



Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!

Ephesians 3:20-21

**Praying Toward
Celebration Sunday**

Prayer Guide

2018



A Note From Our Pastor:

We have much to pray about as a church. God has given us an opportunity to affect future generations through our spiritual vision and our vision for facilities. Our three-year spiritual vision is as follows: **"Equipping SBC to reach the world with the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ."** We can do nothing greater as God's people than to delight in the heart of God to be laborers in the fields that are white unto harvest.

May this 40-day prayer guide unite our hearts and minds in the will of God. Read and be inspired by the Spirit testifying to His Word through these devotional thoughts of our faith family. Be reminded that God is faithful in His promises to bring His glory to the world through His church as we walk in trust and obedience to Him!

What can God do through a church that commits to His Great Commission and Great Commandment? How would our expectations change if we fully believe what He said is true when His church is united in His purpose of **Making Disciples Who Make Disciples?**

I encourage you to utilize these coming months of faith and financial challenge to recommit your lives to Christ Jesus in fresh new ways. I urge you to accept the calling to be witnesses to the gospel together by telling the story of salvation that Jesus saves. The Bible clearly states, "Faith comes through hearing and hearing by the Word of God."

Will you join hearts with your greater church family to help build facilities as a headquarters for God's ministry being sent forth from our faith family to those far away from God locally, state-wide, nationally, and internationally? Will our ministries and facilities be seen as a light to the world? To accomplish such a God-sized task, we will surely need every family to be **ALL IN!**

Imagine yourself being All IN with leading others to Christ. Imagine our Church being **ALL IN** to a Bible-centered spiritual vision. Imagine a faith family being **ALL IN** in financial giving to a place to worship corporately, a place to disciple others in evangelism, a place to receive biblical fellowship for growing to maturity, a place to launch ministry to our communities and beyond.

"Now to him who is able to do **IMMEASURABLY MORE** than all we ask or **IMAGINE**, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3: 20-21)

Steve Boyd

Day 1

Scripture: Ezekiel 22:30

“I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land, so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one.”

Jesus told His disciples God’s intervention will only come about through prayer and fasting. This is the foundation for any answered prayer. When there is a mountain of any kind, whether it be physical, financial, or marital, it will take a dedication and a mindset of prayer. We can be flippant in our prayer life or be fervent in our praying, it's really our choice.

To whom much is given, much is required. When we are given the responsibility of a family, whether it be a personal family or church family, our God-given power to prayer is our utmost responsibility.

In Ezekiel 22:30 God said he sought for a man that would stand in the gap and pray for the land, but He found none. In this season of our lives, and the life of SBC, we need to be people that will stand in the gap and pray.

In Deuteronomy 32:30 it says one puts a thousand to flight and two puts ten thousand. There is power in numbers and power in prayer as we gather together. There is no better way for SBC to move forward than with prayer, supplication, intervention and thanksgiving with one mind and in one accord. The power of prayer will start removing the mountains which are in front of us. For with God all things are possible to those who believe.

I pray that we will fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Rosetta Ploetner

Day 42

Scripture: Ephesians 1:18

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.”

I believe Paul is praying that we see 3 things:

1. We see we are called to hope (believe and have faith)
2. We see we have riches (God’s promises) and a glorious inheritance (Christ Jesus, the Hope of Glory).
3. We see the immeasurable, unlimited, and unsurpassing great power in us and for us as our inheritance. (The very same power that raised Christ from the dead).

To be enlightened to see point 2 and 3, we must see that we are called to hope, to believe, to have faith.

Hope is an interesting little word. What does it mean? Is it just a synonym for “wish?” When we say, “I hope God hears my prayer.” “I hope God will bless this project.” “I hope the money will be there.” Am I just wishing? Am I half believing - maybe He will or maybe He won’t. What am I really saying? What exactly do I mean?

Biblically speaking I believe it is faith and belief that are synonyms for hope, not wish.

Matthew Henry in his commentary tells us that faith has always been the mark of God’s servants. And the same things that are the object of our hope, are also the object of our faith. Both, hope and faith, are firm persuasions and expectations that God will perform all he has promised to us in Christ.

In the Strong’s dictionary we are told that hope is joyful and confident expectation. Hebrews 11:1 tells us that hope is having faith with confidence in what we have yet to see. Though we do not see, we still hope. Hope is the Christian’s heritage. It is looking with expectancy that God is able. He is Jehovah Jireh - the God who provides. He is who He says he is. He has, He can, and He will. This is hope.

Do you hope? Hope with expectancy that we can, and we will see His incomparably great power as we believe? To have hope we have to have faith. To have faith in something we have to believe. And believing is what pleases God as we read in Hebrews 11:6 (“Without faith it is impossible to please God.”)

As we pray, let us ask for enlightenment so we may hope for the good things to come, for this is what we, God’s saints, have been called to do. Let us ask for enlightenment so we may see (by faith) the riches of his glorious inheritance (all his promises). Let us ask for enlightenment so we may see his incomparably great power (Christ in us, the hope of glory). Let us hope. Let us believe. Let us be enlightened.

“A belief, no matter how sincere, if not reflected in reality, is not a belief, it is a delusion.”
Kyle Idleman, *Not a Fan* ***Marydora Conley***

Day 41

Scripture: Proverbs 3:9-10

"Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing."

I love this verse because our family literally has barns that are overflowing. We raise hay. We always have some little difficulty each year with the hay ... sometimes the weather doesn't cooperate, sometimes the equipment breaks, and sometimes it goes so badly that we just have to chuck it all out! But at the end of the year-our barns are overflowing-ALWAYS.

We believe that our blessings are gifts from God because we have been faithful to tithe and to increase the tithe with offerings of one sort or another. Sometimes the extras come in the form of sharing time or talents or sometimes it's just a gift to someone in need.

The backstory: I became a Believer through divorce. Financially times were tough. I was raising two kids without child support and going to the grocery with \$20 a week. And as a Believer I was encouraged to tithe. I started out at \$3 a week. Hardly firstfruits but each year I added \$1. I got remarried and together we continued to increase our tithe sometimes as little as a quarter of a percent a year. We struggled financially raising four children, but the tithe had now become the first-fruits.

In the past twenty years we have paid off the vehicles, paid off the house and farm, paid off educational expenses for the kids, paid off credit cards and taken a vacation every year. Did I mention our barns are overflowing too? In our wildest dreams we couldn't have accomplished this. But God could, and He did.

*Father, I boast in you and you alone for your blessings, for your kindnesses and for your provision. Help us to never forget **how you honored us** by providing your first-fruits in the gift of Your Son so that our barns would overflow in this life and the next.*

Angela Sanford

Day 2

Scripture: 1 John 5:14

"This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."

Nothing is outside the reach of prayer except that which lies outside of the will of God. Prayer is surrender - surrender to the will of God. It is cooperation with His will.

So you might be thinking, why even pray?

Because God wants us to be a part of the process. After all, He loves us, we are His children, and He is training us up in Him. The process goes like this: when God puts a burden on our heart, we talk to Him in prayer. And then we see God do the so-called impossible and answer that prayer. It's not about us. It's about God. We serve a powerful God. When we pray we get in sync with Him.

When we pray for the Gospel to go out; for people to believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord, we are praying according to the will of God. The Bible says The Lord is "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9b

May we desire to get in sync or in step with the will of God, no matter what. Ponder the awesomeness of God and consider His will and purpose. When we put our focus on Jesus and seek His glory, God can do miraculous things.

Father, may the Name of Jesus be lifted up as Savior and Lord in Your church. May Your will be done in this place, for Your glory. Give me the burden You want me to have. I surrender my will to You.

Patricia Pace

Day 3

Scripture: Hebrews 13:16

“Don’t forget to do good... and to share.”

What should I give?... That is the question. I once heard a pastor answer a groom’s question about how much he should pay the minister to conduct his wedding. The pastor simply said, “Just pay me what you think your bride is worth!” That’s the answer to what we should give the Church, the Bride of Christ... Give what she’s worth! In Hebrews 13:16, we read, “And **do not forget to do good ... and to share** with others ... for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” What does it mean to share? It means to sacrifice!

In Luke 10 we read about a man on the way to Jericho where he is beaten and robbed. The thief’s philosophy of life was **“What’s yours is mine. I’ll take it.”** Then, the priest and rabbi pass by on the other side without helping, saying in essence, **“What’s mine is mine. I’ll keep it.”** But, the Good Samaritan stops, helps, cleans his wounds, takes him to Urgent Care, leaves money to pay his costs there and says he’ll be back to take care of any balance owed. His philosophy is, **“What’s mine is yours, I’ll share it!”** Sacrifices in life are GOOD, not bad. This is our special time in the history for Simpsonville Baptist Church, the only time this congregation will ever build a new worship center. It may be the only time in our lives we truly sacrifice.

Father, I thank you for this opportunity to serve you and submit to your leadership. I pray that you will be honored and glorified through us. In Jesus name!

Lowell Ashby

Day 40

Scripture: Isaiah 41:13

“For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, do not fear; I will help you.”

As a young woman preparing to welcome our firstborn child into the world, I had certain ideals and expectations of what childbirth and motherhood *should* be like. I read the recommended books and made the necessary preparations. We had all the equipment, gadgets, and supplies our little one might need. We developed a birth plan with my physician and knew what to do when it came time to deliver. We were ready, or so I thought.

The day our son was born a terrible winter storm had rolled into town. It was so severe the hospital experienced a power outage... during his delivery. So there I was, in the midst of childbirth, in complete darkness. I was immediately consumed by fear. The amazing nurses and doctor however didn’t waver. Their voices penetrated the darkness and encouraged me to keep pushing, to keep breathing, and to press on despite the circumstance. Then it happened. A cry suddenly pierced the air, soft light from the emergency backup generators turned on, and I could see our precious baby boy. His cries were the most beautiful thing I’d ever heard. His face was the most beautiful thing I’d ever seen. In that moment, my fear vanished, my heart flooded with immeasurable love, and I wept tears of joy praising God for his goodness.

Despite my best efforts, I couldn’t have prepared for such an event, but God did. He provided an experienced, compassionate, healthcare team who guided a safe delivery despite the darkness and chaos. And while God’s provisions didn’t match my ideals or expectations, they definitely surpassed them.

Storms in life are unavoidable. We can’t always predict them and we don’t always know how to navigate them. They can consume us in fear, cause us to doubt, and test our faith. But when we’re afraid, God is there; and when we doubt, God is there. He is faithful. Will you take His hand today and let Him help you?

Father, please forgive me when I focus on life’s storms instead of on Your strength and power. Help me to anchor my heart in Your truth and trust in Your provisions. In Jesus name, Amen.

Stephanie Perkins

Day 39

Scripture: Exodus 40:34-38

The average church member gives only 2.5% of their income to all Christian causes. Can you imagine a time when our church would return your check uncashed because they have received too much money? It has happened and we all pray for the day when it happens again. Let's review the story.

Exodus 35 opens with Moses gathering the children of Israel together to announce God's plans for the Tabernacle. Moses was attempting to inspire the people to stretch beyond their self-centered desires to become great stewards of God's inheritance. Verse 5 is a simply stated expectation that the Israelites should make an offering of the riches they control. In verses 6-19 Moses provides a long list of what the riches will be used for. From today's perspective there was nothing in it for them and no return on their investment. All they could accomplish by their giving was to fulfill God's desire by acting obediently.

The remaining verses of Exodus 35 describe the willingness of the people to be obedient and give up their new found wealth. The response was overwhelming, instantaneous and continuous. Then, surprisingly, Moses demands in Exodus 36:6-7 that the people stop bringing their wealth because they had given much more than was needed to meet God's expectations.

There are several lessons in this story. First, God has expectations of His stewards, but He always allows them the freedom to make their own choices. Second, He receives gifts only from willing givers. If guilt is the motivation, He prefers that you keep your wealth. And third, and most importantly, their sacrificial giving resulted in greater intimacy with God. The evidence indicates that when God's people are faithful stewards to God centered causes; the need is completely taken care of.

Let's dream for a moment. If every family in our church increased their giving from 2.5% to 10%, what could be accomplished? What if our church's revenue quadrupled over the next year without adding one new member? What difference would that make in our efforts to reach the local community and around the world for Christ? What kind of compassionate care could we give to needy friends and church family? How might that change our strategy to encourage young people in our church to become the next generation of ministry leaders? Would you give them scholarships to help them pursue a career in ministry? Would you increase our pastor's salary to a level commensurate with his role and expertise? The glorious possibilities are endless!

Some points to remember are:

- All the world's resources are God's resources. God has simply loaned us His resources and has the right to expect us to invest them wisely in whatever way He deems appropriate.
- We have the option to be faithful or unfaithful. God is too loving and gracious to force us against our will.
- How we spend our earthly riches has eternal consequences. There is no make-up exam for this test once we leave behind our earthly life.

So what should you do? Choose wisely and with an eternal perspective. You will experience joy and contentment in this world and riches and honor beyond your imagination in eternity.

Denis Tocci

Day 4

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9:6

"Remember this – Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously."

Have you ever heard of matching gifts? Many employers sponsor matching gift programs and will match any charitable contributions made by their employees. Or some companies will match up to a certain percentage any contributions their employees make to their 401K plans. Christian giving can also be described as a "matching gift" program.

For instance, Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 9:6: *Remember this – Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.* We have been gifted from God with the ability to give to others of our time, talents and material wealth. And the more we give of ourselves, the more God blesses us. So, it is like a super matching gift program, like no one has ever seen.

Paul further reminds us in this passage that *God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and the produce a great harvest of generosity in you.* And the matching gift pays it forward as those who receive our gifts will give glory to God, thanking him for your generosity and for the grace God has given you.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your love, grace, forgiveness and mercy. Help me to be ever mindful that all I have was given from you. Help me to know that I have the privilege and responsibility to grow and share the gifts with others in order to glorify you. Amen.

Dixie Taylor

Day 5

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9:7

“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.”

What is a reasonable amount of money to live on?

One of our central spiritual decisions is determining that answer. Whatever that amount is – and it will vary from family to family – we shouldn’t hoard or spend the excess. After all, it’s His, not ours.

God owns everything and we are His money managers. Whenever we think like owners – i.e. it’s our money - it’s a red flag. We should be thinking like stewards looking for the best place to invest the Owner’s money He has entrusted – not given – to us.

2 Corinthians 9:7 reads *“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

EACH MAN...this is voluntarily and an individual decision.
GIVE WHAT HE HAS DECIDED...this is predetermined (hopefully prayerfully) and should be intentional. GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER...the cheerfulness often comes during and after the act of obedience, not before it.

Give and watch the joy follow. Money is a big thing in the world’s eye, but from God’s view it’s a small thing. However God does see our faith and finances as inseparable. He cares about our faithfulness with what He has entrusted to us – whether it’s a lot or a little.

A. Brent Hinton

Day 38

Scripture Romans 8:29

And we know in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Have you ever been so down, so angry, so fearful, or even so elated that you couldn’t think how to pray? I have - several times. I wondered why. Why, when I have been in church all my life, been a Christian since age 9, taught nearly every age group in Sunday School? Why, God, can I not find the words to pray? Then one day I found Romans 8:26-27, as I was actually trying to concentrate on verse 28.

Just to give you an introduction: when we are weak or we don’t or can’t pray, we have an Intercessor who helps and prays for us. The Spirit prays for us, interceding on our behalf, until we are able to speak those words and feelings to the God who waits patiently for us until we break through the worry, anger, fear - and hears our prayer!

Then --- we can say with all our hearts: “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”.

Father, thank You for Your Word that teaches us, guides us, and keeps us close to You. Then we can see how God works through all circumstances. *Hear our prayers, and when we cannot utter the words, hear as the Spirit intercedes.*

Linda Kerr

Day 37

Scripture: Col 3:23-24

“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.”

The boss left, the admins left, your coworkers left and you are alone to finish the critical assignment by yourself. The pastor is out of town, the church secretary left, the students went home and you are alone to work that important Sunday School project. Do you start to cut corners? Is your focus on doing excellent work a little less intense? Since no one seems to be watching, is your performance sub-standard? In Colossians 3 Paul instructs us to obey our masters on earth, however he adds a twist we often don't hear in the workplace. Paul says we should not just do the minimum to get by but work with a sincere heart fearing the Lord. He said we should work heartily in whatever we do because it is really the Lord we are serving. Doing your work heartily to the Lord is the right thing to do and you may be surprised how God may bless you. Do you want acceptance from your earthly master or do you want a sincere approval from your heavenly Master?

Dear Heavenly Father, help me to realize my efforts need to be focused on doing the best I can for you, my true Master. I want to work hard and do a good job but help me never forget I am ultimately working for you and want my work to reflect the glory of God. Amen

Dale Carlson

Day 6

Scripture: Hebrews 11:13

“All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them from a distance.”

Have you ever made plans to set aside assets, funds, insurance - whatever - in order to leave something for those you love? You know, maybe to make sure they can live decently if you're not there to provide or maybe even to have something extra to enjoy that they didn't have previously? Maybe it's not a huge inheritance, but at any rate you planned - knowing you wouldn't be here to see it used.

On the Sunday we voted to commence this endeavor, Bro. Steve used a passage from Hebrews 11 in his sermon series on Faith That Moves Mountains. As we stood to read that passage, I immediately pulled out my pen and began to underline most of Heb. 11: 13. It literally caught my breath. Our family had been discussing prior to that morning the possibility of the building project. I pointed out to Nathanael that he wouldn't even be in the youth likely by the time it would all be finished. We followed up with a discussion of how that didn't really matter though because it wasn't about us and that this building is an exciting possibility for the church, the community, for the future - and not necessarily for what WE could get out of it.

"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance..."

These "Hall of Faith-ers" invested themselves in promises never seen this side of glory.

Father, help our hearts and minds to be open to investing in this task that isn't about us but those who will come after us.

Can we see and welcome them from a distance?

Melissa Sangster

Day 7

Scripture: John 4:39

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."

In John chapter 4 we read about Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman he meets at a well outside the town of Sychar. The woman was an outcast in her town. She had been married and divorced 5 times and was currently living with a man who wasn't her husband. Jesus invites her to drink of the living water that he alone provides. And somewhere during her conversation with the Lord, the woman experiences a transformation, the kind of change that only Jesus can bring to a repentant heart. In an instant, she goes from misfit to missionary! She heads back into town and begins telling everyone about her encounter with Jesus. In John 4:39 we learn that many of the people of that town believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony, her story.

People are drawn to stories of redemption and hope. As a Christian, the story of how you met Jesus and the difference He has made in your life is powerful and compelling! Pastor/Evangelist, Greg Laurie writes, "Someone has a story a lot like yours but doesn't know there can be a happy ending."

Why not tell your story to someone today!

Lord, thank you for Jesus and the price He paid so that I could drink the living water of salvation. Give me the courage to tell His story of redemption in my life to someone today.

Andy McDonald

Day 36

Scripture: Romans 12:12

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer".

Rich Mullins sang, "Our God is an Awesome God." I believe that with all my heart. Sometimes, though, this life is hard... the daily reality of family, stress, job, hardships, responsibility, diagnosis, etc. Paul brings three crisp reminders in three-word simplicity to encourage and challenge us.

I don't always feel "full" of joy. Paul must have anticipated that *feeling* because he followed the "be joyful" mandate with THE reason for joy. We have the hope of Jesus, the hope that no matter the circumstances of the day... or the year, our joy is not dependent on our circumstances. Rather, our joy is dependent on the wellness of our souls based on the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

"Being" patient in affliction causes us to cringe... whether the cringe comes more from the struggle or the call to patience in it, often depends on the day for me! In the most difficult times, the truth of the progression of this verse is clear. I don't have the strength to be patient in trouble without the hope of Jesus.

The third "be" is the key that unlocks the power for the first two. God's faithfulness in loving us enough to send Jesus as the sacrifice for our sin simply must call us to faithfulness in prayer. We have the honor of speaking to and listening to our Creator.

Father, You know every circumstance of our every day. Thank you that our joy is found in the hope of Jesus who walks faithfully with us. Amen

Susan Wilder

Day 35

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 12:9

“But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

WOW! What a powerful verse, particularly for me at this season of my life.

When we are weak, He goes to work in our lives to keep us afloat. When things seem to be monumental and life gets to be too much, He is there to grab our hand and bring us back out of the muck. All of us will have trials as Christ foretold we would. None are exempt from troubles in this world. They may come in stages and attack in various forms, but for sure we will have valleys in this life.

The world watches us and how we respond to each trial. They will jump at the chance to point a finger and call us names if we fail to walk the walk and talk the talk. Hopefully we can represent Christ in each situation, but the truth is, sometimes we don't. We need to repent in that we have failed in our weakness.

Communication through prayer and daily living with God is the only way to get through this time. He hears and answers our pleas, requests, cries and groans. Sometimes the answer is “yes,” sometimes “no,” and sometimes “to wait.” Waiting and hearing NO are the hard answers. This is when we must trust HIM for his grace to be sufficient. He has a purpose for the answer. The time and answer may not be understood; but be assured, His reason is the BEST!

Paul said “He was happy in his weakness, sufferings, hard times and troubles because when he was weak, God's power was made perfect and he became strong.” Don't we wish we could all say this?

I can truly say that in my weakness this past year of losing my husband after 52 years that God has been faithful every day. He has given me extra power to get going and alerting me to see things more vividly now through HIS eyes. My time with God has been more precious this past year. I am walking this valley with HIM giving me strength and boldness. Only by His grace in my weakness am I able to “GO” and do what He has for me.

May our church family feel His presence as we look to the future growth and the uncertainties of tomorrow. May we, as a body of Christ, walk in our weakness and HE be glorified as the world watches Simpsonville Baptist Church. Because of His power, strength, guidance, and wisdom I pray each step of this season will be revealed as He leads us.

Linda Otterback

Day 8

Philippians 4:6-7

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Can WE build a new building? No.. Can WE raise the funds? No.. What if we don't reach OUR goals?

Often when WE get in the way of what our GOD is and doing, the anxiety sits in as WE take the burden upon ourselves to accomplish a GOD sized task. We struggle with the details and then when the plan is in place our hearts begin to race as we see it is so much bigger than our own capabilities. Doubt and fear step in to allow an open door for Satan to bring confusion to what deep down we know GOD has called us to do. This task is way bigger than we are so we want to bring it back down to a man sized task.

Our church family has been called to step out in faith and obedience and submit ourselves to a calling that can only be accomplished by the one who has called us to such a time as this! We are afraid, confused and feeling incapable of accomplishing the goal so our first thought is to step back and reduce the calling to something we can accomplish on our own.

We need not be anxious but stand in unity before the KING OF KINGS and lay our petitions at HIS feet as we get to work being the hands and feet for the task ahead. Then and only then will the peace that passes all understanding fill our hearts so that we can focus on the one who has called us for such a time as this!

FATHER, in the Name of Jesus our Lord we submit our Time, Talents and Treasures to fulfill the great commission that you have called us to. We lay at your feet the burdens of our heart and walk away with the peace of knowing that only you can author the results. As we work together we will stand in awe of what you will do with two fishes and loafs we have to offer.

George Skeeters

Day 9

Scripture: Ephesian 6:18

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”

Being a Christian for 30 years, praying should be easy, right? I've tried so many ways, often feeling like I'm letting Him down, but that's a lie. Looking back, the closest I have ever been to God, was when I simply included him in every little item of my day, from finding a parking space, to conversations, to funny stories and deep concerns. I talked to Him, shared with Him, asked questions, and expected answers. Over time I realized that I not only craved talking to Him, but I learned His voice in a peace or guiding in my heart. God isn't distant, off in Heaven, but living intimately inside us with creation wielding power. I've learned I need to talk to God like he actually wants to hear it.

Father God, thank you that you are not sitting on your throne, judging our prayers. Thank you that you want to share our lives with us, to leading us for our good and for your glory. Thank you for caring about our mundane, everyday lives, because you see in it, the eternal purposes you are working. Help us to want to invite you in and include you more. Amen

Carrie Vail

Day 34

Scripture: Luke 6:38

“Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

In the middle of a generosity campaign it can become easy to focus on money. Somebody wants it, but I need it. I have bills to pay and kids to feed. Right? But let's focus for a moment instead, on what we have received. Scripture tells us that we have been blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing because He chose us. He adopted us as sons and daughters. We have redemption through His blood, forgiveness of our sins, and had His grace lavishly bestowed upon us. And most importantly, we have hope in Christ. And so, He calls us to be as generous as He has been. We are to give of ourselves to further His kingdom. What happens when we are as generous as Him? Scripture tells us in Luke 6:38 that if we “give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

Father, find us faithful to give as You have given to us. Help us to remember that Your generosity will always exceed ours.

Tina Solomon

Day 33

Scripture: Deuteronomy 15:10

"Give generously to the Lord and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to."

As a young man growing up in this Church, it has always amazed me at the reach Simpsonville Baptist Church has across the world.

I am guilty of thinking of SBC as the small town church, since my family spent much of my younger years at a large 1500-2000 seat church that seemed to "have it all". However, what I have recognized is the structure SBC has built goes far beyond the buildings and bricks. The people of our church seem to find ways to support financially, even though we are somewhat small in comparison to my previous experiences.

Instead of having a large campus-like Church, we have structured our outreach to go beyond the walls. The generosity of our membership has allowed mission work to be done all over Shelby County, Louisville, the Commonwealth of KY, the U.S., and the World. Missionaries have been funded for long terms of service overseas. All of this service has been feasible due to the generous gifts and hearts of our members.

Looking at the passage from Deuteronomy, I wonder how I, a member, as a "youth" member, can learn to selflessly give without a grudge? What prayer can I say that will bring a sense of "others come first", rather than my worldly mind telling me that I really would rather purchase those next pair of new shoes!

I suggest that I may not be the only one, youth or adult, that may wonder if I'm strong enough to give selflessly and without a grudge. Well, I share the prayer below as my focused effort. Feel free to join me when you're in the right frame of mind!

Dear Lord,

I come to you today, begging forgiveness for my own selfish desires.

I pray that I faithfully devote a portion of my money in a generous way that will further our church's ability, Lord, your church's abilities, to reach further and further across this world. Please help all of the adult leaders to be wise and use your guidance to push them towards what you desire. Please help our members, young and old, to grow in our giving and to grow in our faith. Please continue to bless our work, our services, in your name. Amen.

Will Cline

Day 10

Scripture: Ephesians 2:10

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Look in the mirror. What thoughts or questions come to mind? Who am I? What is my purpose in life? Do I have any value in this world? These are common questions we have all pondered at some time. 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 tells us our common purpose is to glorify God. Along with this common purpose, God has given each of us a specific purpose to fulfill. Do you know what *your* specific purpose is? The God who led Moses, worked through Elijah, directed Paul, and guided each man and woman of God through the centuries, is the same God who approaches you to become involved in His work. Do you sense the significance of that? You are a vital part of something much bigger than yourself. You are the only one responsible for finding your specific purpose to fulfill. God will not just send you a text or email revealing this purpose. You must be *intentional* about finding and executing this purpose. Here are a few steps to help find your purpose: 1) Spend time alone in God's word daily 2) Pray- just ask Him 3) Look around to see where God is at work and join Him.

"God, I thank you for allowing me to be a part of building your kingdom. Please open my eyes to the specific purpose you have for my life. May all glory and honor go to you as I fulfill this purpose you have given to me."

Jamie McEldowney

Day 11

Scripture: Matthew 9:37

“Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

Move back in time with me as we follow a busy Jesus around the Sea of Galilee. First, He healed a paralyzed boy then He enlisted Matthew, the tax collector as His disciple. Later, He restored the life of the rabbi’s daughter and healed the blindness of two men.

Seeing the great needs of the crowds that followed Him, He told His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few, so pray to the One in charge of the harvesting and ask Him to recruit more workers for His harvest fields.”

Jesus is in charge of the harvest and wants to enlist us to be His workers as we prayerfully seek His direction while launching out in faith on the task before us.

The needs and problems in our society are as great today as they were in Jesus’ day. Jesus felt pity for the people and was moved as He became aware of their problems.

May we be challenged to make whatever sacrifice is required to provide for the spiritual needs and the physical facilities needed so Jesus will look with favor on our harvest.

*****Les Bailey***

**Les Bailey was a beloved member of Simpsonville Baptist who wrote this devotional during the Building Campaign for the FLC. Les was a faithful member who recently left this world to go home to be with the LORD.

Day 32

Scripture: Matthew 11:28, 30

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

How often do I fail to do this? How often do I think I can do this on my own? It is in these moments, when I am overwhelmed, that He wants me to come to Him. When I allow Him to help me my load seems much lighter and my focus clearer.

We are entering a time in our church when we may become weary and burdened. The decisions, financial responsibilities, and direction of our church can become overwhelming, but we need to remember our focus is clear and the Lord will guide us if we allow Him to do so.

Lord, we pray for our church family in this time of growth. Help us to keep our focus on Your will. Please be with us as we seek to honor and glorify You through our giving and our commitment to work together as one body.

Beth Stewart

Day 12

Scripture: Matthew 19:26

“But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, “with men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”

It has been an interesting few years for our family. I can still remember getting the phone call on March 18th that said...“the test shows that you have cancer and will need surgery right away with chemotherapy and radiation to soon follow.” Those words were hard to hear, but there was such a peace that came only from God and his Spirit filling my heart and my family. I knew that God would guide and support my journey, but was just amazed at how loving and giving all people around our family became. God worked through amazing family, friends, nurses, doctors, and even receptionists. God held me throughout the process. I can recall many days just saying, “God, I am yours and You got this. I trust you and long to just be still and give you the glory.”

Many times when I would start to feel unsure or anxious, God would just provide comfort and I was amazed at how I could work, cook, clean, etc. It was truly only through His Spirit and healing. There were various days that emails from friends with words of comfort would come flowing, phone calls from friends with uplifting thoughts, and cards to give me strength and love always were there to support. God gave my husband and children the strength to love me through everything. There is no way these events would have occurred without God and His touch. I would continue to journal and give myself scriptures to show peace and God’s healing touch. It was continually important to note that God was in control and He was the only way to see change. I continued to tell myself that God loved me and would smile on me and love me at all times no matter what I looked like, felt like, or even how my inner emotions felt. To give myself reminders I asked friends for words of encouragement from scripture to place around my house and office to surround myself with the true wisdom of God. It helped me stay positive and know that this illness would not define who I am, only God could define me and He knew my TRUE being.

As I reflect on Matthew 19:26, I am reminded about the days I could only sit and be Still with God. Days that I would sit on the deck or go for walks and just reflect on God’s beauty in nature. I would get caught up in the beautiful sky that only God could design, not man. I would sit in awe of the amazing colors of leaves on the various trees that no man could begin to create, only our Great God. I would listen to the sounds and know that God was surrounding me with His presence. Throughout these past few years, I am so thankful and want to continually PRAISE and WORSHIP the Almighty God who heals, loves, forgives, and gives GRACE. I have truly learned that with God all things are possible. It is so comforting throughout any and all trials to know that God is near and with you as long as you call to Him and abide with him.

As I think about the changes our church is going through, I cannot help but encourage all of us to realize that this will only happen if we place our TRUST in God. WE must fully embrace and believe Matthew 19:26 and realize that God will do what we pray for and more. God is our provider and guide. I know God has blessed me with these last few years to prepare me for even bigger challenges that will continue to prove who HE is and how He is in control of everything. As you read this scripture today and pray for guidance, I also pray with you for God’s peace, love, and continued support of growing closer to Him every day.

Toni Moore

Day 31

Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:19b-20a

“...I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, love the Lord your God, obey Him, and remain faithful to Him. For He is your life...”

Recently, my family and I went to see a musical called *Ebenezer*. With tear-filled eyes I watched as Scrooge’s life was replayed before him, and he realized the decisions he made in his past affected who he became in the present and future. We, like Scrooge, are given the choice of how we will respond to this life. Sometimes the choice is an obvious Life or Death decision. At other times the Lord walks us through the fire and our hearts want to grow angry and bitter. But in the heat of the fire, in the pruning of the tree, Life and Beauty will spring forth if we would just cling to Him.

Ebenezer awoke on Christmas morning, filled with joy, because he was given a second chance to bless those around him. As we begin this New Year, we too are promised His new mercies every morning (Lam. 3:23) when we choose to trust Him, because “...He is [our] Life...”

Jesus, thank you for your promises. Help us to remember to choose You. Amen

Maureen Bland

Day 13

Scripture: Ephesians 4:2-3

“Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.”

Jesus gave the perfect example of humbleness when he came to the earth knowing he was king, yet presented himself as a lowly servant. He was sinless, yet paid the ultimate price of death on the cross because of his willingness to obey the Father and his never-ending love for us. He told us to walk the extra mile, turn the other cheek and pray for those who mistreat us. He calls us to be patient with one another in the same way that He is immensely patient with us. We know that loving one another is possible because God loved us first. Our love expressed for one another is the true sign that God lives in us.

Implementing the characteristics of humbleness, patience, and love are not something we can easily do in our selfish nature. But we can be certain that through the power of the Holy Spirit, our hearts will be changed and we'll be able to live a life that is pleasing to God. Finally, we as the body of Christ, should strive to live in peace with one another, forgiving each other quickly and being completely merciful so that the Father will continue to be merciful to us. For God has purposefully placed us together so that we may use our individual gifts to advance the Kingdom of heaven and bring Glory to Him.

Father, Give us the heart of Jesus. Let us see others through your eyes with love and compassion. We are thankful for the same Holy Spirit that resides in us to unite us and guide us along the path. Let our church rise up as a people who are obedient to love one another. We know that if we draw near to you, you will direct our steps. May our church be a people eager to share the Gospel and love the lost. In Jesus name. Amen.

Rachel Miller

Day 30

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

“Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Jesus Christ.”

Although I love mountains and trees and sunsets, and those memories still inspire and bless me, I love my Heavenly Father, His Son Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and people so much more.

The first church the apostle Paul established in Macedonia at Thessalonica was “loved by God who chose them because the Gospel came with power, the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.” 1 Thes. 1:4-5. “For you know we dealt with each of you as a father does with his own children; encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God who calls you into His Kingdom and Glory.” 1 Thes. 2:8, 11-12

The Apostle Paul founded the church in Thessalonica and wrote the letter of 1 Thessalonians to them to encourage them. He'd had to leave the church in the midst of persecution and opposition from the Jews, and recent converts needed direction. His instruction continues to be an encouragement to the Church today.

We need to be reminded to rejoice, because we are always tempted to mourn in this world of trouble.

We need to be reminded to pray without ceasing, because contact with our Father is the only way we stay grounded in His will.

And we need to be reminded to give thanks in everything, because we have a gracious Heavenly Father Who gave His all for us through the sacrifice of Christ Jesus on the cross.

Today, ask God for grace to focus on these three things to fulfill His will: Rejoice, Pray, Give Thanks!

Immanuel, Hallelujah, Amen

Paul Lumbatis

Day 29

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9:8

“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.”

In the ninth chapter of 2 Corinthians, Paul appeals to the church at Corinth to follow through on the gifts they promised to the poor Christians in Jerusalem. As part of his appeal, Paul speaks to the blessings of generous giving.

As Sarah Grace and I were studying this verse, I found it humbling to talk with my child about how we have been blessed as a family and to acknowledge that, more often than I'd like to admit, we have fallen short of the type of generous giving that Paul speaks of in this verse. But the truth, as Paul speaks it, is that we are all called to give generously of our material/financial resources to benefit God's kingdom.

God promises that He will continually replenish our resources to meet our own needs, as we continually use them to promote good deeds. It can be hard to think about giving or giving more, especially if our finances are tight, but God always keeps His promises.

Can you remember a time when you gave generously and God blessed you by replenishing your resources to provide for your needs? Or can you think of a time when you have seen this happen in a fellow Christian's life?

As we begin our journey of expanding our ministry at SBC, we will see God work in ways that we could never have imagined. God will lead each one of us to give generously. Not because God needs our money - that is an absurd thought; but because He allows us to experience the blessings of partnering with Him in doing “every good work.”

How is God speaking to you through this verse? Pray that God will reveal to you what He desires for you to give to the SBC ministry expansion. Do you truly believe the promise that if we have a generous spirit, God will provide a generous means to express it? If not, ask God for faith to test this promise and find Him faithful in your own life.

Sarah Grace asked me if I thought God would provide all the money needed for our ministry expansion, and I told her that I knew He would through our congregation's obedience. It is exciting for us to think that God will use our generosity to bless our community for many generations to come! I can't think of a better way to invest our resources.

Paula & Sarah Grace Garner

Day 14

Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The summer after I graduated from college, I went to China for six weeks on a mission trip. I was led by two staff members from my campus ministry. Before the trip, as we were preparing to live and share the gospel in a different country, I was on fire and ready to do exciting work for the Kingdom. I was anticipating all of the awesome ways God would work in China, and how privileged I felt to be part of something so exciting.

Towards the beginning of our sixteen hour flight to Beijing, China, I noticed one of the leaders of our group talking to the stranger next to him on the plane. I assumed they were just introducing themselves or discussing which of the latest movies that were available for us to watch on board that they were going to choose. About an hour later, I realized that they were still talking. The conversation seemed very in depth and passionate, and I couldn't wait to ask my friend what they had been talking about for so long. When we arrived in China, as we were filing off of the plane, I asked him what his intense conversation with his neighbor had been about. He told me that he was able to share the Gospel with that stranger, and that they talked about faith and hard questions for large chunk of the flight.

I can remember vividly the thoughts I had at that moment. I was in awe of the way my friend had sacrificed his sleep-time, or movie-watching time, to talk to this stranger on the plane about our Jesus. I had been focusing so much on how I was going to be on mission when we arrived in China, that I would not have taken the time to spur a conversation with some stranger.

Although the trips we take and the exciting things we are privileged to do for the Kingdom are very important in the spreading of the Gospel, each conversation, as tiny as they may seem, are just as important, even if they are just “on the way.” WE ARE CALLED to be on MISSION ALL THE TIME.

So, if the Lord sends you to a foreign country, be obedient. His words in Matthew 28 are clear, “GO, and make disciples of ALL NATIONS...” But, He also expects us to be on mission every second of every day, even to strangers on a plane.

What does your mission field look like today?

Kirsten Dugle

Day 15

Scripture: Hebrews 11:6

“And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.”

When we put our faith in God, we put our faith in the integrity and honesty that are part of His character. God does what He says He will do. God’s Word does not contradict itself. I’m grateful for that stalwart aspect of God, and by placing faith in Him, I’m assured of protection from the enemies of this world.

God knows the big picture and sees a future we cannot see right now. He wants us to focus on Him, and He will see us through. I don’t always feel strong or courageous. In fact, I can be pretty much the opposite of that when I’m facing situations for which I don’t know the outcome. But God is in control, is He not? When I place my faith in Him, I know He goes before me. With God before me, what other response could I have but courage and strength?

God, thank You for doing what You say You will do. Help me to recognize the ways that You have blessed me during my life. Show me how to use my gifts for Your glory.

Adapted from Read, Ponder, Pray by Kathy Mansfield

Day 28

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:7

“For we walk by faith, not by sight”.

It won’t be long before our grandson, Jack will discover how to push his knees underneath himself and crawl. Not too soon afterwards, he will be wobbling awkwardly into Heather and Dustin’s open arms with the encouragement of cheers and smiles! Learning to walk is a HUGE milestone! Learning the dynamics of forward motion is a lifelong journey. Truly it is.

My office is located in the therapy gym of a long-term care and rehab facility. Recently, I observed as an elderly gentleman learned to walk again after a massive stroke left him paralyzed on one side. The therapist held onto his gait belt and said, “I won’t let go of you or let you fall. I’ve got you. You can trust me.” Isn’t that a real-life picture of learning to walk by faith?

Paul says, “*We walk by faith and not by sight.*” Walking requires that we get up and start moving. It involves: “*Motivation* – moving for a purpose. *Direction* – having a goal and destination to reach. *Motion* – focusing our energy and resources in pursuit of a goal and destination” (Steve Riley). In order to walk by faith, we must be in forward motion. Walking by faith calls for action and finds its roots in God’s power, not human effort. What would our first step of faith be if we really felt like taking action? Whether we’re early in our faith walk or have been trusting Him for years, the principles are the same. The moment we act, our faith springs to life!

Cindy Childers

Day 27

Scripture:

"I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation"

Our digital age has brought about many great changes to our lives. Every year, more of us are doing our shopping on line rather than traveling to the store. We don't even have to leave home to buy our groceries. We have traded our paper roadmaps for GPS units. Thanks to social media, it is possible for us to have hundreds of "friends" whom we have never really met in person.

But is it possible that the same digital dependence that allows us to do so much has inadvertently put up barriers to meaningful worship and the fellowship that should define us as the LORD's disciples?

David reminds us in Psalm III that there should be more to our worship than personal praise and private prayer. We are reminded in the first verse of the importance of joining with other believers as we praise and pray to God. We gain strength and encouragement from each other because we all have the Spirit of Christ Himself within us when we choose to step out of our closets and join together in praise of our Lord and Savior.

Lord, thank you for reminding me of my need for the fellowship and spiritual power that I gain when I join with fellow Christians in praise and prayer. Amen.

Byron Thompson

Day 16

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9: 8-12

"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. As it is written:

"They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever."

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people, but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God."

In the above scriptures, the apostle Paul writes about giving. He explains that through the grace/love of God, He [God] gives us the tools we need to help others both physically and spiritually. As we come to love God more ourselves and want to be more like His Son Jesus, we are freely given everything we need to provide His love to others. As we provide for others, we are given even more "seeds" to multiply the harvest for the Kingdom of God. In helping others with a cheerful heart, we are also thanking God for the opportunity to serve.

God, our prayer is that we know as we give, you will give us the tools, love and compassion to help and serve others even more. It is our enjoyment and blessing to enhance your Kingdom and serve your saints by sharing the story of your son, Jesus Christ. May you, Father God, place others in our lives so that through you, we can supply the spiritual and physical needs they deserve. We thank you for choosing and allowing us to be your servants. Please forgive us of our sins. Amen

Bob Perkins

Day 17

Scripture: Matthew 22:21

“They told him, “Caesar’s.” So he told them, “Then give back to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

Have you ever realized how much God has given us? #everything (hint hint) How do you thank Him or appreciate what he has done and given you?

When I was younger I was taught that everything I had was God's or a gift from Him. Matthew 22:21 to me meant to give it all away or give it back to God. That verse means something different to me now. Giving to Caesar what is Caesar means that I have a responsibility to my government and my community. I pay taxes and follow the laws that the government has set up. I must be a good citizen.

Give to God's what is God's means more to me. I am to take care of what God has given to me. Everything is a gift, that I must cherish. He might take it back. I am to follow His plan for me. He is the great architect of the world and I need to listen and obey him. Following his plan is listening, obeying and putting His plan first above mine. That is hard. My mom tells me that it is something she struggles with even in adulthood, but the reward is worth it to have that special relationship with Him. I think God wants to have that relationship and that is where blessings come from. Obedience.

I think to share His grace and mercy is something that is part of those gifts. He gave those things to me and I should give them freely as well. Love and forgiveness are gifts that I need to be regifting as well. In our society regifting is not acceptable but what could make God happier but giving to others what He has given to us. The bible tells us that God has given us everything we need. (2 Peter 1:3) Everyday is a new beginning and a new chance to not only give money back to the church and to others but to give others the gifts that He has given to us as well. I think He would smile and be proud. What could beat that?

Dear Lord, Please give us wisdom to not just give to give but to give your gifts freely and wisely everyday. Not just money but giving of your gifts of grace, mercy, love and forgiveness. In Jesus's name. Amen

Tyler Griggs

Day 26

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 10:5

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

Sometimes, when I read a command from the Bible, it's easy for me to accept. Thou shall not kill or steal; they make sense. They all seem doable. However, there are times I wonder, how could I possibly live up to the expectation set before me?

Take, for example, 2 Corinthians 10:5b, “*take every thought captive to obey Christ.*”

Wait a second. Take our thoughts captive? It seems impossible to control my thoughts. Yet, we know based on the entirety of Scripture that God never asks us to do something for which He has not already equipped us.

You might say, well, I don't really have “bad” thoughts. What about worry? Doubt? Fear? I think it is safe to say that most of us struggle with one or more of these. Especially when it comes to our finances. As we seek God and ask what He would have us give, we may be tempted to worry about other expenses or fear that we may not reach our goals.

But dear friends, God has equipped us to take these thoughts captive. If you go back and read the rest of 2 Corinthians 10, you will find God reminds us that we fight battles not as the world does, but with divine power. He has given us the Holy Spirit and His Word.

When worry, doubt, and fear increase, take your thoughts captive through the power of the Holy Spirit and replace them with God's promises. Although it seems impossible to control our thoughts, remember, “with God, all things are possible. Matt 19:26.

Lord, help us fill our minds with your promises, so that when we are tempted to worry or fear, we will have the power to take our thoughts captive and make them obedient to you. Amen.

Bobbi Caranna

Day 25

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14

"...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land"

High King of Heaven, my victory won
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heav'n's Sun
Heart of my own heart, whate'er befall
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all

Be thou my vision is a great hymn that was published in 1912. The last verse resounds in my heart as I think about my own victory and how it was won by our savior Jesus Christ. During the "hustle and bustle" of this Americanized life, we often are not reminded of the display of love shown to us on Calvary. However, we sometimes can catch a glimpse of hope through the stories of others who were once lost, but now joyfully found.

The testimony of Digna Veletanga is one of those stories. Digna tells of being by a river and the feeling of evil that was all around her at the moment of her conversion. She ultimately gave everything to Christ and proclaimed that she would live for Him daily. One thing that we have to realize is that there is no one story that is the greatest conversion. Instead, we have to understand that every person that has ever called on the name of the Lord and has been saved is the product of an astounding miracle. As you pray for our Church, pray for more to come to know Christ, to be saved from a life of sin, and be delivered into a relationship with a Holy God.

Digna Veletanga

Day 18

Scripture: Romans 15:5-6

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

If there is ever a time in the history of a local church when we need to hear these verses, it is when we step out in faith to improve and enlarge the vision and outreach of the church. As a church we are to honor and glorify God the Father in everything we do. We must honor God in our faithful giving. If we are walking by faith, our faith will motivate us to give generously; to give sacrificially and to give supernaturally.

Faith is not acting on what we already know is possible. It is not doing what we already know can be done. Faith enables us to be involved in something that could not be accomplished unless God is doing it.

Remember, giving is not about problems, but priorities. Giving is not about wealth, but about willingness. Giving is not about obligation, but opportunity. Giving is not about legalism, but Lordship.

Every time we see a marriage restored, a physical infirmity healed, a commitment to spiritual growth, a baptism with Christ, our minds and hearts should explode with the joy of generosity for what God is doing in our midst.

Praise the name of Jesus!

Rev. Tim Kilby

Day 19

Scripture: John 1:4-5

“In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

For most of my young adult life, God has led me to work in areas of darkness. My anthem has always been take your light into the darkness lest it remain dark... until one day the darkness entered my home and physically chased me out. I felt beaten, trapped, and unwilling to expose my light for fear of being hurt again.

Fear of the darkness is what keeps us away from “those people” and “those places.” Sometimes it’s the result of others’ sin through crime, injustice, or hate; other times it’s our own personal sin of addiction, selfish ambition, or pride. Regardless of the cause, we don’t want to risk our own pain, suffering or temptation.

While these are normal, reasonable reactions, Believers are called to be the light that Jesus embodies— the light of all mankind that cannot be overcome by darkness— to the people and circumstances that may threaten us. When we accept our new lives in Jesus, He gives us power, love and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7). This comes spiritually and practically through people and resources that will encourage and fan your flame.

Sometimes you have to fight for your light. It may feel like a losing battle at times, but we have the only light that cannot be overcome. Once you’ve fanned your flame, remember that it is a light for all mankind. Get (back) out there and shine.

Lord, thank you for the unique hope we have in you, that you have overcome all things. Remind us of that in difficult times of darkness and help us to be obedient to Your call to be the light of the world.

Ashley Boyd Pierce

Day 24

Scripture: James 5:16b

“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

Prayer is talking with God. It is God’s way for us to communicate with Him and must begin with Him. Though we may have knowledge of prayer and say we understand about prayer, unless we pray, we will never learn to pray. We can never do more than pray until we have prayed.

Prayer is the most powerful force available to Christians today. It is making ourselves available to God, and entering His presence with boldness and assurance. We open ourselves to Him and let Him flow through us.

The verse quoted above assures us that tremendous power is made available through earnest praying, but it must be inwardly prompted by the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit was not limited to the early church. The early church was a house of prayer. They all joined together in constant prayer as the Holy Spirit led them. He continues to move mightily today where people are praying, helping us to be Christ-centered, restoring and renewing us, reminding us of our mission to the world.

As a church, we come to know God’s will when the whole body comes to understand what God wants and is telling us what to do. We have seen how God has moved in a great way in our church. As we prepare to face the challenges of future growth, we pray our hearts will be stirred to agonizing and fervent prayer.

God gives greater authority to united prayer. We need this to achieve victories for Christ through the Holy Spirit, to bring His kingdom to total fulfillment.

*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Amen*

Marie White

Day 23

Scripture: Matthew 2:11-12

“On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.”

The moment they see Jesus their anticipated joy spills over into praise “they bowed down and worshiped him.” Having found **THE** treasure “they opened **their** treasures.” Isn’t that an interesting connection? Generosity with one’s “stuff” comes pretty easy after we find what we’re really looking for. Once you find **THE** treasure you can’t help but give away **your** treasures... to honor the greater treasure that you’ve found in him. To worship Jesus is not only to bow down at his feet; it is to lay down all your earthly treasures at the same feet.

You probably don’t pay much attention to your dreams, but they did and it likely saved their lives. God is wildly mysterious - always has been, always will be. If we take our cues from these first followers of Jesus, we are to be filled with joy in the journey to find him, worship him when we find him, be generous to him after we find him and pay attention to where our mind wanders when we fall asleep.

Linc Ashby

Day 20

Scripture: Revelation 22:12

And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me...”

People have been looking for the return of the Lord ever since He ascended into Heaven. We can see the signs as predicted in Scripture centuries ago coming to pass today. God does not expect you, however to just sit around waiting for Him to come back, but to be about His work here on Earth. We are to be busy enlarging His Kingdom.

Simpsonville Baptist Church is about to launch into a huge building project that hopefully and prayerfully will draw many to Him. This is not for our glory (or reward), but for His. We must, therefore, be in prayer about God’s plan and our part in it.

If we believe that His Word is true (and it is), then we know that He will “come quickly” at any moment. We must feel a sense of urgency for those who do not know Him as their personal Lord and Savior. We must be a light for this community drawing all to Him.

Lord Jesus, please, by your Holy Spirit, instill in each of us the desire to see all saved. As you prayed for us in the garden before your death, help us to pray for others who are lost, while there’s still time before Your return. Help us to see your plan and our responsibility in it for Your Honor and Glory. Amen

Mary Wyatt

Day 21

Scripture: Proverbs 14:12

“There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.”

So much of God’s word is His redeeming His people, only to see them follow their own way. His capacity to forgive and offer His grace far exceeds our perpetual fall to disobedience. But God gives us an opportunity through His word and an evolving relationship with Him, to grow in our faith and give us strength in our weaknesses. He says that His “...word is a lamp for [our] feet, a light on [our] path” (Psalms 119:105). But even more, as we mature in our faith, we will be better at discerning good from evil (Hebrews 5: 14). Jesus understood our desperate need to be guided. In the Lord’s Prayer he instructs us to pray to not be lead “... into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matt. 6:13). Finally, He provides the spirit to dwell in us, to intercede to God (Romans 8:26) and to direct us (Romans 8:14).

Father, protect my heart from my sinful ambitions; desires that lead me astray. Through your spirit, may I have eyes and ears to discern your will and a purpose filled heart, eager to serve you.

Matthew Moore

Day 22

Scripture: Psalm 100:1-2

“Make a joyful noise to the Lord all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into His presence with singing!”

When we sing praises to the Lord, it brings Him great joy. He loves to hear our worship because it puts our focus on Him. When we get caught up in the day to day life of this broken world, it is easy to lose our focus and get weighed down. I love to watch the birds fly through the air singing beautiful songs without a care in the world. Just like these birds, the Lord wants us to sing joyful, happy songs of praise. We can do this without letting our burdens weigh us down by putting our trust in the Lord, knowing that He is in control of all things. When we are worshiping Him it takes our attention off of our troubles and puts it on Him.

Dear Lord, as we go into this New Year, please help us to give thanks for everything and to remember Who gave us this life and Who is in control. Amen.

Ashley Bland