are grateful that you have taken this journey with us. We feel joy thinking of the work that you have done. We feel joy thinking of the work Jesus has done in you. We have hope that each of us will continue to work and grow together and with Him.

Thank you for being a part of our life here at SCG. Thank you for letting us be a part of yours.

THINK:

Review your list of the Top 10 things you feel grateful for from Day 2 this week. Are there any people who come up often on this list? Write their names here:

APPLY

Now, grab another piece of paper and write a letter to one of the people whose names you wrote above. Express to them exactly why you are grateful for them. Thank them for what they have done for you and what they mean to you. It doesn't need to be long or perfectly worded—just a few simple sentences and paragraphs of thanks.

Call the person or catch them in person today and read the letter to them out loud. It will help if you give them some time to prepare ("Hey, do you have 5 minutes? I'd like to share something encouraging I wrote for you"). Keep it simple, short, and sweet. This simple act of gratitude can have an enormous impact on your relationships. It's a good habit to start!

Stay strong with your commitments for just a couple more days. Continue to reflect on how you want to incorporate these practices going forward.

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with a time of prayer and reflection. Be sure to end with your gratitude list. See guide at back of booklet.

WEEK 4

DAY 6+7

MORNING MEDITATION

Start your day off with the 5-minute Gratitude Prayer we learned this week. Continue to memorize your verse and practice the 4-Step Process as unhelpful thoughts arise.

EVENING REFLECTION (OPTIONAL)

Conclude your day with the evening reflection you practiced during the week. Take 5 minutes to reflect and journal the day's events that made you feel angry, sad, anxious, satisfied, and glad.

THE LAST DAY

(1 HOUR CONCLUDING ACTIVITY)

You did it! We have completed our 21 Days of Peace and arrived at the most critical part of the journey: the end. Before we return to our “normal” way of living, we’d like to take a moment to reflect on the past few weeks. Let’s examine what we’ve done and what its impacts are. Then let’s make some decisions based on what we’ve learned.

You need to decide:

Are there things you eliminated that need to stay eliminated?

Are there things you added that need to stay added?

To determine this we are going to assess, once again, how we are doing physically, mentally, relationally, and spiritually. This will feel familiar. You did something similar at the very beginning of this journey. Don’t look back at your answers to those assessments just yet, we’ll tell you when to look.

For now, just take 5 minutes to pray and ask God to guide your thoughts as you walk through these exercises.

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT: *PHYSICAL HEALTH*

CONSIDER:

Start with the following exercise. Close your eyes or focus on an object across the room. Take two deep breaths, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Become aware of your body. Start by actively becoming aware of the sensations emanating from your toes, then your feet, then your ankles. Move your attention up your body till you finish with the crown of your head.

How do you feel? Are there any body parts that are not working correctly or causing you discomfort or pain?

How is your health? Are you experiencing any sickness (either temporary or chronic)?

What routines (including diet and exercise) are you practicing that might be negatively impacting your health?

What routines (including diet and exercise) are you practicing that might be positively impacting your health?

EXAMINING YOUR COMMITMENT:

Look back at the Physical Health Assessment you took on Day 0. What (if anything) changed over the past 21 Days?

These questions will help guide your thoughts:

Consider what you eliminated for your Physical Health for the last 21 days. How hard was it to refrain from this substance, activity, or habit? How did refraining harm you? How did refraining benefit you?

Consider what you added for your Physical Health for the last 21 days. How hard was incorporating this substance, activity, or habit into your daily rhythms? What did you gain or learn from adding it to your life?

RE-COMMIT:

What did your commitments over the past 21-Days highlight about your physical health?

What parts of the Physical Health commitment of the 21 Days of Peace are essential for you to continue? What must you do to ensure you stay on track with them?

Are there any additional steps you need to take to address any aspect of your physical health (ex., see a doctor or health professional)?

Going forward, for the sake of my physical health, I want to:

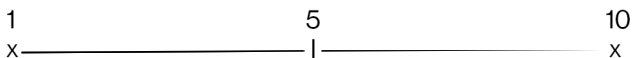
PERSONAL ASSESSMENT: *MENTAL HEALTH*

CONSIDER:

How has your mood primarily been in the past two weeks (e.g., happy, sad, irritable, anxious, etc.)?

How has your mood affected your physical health? How about your relationships with others and with God?

On a scale of 1-10, mark your opinion of your mental health below
(1= Mentally Drained/Fragile, 10=Mentally Strong/Resilient)



Why did you rate yourself this way?

How much time have you spent on digital entertainment in the last week (social media, streaming, video games, YouTube, etc.)? How does it impact your mood when you spend time doing these activities? In what ways does it benefit you? In what ways does it detract from other important things in your life?

What are your cell phone habits? Where does your phone “live” during the day (ex., in your hand, pocket, purse)? At night? Do you have periods away from it?

EXAMINING YOUR COMMITMENT:

Look back at the Mental Health Assessment you took on Day 0. What (if anything) changed over the past 21 Days?

These questions will help guide your thoughts:

Consider what you eliminated for your Mental Health for the last 21 days. How hard was it to refrain from this item or activity? How did refraining harm you? How did refraining benefit you?

Consider what you added for your Mental Health for the last 21 days. How hard was incorporating this activity or habit into your daily rhythms? What did you gain or learn from adding it to your life?

RE-COMMIT:

What did your commitments over the past 21-Days highlight about your mental health?

What parts of the Mental Health commitment of the 21 Days of Peace are essential for you to continue? What must you do to ensure you stay on track with them?

Are there any additional steps you need to take to address any aspect of your mental health (ex., see a doctor or mental health professional)?

Going forward, for the sake of my mental health, I want to:

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT: *RELATIONAL HEALTH*

CONSIDER:

Spend a few moments thinking about your relationships. Below we have listed four categories of relationships. In each category, list the 0-5 people you talk with (either digitally or in-person) with regularly (daily or weekly). If you have nobody that you interact with in a particular category, that's okay, just leave it blank.

Next to each person write a few words to describe the relationship (Lifegiving: That person makes me feel energized, respects my boundaries, is trustworthy, helps me achieve my goals, is present when I am struggling; Draining: That person drains my energy, is unsafe to be around, not trustworthy, manipulative, hinders my daily tasks, disrespects my boundaries).

Family Relationships

Work Relationships

Social Relationships

Church Relationships

Which of these people do you want to spend less time with? How come?

Which of these people do you want to spend more time with? How would that benefit you and them?

Which of these relationships do you consider to be most important (MIP=Most Important People)? How could you grow in each of these important relationships?

EXAMINING YOUR COMMITMENT:

Look back at the Relational Health Assessment you took on Day 0. What (if anything) changed over the past 21 Days?

These questions will help guide your thoughts:

Consider what you eliminated for your Relational Health for the last 21 days. How hard was it to refrain from this item, activity, or habit? How did refraining harm you? How did refraining benefit you?

Consider what you added for your Relational Health for the last 21 days. How hard was incorporating this activity or habit into your daily rhythms? What did you gain or learn from adding it to your life?

RE-COMMIT:

What did your commitments over the past 21-Days highlight about your relational health?

What parts of the Relational Health commitment of the 21 Days of Peace are essential for you to continue? What must you do to ensure you stay on track with them?

Are there any additional steps you need to take to address any aspect of your relational health (ex., seek counseling/therapy to address relational issues)?

Going forward, for the sake of my Relational Health, I want to:

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT: *SPIRITUAL HEALTH*

CONSIDER:

What are you currently doing to grow in your faith?

On a scale of 1-10, mark your opinion of your spiritual state below
(1= Far from God, 10=Close to God)

Why did you rate yourself this way?

Look at the list below. Are you more _____ than you were a year ago?

Check all that apply.

☐ Loving

| Joyful

☐ Peaceful

| Patient

Kind

☐ Gentle☐ Compassionate

Self-Controlled

Why do you think you have grown in these areas you marked? In which areas do you want to grow in the next year? Why?

Spiritual habits: Please fill in the statements below with what you actually do, not what you think you should do.

I read my Bible _____ times per _____

I pray _____ times per _____

I serve _____ times per _____

I share my faith _____ times per _____

I give _____ % of my income annually.

Other: I _____ times per _____

How are the above habits impacting your spiritual health? Which would you want to change?

What other habits are you practicing that may be damaging your spiritual health?

EXAMINING YOUR COMMITMENT:

Look back at the Spiritual Health Assessment you took on Day 0. What (if anything) changed over the past 21 Days?

These questions will help guide your thoughts:

Consider what you eliminated for your Spiritual Health for the last 21 days. How hard was it to refrain from this item, activity, or habit? How did refraining harm you? How did refraining benefit you?

Consider what you added for your Spiritual Health for the last 21 days. How hard was incorporating this activity or habit into your daily rhythms? What did you gain or learn from adding it to your life?

RE-COMMIT:

What did your commitments over the past 21-Days highlight about your spiritual health?

What parts of the Spiritual Health commitment of the 21 Days of Peace are essential for you to continue? What must you do to ensure you stay on track with them?

Are there any additional steps you need to take to address any aspect of your spiritual health (ex., join a group or class, get involved in discipleship)?

Going forward, for the sake of my Spiritual Health, I want to:

NEXT STEPS

We pray that the past 21 days have only been the first steps in a lifelong journey towards true peace, towards the shalom that Jesus offers. Take a few minutes to prayerfully consider the things you wrote in your physical, mental, relational, and spiritual health assessments.

Pay special attention to the last question on each, "Going forward, for the sake of my _____ health, I want to _____."

Ask God to give you wisdom and insight as you consider your desire to grow and change in these areas. Ask Him to reveal which of them (maybe all of them) you NEED to commit to doing.

After a few minutes of prayerful contemplation, write a response below:

With God's help, I commit to:

The practical steps I will take to ensure I stick to my commitment are:

The people I will ask to help me on this journey are:

Thank you for joining us on this journey. Jesus created you to be fully alive, free, and full of peace and joy. We have been blessed to be a small part of your journey towards the shalom He promises.



EXTRA

RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

ISAIAH 26:3

PARTNER WITH US

HELP BRING THIS STUDY TO UGANDA!

This summer, members of our team will be traveling to visit our ministry partners in Uganda and come alongside local pastors—encouraging, equipping, and serving them as they shepherd their communities through incredibly challenging circumstances.

Many of these pastors are ministering in areas marked by deep poverty, political instability, and spiritual warfare. Yet despite the hardships, they lead with courage, faith, and an unwavering commitment to the gospel. We believe the message of this devotional—finding supernatural peace in the middle of life's storms—will be both timely and life-giving for them.

Our goal is to bring as many printed copies of “21 Days of Peace” as we can and place them directly into the hands of these faithful leaders. But we need your help to make it happen.

Will you partner with us? Your donation will go toward printing and transporting the devotionals, ensuring that these pastors receive a resource that can refresh their souls and strengthen their ministries.

Every gift makes a difference. Scan the QR code below to give—and help us bring the message of peace where it's needed most.



Note: When you give, please make sure "Bless" is selected from the "Giving Type" dropdown.

If you could like to give in person via check, please include "Uganda" in the memo.

PRAYER GUIDE

BREATH PRAYER EXERCISE

Sit comfortably in a chair, with your feet grounded and your hands in your lap. Close your eyes or focus them on an object across the room. Relax your body. Take a shallow breath in through your nose. Pause, then breathe in more deeply to fill your lungs completely. Put your hand on your belly and feel the air going in and out like a balloon. As you breathe in, notice what happens to your body—where the breath begins and ends, how your body moves in response to the breath. Then slowly breathe out through your mouth (fully exhale). As you breathe out, feel the air leaving you and notice how your body responds.

When you are ready, begin to meditate on one or two words related to God. One commonly used is the Name of God: Yahweh. As you breathe in, let your breath whisper: Yah. As you breathe out: Weh. Do this for a full 5 minutes (use a timer).

Other words or word pairs suggestions: Fa-ther, Je-sus, King-Jesus, Lord-Savior, Grace-Peace, Be-Still, Love-Grace, Jesus-Christ, Creator-God. Pick one word/pair and breathe it in and out for the full 5 minutes.

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER EXERCISE

The point of this type of prayer is not to ask God for things or to accomplish anything other than simply being with God. You will learn to sit silently and calmly as you practice His presence. There are five parts to this prayer:

1. **Place:** You don't have to do this prayer at the same time and place every day (although this is helpful), but you do need to put yourself in a physical space that is quiet, comfortable, and free from distractions. Investing in good earplugs may be helpful if this is impossible in your home.
2. **Peace:** Relax your body. Breathe deeply (as in Breath Prayers) and focus on relaxing your body progressively one muscle group at a time. Pay special attention to relaxing any area that is a source of particular anxiety or stress. Choose an encouraging Scripture (see list at back of this guide) and repeat it to yourself, slowly and thoughtfully. If you have any anxiety or tension left in a place in your body, mentally focus the verse on that body part. Speak God's peace to your body.
3. **Pass:** Speak to Jesus. Describe to Him who you know yourself to be. Share with Him your concerns and anxieties. Imagine yourself passing them from your hands to His. If you have a long list of concerns, choose the top 2 or 3. Express them to Him and pass them on. Repeat a "Trusting" verse (see list at back of guide) to yourself as you hand them to Him.

4. **Presence:** Come to a place of stillness and sit before the Lord. You may sense Him speaking to you, you may not. Simply wait patiently and calmly in His presence.
5. **Practice:** Spend at least 5 minutes (we prefer 10 or more) practicing Contemplative Prayer daily. We understand that contemplative prayer may be challenging for you (it is for just about everyone). You may find yourself distracted with a wildly wandering mind. Refocus yourself using one of the encouraging or trusting verses you used previously as you catch your mind wandering. We are going to practice this type of prayer each day this week. Keep trying. Keep coming back.

PRAYER OF GRATITUDE

Begin with a 2-minute breath prayer. Then, look slowly around the room. Look at the furniture, items, and people that occupy the same space as you. Focus on the ones you feel grateful for (from an exceedingly soft pillow to your sleeping baby). Hold each in your mind briefly and thank God for it/them. Do this slowly and thoughtfully. Be sure to tell Him WHY you are grateful for it/them. Do this for 3-5 minutes.

REFLECTION

EVENING REFLECTION EXERCISE (OPTIONAL)

Practice this reflection at the end of each day.

Open this time in prayer and draw near to God. Take 5 minutes to process your day with Him. Mentally walk through your day from when you got out of bed in the morning, to each activity, to now. Journal your thoughts about the times of the day you felt:

Angry

Sad

Anxious

Satisfied

Glad

Starting Week 3: At the end of your time of reflection, list 5-10 things, people, or circumstances that you were exceptionally grateful for today. Let this be the last thing you think about as you drift off to sleep.

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURES

Below is a list of Scriptures that can be both helpful during your times of contemplative prayer AND are great ones to commit to memory:

Numbers 6:24-26

Joshua 1:9

Psalms 37:3-5

Psalms 46:10

Psalms 131

Psalms 139:1-6

Psalms 139:13-18

Psalms 139:23-24

Proverbs 3:5-6

Proverbs 16:3-4

Isaiah 26:3

Isaiah 41:10

Matthew 6:25-27, 31-34

Matthew 6:31-34

John 14:1

John 14:27

Romans 6:11-13

Romans 12:1-3

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

1 Corinthians 10:13

Ephesians 2:4-9

Philippians 4:4-7

Philippians 4:8-9

Philippians 4:12-13

1 Timothy 4:7-8

1 Peter 5:6-7

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CHRISTIAN

Books

John Mark Comer, *Live No Lies*

JP Moreland, *Finding Quiet*

John Ortberg, *Steps*

Mark Sayers, *Non-Anxious Presence*

Peter Scazzaro, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*

Apps:

Abide

YouVersion

SECULAR

These are books that we have found to be helpful. They do not necessarily reflect our faith, values, and theology but have many sections that may be useful on your journey when applied through a Scriptural lens.

Books:

James Clear, *Atomic Habits*

Dennis Greenberg and Christine Padesky, *Mind Over Mood* (2nd edition)

Jonathan Haidt, *Anxious Generation*

Russ Harris, *The Happiness Trap*

Kristin Neff and Christopher Gerner, *The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook*

Jeffery M. Schwartz, *You Are Not Your Brain*

Websites:

American Psychological Association

National Institute on Mental Health

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

National Institute on Drug Abuse

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Apps:

Calm

Headspace



SCGCHURCH

JESUS CHANGES EVERYTHING