

40 DAYS OF FOCUS

GLORIFYING GOD BY UNITING HIS PEOPLE IN DEVOTION



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FOREWORD

I invite you on a spiritual journey with Riverside Baptist Church. We are beginning our journey with God on February 21st and continuing through April 8th. If you don't count the Sundays during this time frame, there are 40 days. We will spend these 40 days cultivating our hearts to receive great blessings from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our church is focusing on four important areas that will bring spiritual growth in everyone who sincerely participates.

1. Prayer – We invite you to join us in asking God to do great and marvelous works in and through us. During this time, we ask you to pray for the request at the end of each devotion and to attend prayer meeting faithfully. Can you imagine how pleasing it will be to God to hear so many of his children praying with unity? We are expecting a mighty move of God!

2. Fasting – We invite you to fast for at least one 24 hour period between February 21 and April 7. You can fast as Daniel did by not eating meat or you can fast as Jesus did by not eating food. If you have health conditions of concern, please consult with your doctor before you fast. I firmly believe that God will do a great work in us as we fast for 40 days as a church family. Remember, fasting is not just a time of not eating certain foods. It is a time of earnestly seeking the Lord. When you are hungry, pray! You will pray more than ever and experience God's presence in an intimate and powerful manner.

3. Sacrifice – We invite you to give up something that is dear to you for the 40 Days of Focus. I want everyone to be able to appreciate the suffering Christ endured for us on the cross. What better way to help us realize His suffering than willingly giving up something we love?! You can give up soft drinks, nicotine, tea, sweets, anything that you enjoy. The idea is that as you crave what you have given up, you thank Jesus for denying Himself and dying on the cross to pay for our sins.

4. Devotion – We invite you to worshipfully read these 40 days of devotions. Ask God to speak to you and to teach you before you read them. After you read, ask God to help you live out what you have read. Your faith in God will be strengthened as you meditate on His word for 40 Days.

Please let anyone on our church staff know the great things God does in your life during these 40 Days of Focus. I am praying for you!

Pastor Joe Wood

SPELLBOUND IN SILENCE AT JESUS' FEET

Read Luke 10:38 – 42

Mary was praised by Jesus for her willingness to sit at His feet and listen. Those of us with the “Martha syndrome” have often felt guilty for our out-of-control work ethic and inability to sit still in order to “waste time with Jesus.” Just what is it that we are supposed to be doing when we sit in silence at Jesus feet?

Dallas Willard,* a writer in the area of spiritual disciplines, says that “Silence is frightening because it strips us as nothing else does, throwing us upon the stark realities of our life. It reminds us of death, which will cut us off from this world and leave only us and God. And in that quiet, what if there turns out to be very little to ‘just us and God?’”

Silence is especially difficult because it is a mark of quiet, inner confidence. Many of us run off at the mouth because we are inwardly uneasy about what others think of us. Eberhard Arnold** observes that “People who love one another can be silent together.” Perhaps, that’s why Mary was able to sit silently at Jesus’ feet – she loved Him so much that she had no need to ramble on and on with mindless conversation. She could be silent with Him in the comfort of her love relationship with Jesus.

Let me challenge you to spend 30 minutes in silence with Jesus. You may find that you are distracted, just as Martha was, by the many pressures of life. Allow those thoughts to go slowly out of your mind, as though you were watching debris float down a river and out of sight. Think about Jesus, His love for you, how He has shown Himself to you. Think about how life would be without Him. Ask Him to speak to your spirit.

If you listen, really listen to Him, Jesus will speak to you in a still small voice, just as He spoke to Mary. Write down what He says to you. What He says is important for you to hear. It may change your life. You may discover why Mary sat spellbound in silence with the friend she loved so much.

Beverly Oxley

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*Willard, Dallas. *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Harper San Francisco, 1988, pg. 163

**Arnold, Eberhard, “Why We Choose Silence Over Dialogue,” *The Plough*, 1985, pg. 12

DAY ONE:

Pray for great friendships to develop in Connections

RETURN

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you." Jeremiah 31:3

There are four things about the love of God that I'd like you to meditate on today.

First, God loves you. He loves you more than anyone else could ever love you!

Second, God's love for you is eternal. Time cannot erase it. God loves you and He will always love you.

Third, God's love for you is unconditional. This concept is hard to completely understand at times because of how conditional human love can be. Sometimes human love is dependent on how we feel about someone...or it's dependent upon someone loving us in return. But God's love is unconditional. Nothing you do or don't do can alter it.

Lastly, God's love is incomprehensible! It's immeasurable. What's most remarkable about the love of God is that in spite of your sin and my sin...despite our failure and brokenness and worthlessness...He reached down and showed us His love by sending His Son to die in our place on the cross!

It's my prayer that you'll remember just how much God loves you today...and that as a result, you'll be motivated to share God's love with others.

God's love for you is eternal, unconditional, and immeasurable!

Jack Graham

Power Point Ministries

www.jackgraham.org



DAY TWO:

Pray for 85 people to be saved and baptized by the year's end

OBEDIENCE

“Jesus replied, ‘If anyone loves me he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him’” John 14:23

In this verse Jesus states that obedience to His commands is a product of our love for Him.

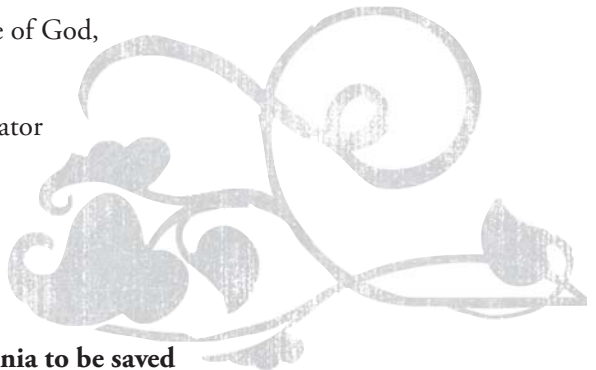
My heart is consumed with a passion for the children of Riverside. I think of them daily – their hearts, their desires and their futures. My own childhood was full of “righteous training” by godly people, yet this verse did not apply to me. Since God rescued me from that pit of sin, I’ve often wondered, “What was missing in all that childhood training, and are we missing it with our kids today?” This verse, I believe, is the key. What was missing in my life was not a knowledge of the Word of God or a realization of my need for a Savior. It was a love for Jesus – the kind that encompasses your whole heart, that your mind just can’t understand, and that you feel down to the very bottom of your soul. If I had possessed this kind of love for the Savior that I had accepted, then I would have obeyed His commands.

So, how can we as parents, teachers and Christian adults instill a love for Jesus into the hearts of our children, and thereby ensure their obedience to God? I believe it starts with us sharing with them our love for Jesus. How often do we speak of Jesus flippantly in front of our children? Have we lost the awe of Him that caused us to fall in love with Jesus ourselves? I challenge you to think about our Savior – the perfect Son of God – the same God who spoke the universe into being, who sees and knows all, the God who knit you together and assigned His perfect purpose to your life. Fall in love with Jesus all over again. When you speak of Him, make a point to let the love you have for Jesus be heard in your voice, seen in the sparkle of your eyes and witnessed in the awe on your face. Help lead the children of Riverside not only to the knowledge of Jesus but also to a lifelong, loving relationship with Him.

Because of the amazing grace of God,

Melanie Kidd

Children’s Ministry Coordinator
Riverside Baptist Church



DAY THREE:

Pray for the lost in Macedonia to be saved

OUR CREATIVE GOD

*“Great are the works of the LORD, they are pondered by all who delight in them.”
Psalms 111:2*

Consider these:

- According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources database there are approximately 2 million known species of creatures on Earth and almost 300,000 different types of known plants. (iucnredlist.org)

- It is estimated that there are over 6.5 billion humans on earth and no two fingerprints have ever been found to be identical. (wikipedia.com)

- A team of stargazers based out of the Australian National University in 2003 estimated that there are approximately 70 sextillion (70,000,000,000,000,000,000,000) stars in the known universe. (cnn.com)

When we take the time and opportunity to ponder and search out the works of the LORD, we cannot help but praise Him and stand in awe of His greatness and vast creativity! “Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; His greatness no one can fathom.” (Psalm 145:3)

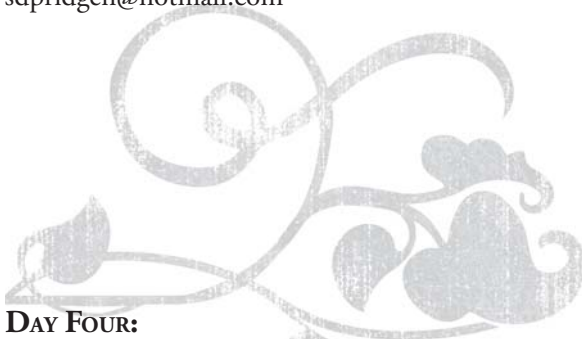
Take a walk and enjoy God’s creation, research something created by God, or reflect on how intricately all of creation works together to give glory to God. However you choose, take a few minutes today to consider and delight in the works and creativity of our awesome God. Then be sure to take the time to give Him praise for it.

Stephanie Pridgen

Office Administrator

Riverside Baptist Church

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DAY FOUR:

Pray that new believers will grow strong in their faith

BE UNASHAMED

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes...” Romans 1:16

In this scripture, Paul is stating that he is ready to share the gospel of Christ no matter where he is, who he is with, or what he is doing. He is saying that there is no excuse that will keep him from sharing the gospel. He explains that he is unashamed because the gospel has God’s power in it. It is the power given to us by God to lead others to Christ. Not one soul has been saved by the power of any man because it is God’s power that saves us, not the power of the messenger. Paul understood this. He knew that there was no reason for him to be ashamed or afraid to share the gospel because it was God’s power that would lead people to salvation, not his own.

It is important that we be unashamed of the gospel because Christ’s last command to us was that we were to make disciples of all nations, and we cannot do that without sharing His gospel. This is a clear command for everyone, not just for those who are comfortable with it. So, my question to you is, “Are you truly unashamed of the gospel?” If you are, then ask yourself “Am I sharing the gospel every opportunity I have, or am I sharing the gospel only when it is convenient for me?” If you are not, then ask yourself why. Paul has clearly shown us that God is in control when we share the gospel. So have faith in God’s word and share the gospel of Christ because God has promised that it is His power that will bring people to salvation, not our own.

Bryan Bird

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DAY FIVE:

Pray for middle and high school students at Riverside

AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

“So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless.” Daniel 10:8

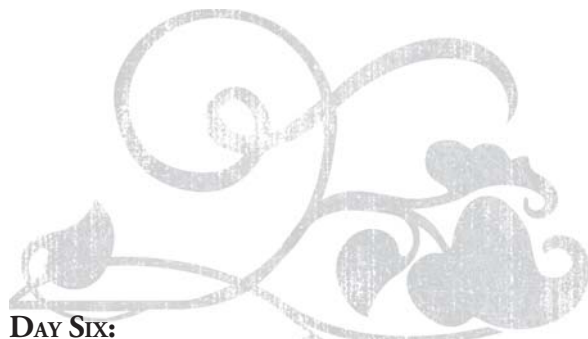
Daniel received a vision that troubled him greatly. He set himself out to understand the vision by fasting for three weeks. Three days after his three weeks of fasting, a messenger of God appeared to Daniel. The messenger explained that Heaven had heard his prayer from the first day, but the angel was temporarily prevented from coming by the prince of Persia, a demon angel, who sought to thwart God’s messenger.

There are times in our lives when we must seek God with all our hearts. It is in these times that we hear from Heaven in ways we may never have experienced before. Daniel’s perseverance in prayer was rewarded with a personal encounter with Heaven. However, in order to receive from God, Daniel had to be left alone, his strength removed, and be placed in a helpless condition. When we have no ability in our own strength to move Heaven or the events around us, we are in position to hear from Heaven. It is the acknowledgment of our humanity and our frailness that places us in a position to have a personal encounter with the living God.

Do you need a personal encounter with God today? Do you need God to intervene on your behalf? Seek Him with all your heart. Demonstrate to Him you are serious. Get alone and acknowledge your helpless condition before Him. He will reward you with His presence.

Os Hillman

The Faith at Work Movement
www.marketplaceleaders.org



DAY SIX:
Pray for young adults at Riverside

WHAT DOES HE SEE?

“The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord is on His heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men, His eyes examine them ...” Psalm 11:4

The book of Psalms holds much insight in exploring a wide-range of human experiences in a personal way. In this verse, I believe David was conveying the fact that God is watching and testing His children. He is ever aware of what we are “up to”. While this could be somewhat intimidating, I feel it can also bring us much comfort. He is always watching us. What does He see? Do I “look” like His child? Are there times when He doesn’t see in us any resemblance of Himself? Are there times when He points me out to the angels and says, “Now, that’s loving one another”, or “That’s how you serve me.” Or do the angels get to point and say to God, “Look how You are shining. She must be glorifying You.” My prayer is that there is always a “glow” that I am sending around my Lord and Savior.

A few days ago, I think God gave me a little insight on what pleasing Him is all about. It came from a 9 year old girl, beginning her walk with Him, writing a song ...

*All sisters, from the angels above, to the depths of the sea
Please, Oh Lord, please guide us all the way to your heart.
Please, Oh Lord, guide us all the way to your heart.
All we want is to know You.
Please, Oh Lord, please guide us all the way to your heart.*

As He is examining you today, what do you think He sees?

Janie Nix
Welcome Team Coordinator
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DAY SEVEN:
Pray for the children at Riverside

SHOULD YOU SET GOALS?

“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:13-14

Verse after verse of Scripture encourages believers to trust God for their needs. Some people, including church leaders, think those passages indicate believers should not set their own goals. To them, setting goals indicates a lack of confidence in our heavenly Father. But, this interpretation fails to acknowledge trust as an important discipline and turns it into apathy.

Goal setting helps us determine where to focus our energy to accomplish the work the Lord has for us to do. It is scriptural. In Genesis 6, we learn Noah built an ark with God’s instruction. In chapter 24 of Genesis, Abraham sent a servant out to find a wife for his son Isaac. And in Genesis 41, Joseph stockpiled food to supply Egypt through a famine. In Philippians 3, the apostle Paul sought deeper knowledge of Jesus Christ.

As any of these wise men could confirm, reaching for a goal increases faith. Stretch a rubber band wide, and – when allowed to relax – it will be slightly larger. Faith works the same way. When we decide to do something that requires more resources than we have, we must depend upon God to do the work through us. And if we rely on Him for the wisdom to set the right goals, then we can trust Him to enable us to achieve them.

Setting goals is the most basic step toward achieving anything worthwhile. If we are to succeed, we must be purposeful in deciding how to live. Any wise man or woman knows the only way to be sure of a goal’s value is to rely on the Lord’s guidance in setting it.

Dr. Charles Stanley

In Touch Ministries

www.intouch.org

Available at http://ww2.intouch.org/site/c.7nKFISNvEqG/b.1014819/k.8FC6/InTouch_Today.htm accessed 10, January 2007.

DAY EIGHT:

Pray for the choir as they minister to our church in song

PRAISE

“For My thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.’” Isaiah 55:8-9

Isn't it great to sing God's praises when He answers our prayers? But what about when He doesn't answer prayers the way WE want? Do we start to question God? Do we look up to heaven and ask, “Why me? Why now?”

Consider Job. Here was a man of immense wealth and also a very spiritual man. But what happened in his life? He lost everything – his health, his wealth, his friends, and his family. Job goes straight to God with questions. But how does God respond? With a few questions of his own. Four chapters of questions! Mind stunning questions that leave Job dumfounded and repentant. Listen to his response to God. “I know you can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.....I have declared that which I did not understand...I will ask of You, and You will instruct me...and I repent...” Job 42:2-6

The point is that God does not need to explain His actions. While we may think we know what we need in life, God *does* know. He knows our problems. He knows our needs. He knows our future. He is omniscient!

Sure God wants to bless us, but God knows that we are like any child who occasionally needs the rod of reproof. Even the Apostle Paul was given a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble.

So, perhaps the next time we want to ask God to do something in our lives, we should instead ask what WE should be doing in our own lives that will glorify Him.

Perhaps the next time we ask God why he hasn't answered a prayer, we should instead ask God to help build our trust in Him and His choices for our lives.

Perhaps the next time we ask God for anything, we should be willing to accept His answer by faithfully acknowledging what Paul writes in Romans: “...God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

Father, I acknowledge that You are in control, not me, and I trust that You will meet my needs in all circumstances. I submit my life to You —my trust in you is sufficient.

Karl V. Miller

Leadership Team Member

Riverside Baptist Church

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DAY NINE:

Pray for our worship team as they lead us in worship

YOU'RE A HERO!

Read Joshua 6:1-20

Do you look at others and wish you can be like them? Who are your personal heroes? The superstars you want to be like? Joshua had the potential of being a hero. Face it, he was chosen to be leader of the Hebrews as they conquered the Promised Land. He had to have military skills, leadership skills, and administrative skills to have been chosen for this position.

As Joshua led his people up to the city of Jericho, he must have been anticipating the battle to come. The city was surrounded by a high wall (possibly has high as 35 feet) and wide enough for the city's soldiers to march around. It would have taken a mighty battle to take the city – Joshua was just the man who could have led his army to victory.

God, however, had other plans. When He met with Joshua before the battle, God gave instructions that were difficult to understand. He told Joshua to lead his people in marching around the walls of the city for seven days and that the victory would then be theirs.

Joshua must have been disappointed with the instructions, but he responded immediately in faith and obedience. Consider Joshua's responses:

- He immediately left God's presence to go give his people their instructions. Notice that he did not question God's instructions or try to talk God into another plan. (see v. 6)
- He made following God's instructions his top priority. Scripture records that Joshua led his people early each morning around the city (see v. 12). He didn't wait for a more convenient time to respond, but instead made it the first thing the people did.
- He expected God to bring about the victory. Joshua led the people at dawn (even earlier in the morning) around the city on the final day of God's plan. He knew that the victory belonged to God and couldn't wait to see.

Joshua could have been a military hero by leading his people into a successful battle. Instead he was a spiritual hero because he was obedient to God's instructions. Like Joshua, we can be heroes when we obey God's instructions.

“Go forward . . . For the Lord has given you the city.”

Dr. Margie Williamson

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DAY TEN:

Pray for financial freedom for all of Riverside's members

DON'T GET THROWN OUT

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.”

Matthew 5:13

Although today salt is used primarily to season our food, in Jesus' time on earth it was most popular as a preservative. Because there was no refrigeration, it would have taken large amounts of salt to preserve their meat, leaving little for seasoning.

In comparing believers to salt, Jesus is illustrating the importance of Christians having an impact on the world. You see, the meat would be packed in or covered with salt which prevented the meat from spoiling or becoming contaminated. The phrase “loses its saltiness” can more accurately be understood as “becomes defiled,” meaning that the salt could become mixed with other impure substances that rendered the salt useless as a preservative.

In the context of this chapter we see that even in the midst of suffering and persecution we are still expected to influence the world. We are warned not to become discouraged or distracted to the point that we cannot be useful to God.

Just as the salt protects the meat from contamination and spoiling, as believers, we are to influence the world around us by slowing corruption, preventing moral decay, preserving peace and making the world thirsty for Christ.

In the same way that the salt becomes useless when it is mixed with impure substances, we can become useless if we allow “impurities” to enter into our lives. If we compromise our convictions, whether it is to avoid persecution or to be more acceptable to the world, we will become worthless agents of influence, good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled on.

Dennis G. Nix

Associate Pastor

Riverside Baptist Church

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DAY ELEVEN:

Pray that each member will find a place of service at Riverside

SACRIFICE

“The king [David] answered Araunah, ‘No, I insist on buying it from you for a price, for I will not offer to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.’”
2 Samuel 24:24

I remember as a kid hearing a preacher encourage me and other Christians to fast to celebrate Lent and remember Jesus’ sacrifice. As a kid with a healthy imagination and equally healthy appetite, I sat in the service and contemplated whether to give up asparagus, collard greens, spinach, or another vegetable I detested. The last thing I wanted to give up was cookies, sodas, or sweets, those treats that I often craved. I wanted to give a “sacrifice” to God, but I didn’t want it to cost me much.

King David encountered a similar situation. As punishment for David’s sin, God allowed a plague to kill thousands. In repentance, David was told to set up an altar and sacrifice on the property of Araunah the Jebusite. Araunah was willing to give David land, but the king insisted on paying for it because a sacrifice must cost something. Abel made an acceptable sacrifice. Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac. Jesus sacrificed His own life. David knew a sacrifice to God had to cost him.

What about us? Are we offering sacrifices to the Lord, or are we just giving God leftovers? Let’s be honest. It’s easy to go to church. It’s easy to say we are Christians. It’s easy to read the Bible every now and then, listen to Christian radio, or wear a Jesus t-shirt. Let’s refuse to offer to God something that isn’t a sacrifice, something that costs very little. Whether we are giving our time, our money, or our energy, let’s give the Lord something costly. He did not even spare His own Son, and He deserves our very best. Offer Him sacrifices that will make Him smile with delight.

John David Mangrum
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DAY TWELVE:

Pray that God provide abundantly for reducing the debt on our building

GRACE

Read Ephesians 2: 4-10

The primary emphasis of the passage is to describe the unmerited favor God has bestowed upon us despite our sinfulness. First, we are told of God's great unconditional love for us; that his mercy and love through Christ transcends our transgressions to make us alive even though we deserve death. We are to be seated beside Christ throughout the coming timeless ages for the purpose of being showered by God's love and kindness. It's all because of his matchless *grace*. We don't understand it but it is ... "by grace (we) have been saved through faith." Thank you, Jesus. As a result of our salvation we are expected to perform good works, prepared beforehand, not to obtain that salvation, but as a result of having received it. Again, thank you Jesus.

During the terrible days of World War II, Sergeant Jacob De Shazer took part in General Jimmy Doolittle's famous raid on Tokyo. His plane was shot down and De Shazer was captured. Mistreated, he developed an intense hatred for his Japanese captors. That is, until a Bible made its way through the prison compound to De Shazer's cell. He read through it, discovering the miracle of God's grace. Much like St. Patrick, who returned to Ireland to evangelize his former Druid captors, in the fifth century (and by so doing, saved Western Civilization), De Shazer returned to Japan after the war with the message of God's love and grace. A lonely, dejected, downhearted Japanese man contemplating suicide was handed one of De Shazer's tracts detailing his conversion. That man, Captain Mitsuo Fuchida was converted and eventually became part of Billy Graham's team. By the way, Captain Fuchida led the attack on Pearl Harbor. He returned to Pearl Harbor with an apology in the 1960's, presenting them with a Bible in which was inscribed Luke 23:34a "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It became Grace! Grace! Grace! Not Tora! Tora! Tora! Thank you, Jesus.

This same Grace that has been extended to De Shazer, Fuchido, and to my unworthy self, is extended to each of you. It requires only a profession of your faith in the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ and the sufficiency of His sacrifice. I extend this invitation to every one of you now—now being the most important time in your entire life.

Frank L. Churchman

Dive into the Deep Teacher
Riverside Baptist Church
fchurch@alltel.net

DAY THIRTEEN:

Pray for the staff and Leadership Team of Riverside

ACT NOW! SUPPLIES WILL LAST!

*“For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”
Phil 2:13*

“God works in you.” Don’t miss the wow-factor here. The Creator, the Red-Sea Splitter, the Dead-Resurrector is at work in YOU. Not only has He worked to create the desire for something great for His Kingdom through your life, He works in you for the power to act, to do, to implement. And His “good pleasure” in you is not fulfilled until you take action.

The same electricity that is available to run a passive little radio is just as available to run a swishing, swashing, filling, draining action-oriented washing machine. God’s power is able to accomplish in you not only the ideas themselves, but the action to implement those ideas! Heaven’s supply is available to you to DO!

And action is where the excitement is.

Action is the connecting point between God’s work in you and His good pleasure. Desire is there—necessary and important—but desire doesn’t guarantee anything tangible. Action is everything. The movie doesn’t get filmed until the director says “Action!” The money, the bed, or lunch doesn’t get made without action. Action is what brought the Brooklyn Bridge, the Eiffel Tower, and the Empire State Building out of the realm of intangible thought and into reality.

As one man said, “Nothing happens until something moves.” Talk, plan and dream all day, but until something moves, until someone takes action, talking, planning and dreaming are exercises in futility. Might as well watch TV.

What holds you back from taking action on your God-given dreams? What holds you back from doing something about the what-should-be’s in your life?

Refuse to be like the majority out there that’s just shouting, “Ready!... Aim!... Aim!... Aim!... Aim!” but they never fire. Take action! Act, knowing that God’s power is there for it and His “good pleasure” over your life is fulfilled in it.

Set a godly goal. Make a plan. Plan the work. **WORK THE PLAN!**

Scott Newton Smith
S.N.S. Ministries, Inc.
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DAY FOURTEEN:

Pray that God will do mighty things in our worship services

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

*"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."
Isaiah 41:10*

Isaiah 41:10 is one of my favorite scripture verses. It has been a lifeline for me for many years. Over and over again, I have held on to this verse. God used it to rescue me in some tragic situations. God used Isaiah the prophet to give this promise to Israel long, long ago. In 1984, when I was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 36, he used a dear, Christian friend to give it to me. I have often thought if I were locked away in prison and not allowed to have a Bible, this would be one of the verses that I would still have. It is in my mind. It is in my heart. It is in my soul.

Before the promise comes the command. We are told not to fear. Tall order. When we feel the threat of danger, pain, harm or death, fear is our natural response. But, God says, "Don't fear." He also says, "Don't be dismayed." Another tall order. We are not to be discouraged or distressed. From a human perspective, how can you not fear, not be discouraged, and not be distressed when you've been told you have cancer?

Here's how—you believe the rest of the verse. God says, "I am your God." First, you have to believe God is who He says He is. If you believe, then He says, "I will make you stronger." He says, "Yes, I will help you." "Yes, I will hold you up, confirm you, support you, and maintain you." He doesn't say, "Maybe I will." He says, "I will do it and I will do it with my strong, right hand."

Fear is a normal, human response to danger. Reaching for and resting in the promises of the God of Isaiah 41:10 can and should be the natural response of a believer in Christ Jesus.

Here's something else He doesn't say. He doesn't say, "I will take away what you fear." He doesn't say, "I will take your cancer away." He says, "When you go through fearful times, I will be closer than your skin."

Pat Pinckard

Behind the Scenes Servant
Riverside Baptist Church
patpinckard@charter.net



DAY FIFTEEN:

Pray that we will be picture of Jesus to the community

OUR TRANSFER

“He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.” Colossians 1:13

Perhaps you have heard the illustration of the two dogs. Some people say that we have two natures within us vying for control of our lives. They claim that our old sin nature, which we inherited from disobedient Adam, is like a big black dog. Our new nature, which we inherited through Christ’s redemptive work, is like a big white dog. These two dogs are bitter enemies, intent on destroying each other. Whenever you involve yourself in worldly thoughts or behavior, you are feeding the black dog. Whenever you focus your mind and activities on spiritual things, you are feeding the white dog. The dog you feed the most will eventually grow stronger and overpower the other.

This dramatic illustration may motivate Christians toward saintly behavior, but is it accurate based on who we really are in Christ? Since God “delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13), can we still be in both kingdoms? When God declares that we are “not in the flesh but in the Spirit” (Romans 8:9), can we be in the flesh and in the Spirit simultaneously? When God says that “you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8), can you possibly be both light and darkness? When God states that “if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17), can we be partly new creature and partly old creature?

But be careful. Can a Christian sin? Of course! “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). But having sin and being sin are two completely different issues. When we choose to walk by the flesh we will sin, but, as 1 John 2:1 reminds us, we don’t have to: “My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin.”

Prayer:

How liberating to know today, Lord, that I am in the light, that I am a new creature, and that my new nature is firmly anchored in Your work of reconciliation.

Neil Anderson

Freedom in Christ Ministries

www.fcm.org

DAY SIXTEEN:

Pray for the salvation of all babies and children at Riverside

MARKS OF THE POTTER

“But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and we are all the work of Your hand.” Isaiah 64:8

At one point in my life I aspired to be an artist. So, during high school I enrolled in every art class available working my way into an advanced class where one of my favorite projects was pottery. I could literally sit at the potter’s wheel for hours attempting to create a “masterpiece” out of a lump of clay.

As I worked with the clay, I discovered a few things. One is that the lump of clay can do nothing on its own. Until the potter takes the clay into his hands and begins to mold and shape it, the clay can only sit there on the wheel.

Another discovery had to do with the process of molding the clay. The potter has to gently apply water to the clay to keep it moldable. When one little part of the clay is resistant to the water, it becomes dried out and difficult to work and usually mars the creation.

I also learned that no matter how hard I tried I could never create two pieces that were exactly the same. Each piece was shaped a little differently and had its own marks of beauty as well as imperfections.

Finally, the most important discovery was that the pottery has to remain in the potter’s hand to be useful. You see, a potter can create a beautiful pitcher and it can set on a table for people to admire, but if the pitcher remains in the potter’s hands it can be used to serve a refreshing drink to a thirsty soul.

We are much like the clay.

Like the clay, we will never become a thing of beauty without God’s touch.

Like the clay, we can have one little part of our life that is resistant to God’s molding.

Like the clay, God has designed each of us slightly different for His purposes.

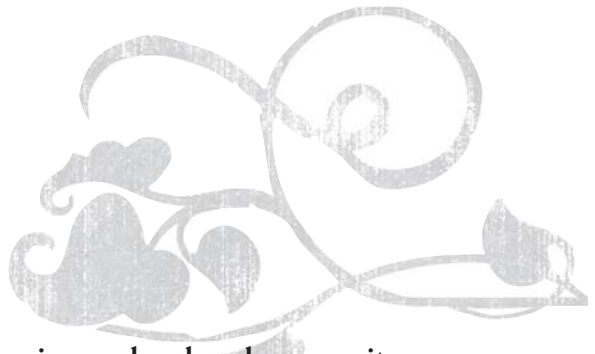
Like the clay, we must remain in God’s hands to be useful to Him.

Dennis G. Nix

Associate Pastor

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DAY SEVENTEEN:

Pray for the safety of children in our church and community

WHEN DO WE PRAISE?

*“And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.”
John 11:41*

This is a very strange and unusual order. Lazarus is still in the grave, and the thanksgiving precedes the miracle of resurrection. I thought that the thanksgiving would have risen when the great deed had been wrought, and Lazarus was restored to life again. But Jesus gives thanks for what He is about to receive. The gratitude breaks forth before the bounty has arrived, in the assurance that it is certainly on the way. The song of victory is sung before the battle has been fought. It is the sower who is singing the song of the harvest home. It is thanksgiving before the miracle!

Who thinks of announcing a victory-psalm when the crusaders are just starting out for the field? Where can we hear the grateful song for the answer which has not yet been received? And after all, there is nothing strange or forced, or unreasonable in the Master's order. Praise is really the most vital preparatory ministry to the working of the miracles. Miracles are wrought by spiritual power. Spiritual power is always proportioned to our faith.

--Dr. Jowett

Nothing so pleases God in connection with our prayer as our praise, and nothing so blesses the man who prays as the praise which he offers. I got a great blessing once in China in this connection. I had received bad and sad news from home, and deep shadows had covered my soul. I prayed, but the darkness did not vanish. I summoned myself to endure, but the darkness only deepened. Just then I went to an inland station and saw on the wall of the mission home these words: “Try Thanksgiving.” I did, and in a moment every shadow was gone, not to return. Yes, the Psalmist was right, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.”

--Rev. Henry W. Frost

Compiled by
Mrs. Charles Cowman
Streams in the Desert

DAY EIGHTEEN:

Pray that God will protect the marriages of those at Riverside

SHINE LIKE THE STARS

“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.” Daniel 12:3

I remember sitting in my sandbox when I was a kid, dreaming that I was something amazing. I was confined to a small 4 X 4 space, but my dreams were big. I was Luke Skywalker, Batman, Captain America, and King Arthur and all of his knights of the round table. I didn't just pretend to be those things---In my mind, I was all of those things. My more-than-slightly-pudgy 5 year old frame could fly spaceships, fight villains, slay dragons and wield swords with great skill. I was a hero, a legend in my own mind. I had big dreams.

As I grew older, my world got bigger. My power in life has expanded in the most remarkable ways. I can drive anywhere I want to, without asking anyone's permission. I can eat Mayfield chocolate ice cream anytime I choose, even for breakfast. I have no curfews. I make my own money. I have a career. I have control of my destiny, power over my life.

I have experienced and accomplished a lot of things in life. If I've learned anything at all, it's that in my own power, my dreams are small. Where once I played in a sandbox and had world-sized dreams, today the whole world is open to me, and most of my individual dreams would fit into a sandbox.

There are times, when I step outside of myself, and operate in God's power. In those rare moments when I truly move with God, life becomes more than mundane---It becomes legendary. When I've moved in God's power, I've walked down the same streets as Alexander the Great. I've seen broken relationships restored, sicknesses healed, and hope restored. I've seen the destitute, homeless, addicted, and hungry dance before God with all of their might. I've seen a man dying of AIDS weeping with joy as he sang "Great is Thy Faithfulness". In God's power, I've been able to experience the impossible---The absolute transformation of eternity. I've seen my eternity changed, and I've seen the eternities of many young people radically altered.

My own dreams are small, but God's dreams are legendary. When we commit to being a small part of His great story, our lives become the stuff that legend is made of. When we impact the eternities of others in the name of Jesus Christ, we shine like the stars, for ever and ever.

Shining like the stars. Now that's a big dream. *Jesus, let me shine for You today.*

Lee Adams

Youth Pastor

Riverside Baptist Church

pastorlee122@yahoo.com

DAY NINETEEN:

Pray that God will strengthen the faith of our Riverside families

MY HEART'S DESIRE

*"You have given him (David) his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips."
Psalm 21:2*

Finding our place in God's story is a process of discovery. God writes the destiny of our lives in our dreams and desires. Until the return of our King, history is still unfolding and the simple fact that you are here is proof that you have a vital role to play. Our place in God's plan is as diverse and unique as each one of us. We all have dreams and desires, although they may have faded or been forgotten through the years. But we are all called to influence the world and our relationships in the body of Christ and in the world.

Since I was a young girl, I have always loved horses. Most young girls do. However that desire has never left my heart. My parents often questioned this passion. And now, as a grown woman with children of my own, I know we sometimes question the desires or interests of our own children. Sometimes these interests change with the seasons of life, but at times they can become the core of who we are.

Today, God uses my devotion to horses to further His kingdom. It has become my ministry. I avail myself to Him as it has become clear that I have an important part to play in furthering His kingdom on this earth! So do you! God has placed dreams and desires in your heart and will provide invitations for you to use your desires for Him. Do you know your gifting? You're calling? What has God written on your heart? Music? Sports? Cooking? Even motorcycles?

Use the desires that God has written on your heart. The world desperately needs you.

Speaking from the heart,

Renee Miller

Dive into the Deep Teacher
Riverside Baptist Church
wildwoodga@windstream.net

DAY TWENTY:

Pray that we will obey God in witnessing to others

SUNDAY'S HEROES

Read John 14:15-17

Jesus states in John 14:15-17, that when you love Him you demonstrate that love with obedience. Obedience not only puts love in action but glorifies Christ. It brings the resources of the Holy Spirit to our lives. His presence gives strength and help beyond human ability.

Eric Liddell was the gold medalist in the 400 meter in the 1924 Olympics in Paris, France. Liddell's fame rests more in that he refused to run his 100 meter race on Sunday, choosing to keep the Commandment to "Keep the LORD'S Day holy." His fame was revived in the movie, *Chariots of Fire*. A year after the Olympics, Eric Liddell returned to China, where he had been raised by missionary parents. There he served with the China Inland Mission for twenty years without spotlight or fame, except in the eyes of God and those touched by his ministry. He said, "Obedience to God's Will is the secret to spiritual knowledge and insight" (*The Disciplines of the Christian Life*, 27).

Before World War II broke out, Eric and a friend helped a man escape who had been part of a group that the Japanese beheaded for conspiracy. When the Japanese executioners struck the men with their swords, all were beheaded except one man, because he refused to kneel, and his head was severely cut. The Japanese left him for dead. Eric rescued him and carried him for medical help. He became a believer in Christ, testimony to the power of obedience.

Eric Liddell was totally committed to Jesus, "a man whose humble life combined muscular Christianity with radiant godliness" (*ibid*, 18). His faithfulness helps us realize that we are responsible to God in whatever we do. The Scottish athlete-missionary challenged every believer to faithful obedience. With your faithfulness, God will respond with the power of His Holy Spirit to guide and help, to comfort and strengthen, to make you fruitful for Him.

May God lead you to discover the power of obedience.

Dr. Dan Parker

First Baptist Church
Stone Mountain, Georgia
drdanparker@yahoo.com



DAY TWENTY-ONE:
Pray for Vacation Bible School

LOVE

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ...” Ephesians 5:25

“Love your wives...” Why did Paul have to tell the Ephesian men this? And why doesn’t scripture ever provide similar instruction for wives to love their husbands?

The answer stems from the Greek word for love used in this passage. Scripture presents several words that are translated as love in the English language. In this case, the word for love is AGAPE.

Agape is a special kind of love. It is the type of love that God has for us – “For God so loved (agape) the world that He gave his only Son... (John 3:16)”. It is the type of love that Jesus has for his bride the church “...and the ruler of the kings of the earth to Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood... (Rel. 1:5)”. It is a love that is unconditional and sacrificial, and it is the type of love that God expects every husband to have for his wife.

God expects a husband to love his wife with the same sacrificial love that Jesus has shown toward each of us. A love without condition. A love that is willing to give everything. A love that expects nothing in return. But why husbands?

Throughout scripture we see that God intends man to provide leadership over the family. Modern society scoffs at the headship of men, but scripture is quite clear. But what does this headship entail? What does this agape love entail?

Christ sacrificed everything for His bride the church and expected nothing in return. But agape love is even more. A man must also look at the life of Jesus to see what else agape love entails. Jesus is presented as the Head of the Church, but also as a servant. In Matthew, Jesus said “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve.” He is the head over everything who took “the very nature of a servant (Phil 2:7).

As Christian men we are expected to extend this same servanthood in our marriage. Our leadership should be tendered with service to our wives. Husbands must love their wives by regarding them as an equal partner and use their headship to ensure that this equal partnership works. Loving headship affirms. Loving headship encourages. Loving headship expects nothing!

Karl V. Miller

Leadership Team Member
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DAY TWENTY-TWO:

Pray that all of our guests will feel welcomed and loved

JUST THROW THE NET

“And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’” Acts 16:30

Many of us are afraid to ask someone if they would like to give their life to Jesus Christ for one simple reason: we’re afraid the answer will be no. And it just may be. But there are those wonderful times when someone will surprise you and say, “I want to give my life to Jesus Christ.”

Many years ago, I had the opportunity to be reunited with my father, Oscar Laurie, the man who adopted me. My mother had divorced him when I was a young boy, and that was the last time I had seen him. Years later, when I had an opportunity to preach on the East Coast, he invited our family to stay at his house for the weekend.

After dinner one night, his wife said, “Greg, tell me about how you came to put your faith in Jesus Christ.” As I shared my testimony and what Christ had done for me, my dad sat there listening with his hands folded. I thought, He is not buying this at all. But later that night, he asked me to go walking with him the next morning.

As we walked out into the cold morning air, he said, “I was listening to what you said last night. I want to know what I need to do to give my life to Jesus Christ.” He made a commitment to Christ that day, and he faithfully served the Lord for the remaining 15 years of his life.

Sometimes, when you share your faith, you don’t think you are getting through. But you never know. That is why we need to throw out the net. We need to give people the opportunity.

Pastor Greg Laurie
Harvest Christian Fellowship
www.harvest.org



DAY TWENTY-THREE:

Pray that we will have 500 people in worship on Easter Sunday

PRAYER FIRST

“And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” Matthew 21:22

Matthew 21:22 states, “And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” Remember Jesus’ words in Luke 18:28, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”

How well you subscribe to these truths depends on where you are in your relationship with God. A new believer may read these words and know them to be true, but a person who has truly experienced God’s work in his life will also believe these verses with his heart and soul. Even though we believe these to be true, it’s amazing how seldom we put them into practice.

Often when faced with a difficulty in life, we try to resolve our own abilities. When all else fails Christians sometimes say, “Well, I guess all we can do now is pray.” While it is great that we eventually go to God in prayer, it prolongs our struggle when we go to Him last. It is also a sobering indication as to where we put God on our list.

God is all-knowing and all-powerful. No matter where you are, He is with you ready to help you through whatever problems you are facing. Sometimes God will allow you to struggle with certain things so you can grow spiritually into a person He can use to further His Kingdom.

Trusting in God when you can’t see the end result goes directly against what we as humans have been “programmed” to do. Yet, we must take that step of faith in order to experience the power and glory that only comes from God. When we realize God can handle any problem we have, we will automatically go to Him in prayer fully expecting Him to see us through.

Prayer is an essential piece of the armor of God. Without doubt, prayer is the single most important and most powerful thing we can do. God is waiting for us to call on Him. How exciting it is that we have a Heavenly Father who longs to hear from us!

Michael Nelms

Leadership Team Member
Riverside Baptist Church
nelms1016@alltel.net

DAY TWENTY-FOUR:

Pray that God will show us new and effective ways to reach our community

ENTITLEMENTS

“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” Philippians 2:8

Society today has duped many of us into believing that the world owes us. It owes us a good living, a loving spouse, good health throughout our whole life, sexual pleasure when we want it, and paid vacations the rest of our lives. The world has told us if we work hard and do right, we are entitled to these things. This is the Esau perspective on life. For a mere meal, he sold his own birthright for a simple pleasure to which he felt entitled.

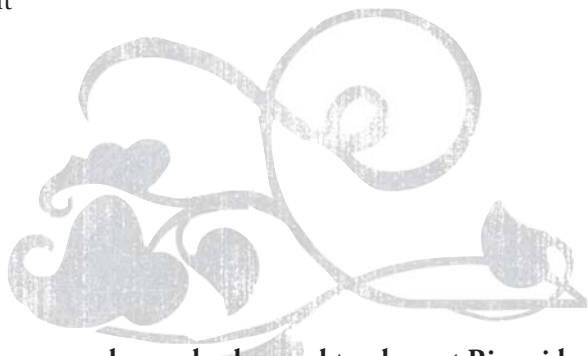
Society and even the Church is more pleasure-focused than ever before. George Barna, the Christian researcher, cites:

We are not a society that simply enjoys its time off. Our leisure appetites drive us. It is increasingly common to hear people turning down job offers because the hours or other responsibilities would interfere with their hobbies, fitness regimens and other free time activities. Even our spending habits show that playing has become a major priority. The average household spends more money on entertainment than it does clothing, health care, furniture or gasoline. Recreational activities have jumped more than 10 percent in the amount of time given to them. [George Barna, Frog In The Kettle (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1990), 82.]

What are the motives for our work life? Is it only to gain increased pleasure and leisure time? Jesus said He came only to do the work of the Father. I am sure that Jesus had times of refreshment in His life that allowed Him to get recharged for the mission God called Him to. However, He understood the balance of maintaining mission and play. When we view life with an attitude of entitlements, we are susceptible to becoming disappointed, resentful, and even bitter when our expectations go unmet. Ask the Lord if you need to relinquish any rights that may be hindering your freedom to experience His love and grace.

Os Hillman

The Faith at Work Movement
www.marketplaceleaders.org



DAY TWENTY-FIVE:

Pray that God will raise up more and more leaders and teachers at Riverside

AM I WALKING IN THE DARK?

"Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" Psalm 119:105

Being a mother is the single most difficult calling in my life. Some mothers possess a nurturing calmness that is magnetic. Their patience and love far exceed selfish desires. However, these qualities do not come naturally or easily for me. Most of my parenting moments feel like I am walking around in total darkness. Lost, uncertain, unsure and impatient describe the majority of my parenting years.

However, the Lord Jesus is teaching me through this simple verse that His Word, when I take the time to truly read and study it, is a well-lit path for my walk. Listening and obeying His commands remove the darkness behind my eyes. He becomes the light I need to give my children direction. He becomes the beautiful pathway to help me provide the love and patience my children deserve. Because I pray and praise Him, He elevates me to be the mother He created me to be. And, despite my never-ending failures, my children still can see Jesus in my reflection.

It is because of Jesus' love for me and my acceptance of His salvation that helps me walk down His well-lit pathway.

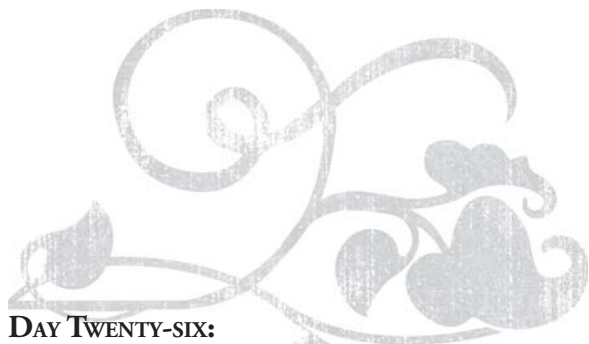
Choose His light today because His direction is brilliant. You will never again feel like you are walking around in the dark!

Necole Jacobs

Church Treasurer

Riverside Baptist Church

necolejacobs@alltel.net



DAY TWENTY-SIX:

Pray for spiritual and physical healing for the members of Riverside

SALVATION IS REGENERATION

“He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature.” 2 Peter 1:4

What does the Bible specifically say about our nature? Ephesians 2:1-3 described the nature we all shared before we came to Christ: “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins . . . and were by nature children of wrath.” What was your basic nature before you were born again spiritually? You and every other Christian “were by nature children of wrath,” dead in sin, subject to Satan’s power, living completely to fulfill sinful lusts and desires. This is the condition of every unbeliever today.

The second occurrence of the word is in 2 Peter 1:4 describing our nature after we came to Christ: “He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature.”

When you came into spiritual union with God through your new birth, you didn’t add a new, divine nature to your old, sinful nature. You exchanged natures. Salvation isn’t just a matter of God forgiving your sins and issuing you a pass to heaven when you die. Salvation is regeneration. God changed you from darkness to light, from sinner to saint. There is a newness about you that wasn’t there before. If God hadn’t changed your identity at salvation, you would be stuck with your old identity until you died. How could you expect to grow to maturity if you didn’t start as a transformed child of God? Becoming a partaker of God’s nature is fundamental to a Christian’s identity and maturity.

We are no longer in Adam; we are in Christ. We can still choose to walk according to the flesh, but why should we want to? “You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him” (Romans 8:9).

Prayer: Lord, may my understanding of who I am in Christ grow today so that I may walk in the victorious life You secured for me.

Neil Anderson
Freedom in Christ Ministries
www.fcm.org



DAY TWENTY-SEVEN:
Pray for the long range vision of Riverside

WORSHIP GOD WITH YOUR LIFE

Read Psalm 63:1-8

Worship is one of the most talked about subjects in Christianity, and also one of the least understood. Many times our discussions of worship are completely ego-centric. “I can’t worship to contemporary music...” “I don’t like those old hymns...” “I don’t think drums should be played in church...” “Hymns contain more spiritual truths than contemporary songs...” And on and on the discussions go. Most of the time our discussions center around our personal tastes. This reveals a problem with our heart. We can learn from David, the man after God’s own heart, what our heart of worship should look like.

Psalm 63:1-8 tells us to worship God with our soul, mind, and body. Our soul is the seat of our will and emotions. It is perhaps the deepest part of who we are. Verse 1 says, “My soul thirsts for You...” Verse 8 says, “My soul clings to You...” This implies an intense personal longing for the Lover of our soul. And in verse 5 we see that, “My soul will be satisfied...” Only God can satisfy the longing in our souls.

When we worship God with our mind, we make a choice to have our thoughts dwell on Him. Verse 6 says, “...I remember You...I think of You...” God asks for us to think of Him at all times, even during the night, as part of worship.

David also describes a physical component to worship: “My body longs for You...(v.1),” “I have seen You...(v.2),” “...my lips will glorify You...(v.3),” “... I will lift up my hands...(v.4),” “...with singing lips my mouth will praise You...(v.5).” When we worship privately or corporately, God desires for physical expressions of worship to be directed toward Him. We do not sing or lift hands or shout for the benefit of ourselves or anyone else around us. We do these things for Him because He is worthy. Take a look at your “unseen” life of worship. Is your worship at church just an overflow of your experiences with God during the week? As the song says, “It’s all about You, Jesus. And all this is for You, for Your glory and Your fame. It’s not about me, as if You should do things my way. You alone are God and I surrender to Your ways.” (*Jesus, Lover of My Soul*, Paul Oakley). Let’s worship God with ALL of our lives.

Kay Clifton

Worship Leader

Riverside Baptist Church

kayclifton@windstream.net

DAY TWENTY-EIGHT:

Pray for all of the teachers in Madison and surrounding counties

THE GREAT OMISSION

Read Matthew 28:18-20

This passage of Scripture is commonly known as the Great Commission. I submit that it is the Great Omission because we as God's children are in many instances simply not obeying this command. Some churches are known for winning souls and for sharing the Gospel. Other churches are known as great teaching stations, where the Word of God is taught. God wants each of His children to do both. He wants us to win others to Christ and then He wants us to TEACH them how to be followers of Christ.

One way of learning is through apprenticeship. Plumbers, electricians, doctors doing their internship and others learn by serving as an apprentice to the professional. A high school senior who wants to one day be a Christian counselor works in my counseling ministry for 3 hours each morning. This is part of her education, and she gets high school credit for her work at my office. Her school knows the importance of on-the-job training. Jesus' disciples served as apprentices to the Master teacher, Jesus Himself.

We are commanded in Scripture to reproduce ourselves spiritually. We should pour our lives into the lives of others. We must take our knowledge of Scripture, our love for God, our love for others, our heart for the church and reproduce it in the hearts and lives of others. We can do this by getting involved in small group Bible studies in homes or at work. We can accomplish this by sharing the Gospel with others and by inviting our friends, family and co-workers to church. We can do this by having prayer meetings at work and school. We can reproduce ourselves by investing time in others in one-on-one friendships. We must walk the walk and not just talk the talk. Many are afraid to step out and do something like this because of their lack of Bible knowledge. As the Scripture says, we must be ready to give everyone an answer.

Jon C. Ainbinder

Life Change Counseling Center, Inc.

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DAY TWENTY-NINE:

Pray for all of the firefighters in Madison and surrounding counties

RAISED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Read Romans 8:10-14

Trusting in Christ as personal Savior is the greatest experience on earth. Knowing that you have become a child of God and that Jesus paid for all your sins is so wonderful it is indescribable. After a person receives Christ as their Savior, they are elated and often “think” they will never sin again. These are genuine thoughts.

Reality sets in quickly! When a believer sins, they often think, “Maybe I did not really get saved” or “I just can’t be a good Christian.” These thoughts can be devastating. If this is your experience, you are not alone! I’ve never met a believer who hasn’t sinned since their salvation. Christians can sin. They can even be overcome with sin! However, there is more to the story.

Every Christian can live a life free from the power of sin! No matter how long you have been enslaved to a particular sin, you can find freedom from it through the Spirit of God. It begins by knowing that the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in you. Really think about that! In fact, why don’t you say it out loud and believe it? Say, “The same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in me.” The Spirit of God cannot sin. In fact, He is grieved by sin. Therefore, realize that when you sin as a child of God, you are acting out of character. You are not living as the new person you are in Christ.

When you are tempted by sin, admit to God and yourself that you can not overcome on your own. Then, thank God that you can overcome through the Spirit of God who dwells in you. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the desire and the power to not live in sin. Trust the word of God. If the Spirit of God raised Christ from the dead, He can raise you up so that you don’t live in sin. I also encourage you to lean on other believers. Ask for help. Tell mature Christians what you are experiencing. Never forget that you are a child of God, and you can live like it!

Joe Wood

Senior Pastor
Riverside Baptist Church
eslforinternationals@hotmail.com

DAY THIRTY:

Pray for all law enforcement officers in Madison and surrounding counties

A RADICAL, INNER TRANSFORMATION

*“By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain.”
1 Corinthians 15:10*

If you believe that you are part light and part darkness, part saint and part sinner, you will live in a very mediocre manner with little to distinguish you from the non-Christian. You may confess your proneness to sin and strive to do better, but you will live a continually defeated life because you perceive yourself to be only a sinner saved by grace who is hanging on until the rapture. Satan knows he can do nothing about who you really are, but if he can get you to believe you are no different from the natural person, then you will behave no differently than the natural person.

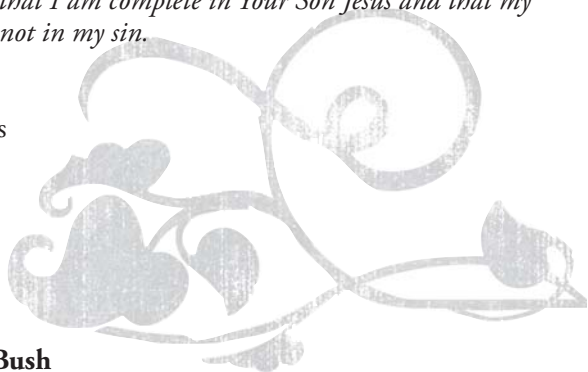
Why does this profile describe so many Christians? Because we are ignorant of our true identity in Christ. God’s work of atonement in changing sinners to saints is His greatest accomplishment. The inner change, justification, is effected at the moment of salvation. The outer change in the believer’s daily walk, sanctification, continues throughout life. But the progressive work of sanctification is only fully effective when the radical, inner transformation of justification is realized and appropriated by faith.

“But didn’t I read somewhere that Paul referred to himself as the chief of sinners?” you may wonder. Yes, but he was referring to his nature before his conversion to Christ (1 Timothy 1:12-16). He made a similar statement of self-depreciation in 1 Corinthians 15:9, but continued by saying: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain” (verse 10). Paul knew that who he was before Christ and who he became in Christ were two separate identities.

If you claim to be just a sinner, what will you do? You will sin! You are professing that sin is at the core of your identity. That’s not what the Bible teaches. Why don’t we just believe God that Jesus is at the core of our being and then begin to live like it by His Spirit?

Prayer: Thank You, Father, that I am complete in Your Son Jesus and that my identity is rooted in Him and not in my sin.

Neil Anderson
Freedom In Christ Ministries



DAY THIRTY-ONE:
Pray for President George Bush

RETURN

"I am coming quickly." Revelation 22:20

Last year, internet pornography made more money than Major League Baseball, the National Basketball Association, and the National Football League combined. Violent crime is at an all-time high. Hundreds of thousands die of AIDS in Africa every month. Even in Georgia, many go to bed hungry every night, and about one-third of those are under the age of six. It's very easy as a Christian to give up hope, throw your hands in the air, and begin to believe that the fight just isn't worth it anymore.

Then there's Jesus. Jesus was flogged, beaten, bruised, and bloodied. He was humiliated, spat upon, mocked, and denied. He died a criminal's death and was buried in a borrowed tomb. As Jesus was being led to the place He would die, a group of women followed, mourning, and Jesus addressed them in this way: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children...For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:28, 31).

Jesus is telling the mourners plainly that the world is a tough place, and that it's only going to get tougher.

Many people hold to the idea that Jesus last words came on the cross..."It is finished" (John 19:30). He died in humility and shame, a sacrificial lamb.

He wasn't finished.

Years after the crucifixion, Jesus told John a story of things to come:

"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns...He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood...He has on His robe and His thigh a name written: *"KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."* (Revelation 19)

Oh, He is coming back, and He is coming back to take what is His---His bride---His people. Zechariah 9:16 says that "The Lord their God will save them on that day...they shall be like jewels in His crown, lifted like a banner over His land.

He is coming back, and when He comes, He won't be a lamb. Get ready---victory is on its way.

Jesus, I can't wait. Amen.

Lee Adams

Youth Pastor

Riverside Baptist Church

DAY THIRTY-TWO:

Pray for U.S. troops around the world

ANNOINTED MUSIC

Read 1 Samuel 16:13 & 23

These two verses show how the Holy Spirit can minister to us through anointed music.

February 17, 1998, my father had a stroke and remained unconscious until he passed away on March 27, mine and Chris' 10th wedding anniversary.

As you can imagine, those five weeks and his death rocked my world. One thing I will never forget, however, is the peace I felt. Finding myself at rest in the Lord during anxious, chaotic times made no sense. Still, I could not deny how the Holy Spirit was ministering to me. I am convinced He was able to do that through anointed music much the same way He refreshed Saul through David's music.

A few years before Daddy's stroke, I was determined to like Christian music. I just could not enjoy it, so I stopped listening to it. I asked the Lord to help me like it. I began to hear praise and worship songs I had never heard and LOVED them! I even decided to stop listening to the pop/rock music I had listened to all my life. One day, I realized those songs that spontaneously popped into my head had become Christian songs. Now when I hear a song I really like, I listen to it repeatedly until it becomes part of me. I don't have to think about the words and melody. My full focus is on communing with the Lord.

The Lord has totally transformed my relationship with Him through anointed music. Through it, He has changed who I am. He can change you too. Try it and find yourself at peace in the midst of your storms.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, help us to fill our hearts and minds with what pleases You. Help us to be careful what we allow our ears and eyes to absorb. We ask You to transform people during the musical portion of our services and for people to remember how You can minister through anointed music.

Paula Dixon
Public Relations Coordinator
Riverside Baptist Church
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DAY THIRTY-THREE:

Pray for more financial support for the Madison County Pregnancy Center

THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3,4

Why does God allow Christians to endure hard times, to feel deep hurt or pain? This is a difficult question for believers. The Bible teaches in II Corinthians that our Lord Jesus Christ is the God of all comfort. He promises to carry us through the uncertain days and the dark moments in our lives. (Hebrews 13:5b- “I will never leave you.”) It is during the difficult days and the unbearable moments in our lives that God shines through to strengthen us and to show Himself to be our Stronghold. (Nahum 1:7- “The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble.”)

The verses do not end simply with God comforting us. They encourage us to comfort others in the same way we have been comforted. We are able to give others hope and encouragement because of the miracles and faithfulness that God has shown us. He has proven to us that His word is true and can be trusted.

When I was a teenager, my parents divorced. It was devastating to me. I felt that my security, my sense of normalcy, was torn apart. Life had taken a drastic turn. It was during that time that I learned to pray and grew closer to my Lord. The Lord became my Comfort, my Father, my All. As the years passed, I began to see God’s hand at work. Jesus has worked all things together, even the divorce of my parents, for good. (Romans 8:28- “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God.”)

You may be going through some dark moments in your life right now. You may feel that your world is crashing in around you, that there is no hope. Trust God. Rest in His comfort. In Christ you can overcome and live victoriously. (Romans 8:37- “We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”)

Why does God allow Christians to endure hard times, to feel deep hurt or pain? He allows it so that we will glory in His name and testify of His faithfulness and love.

Mayra Elizabeth Wood
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DAY THIRTY-FOUR:

Pray for the Northeast Georgia Starlight Crusade, April 15-17

THERE'S NOBODY IN THE TOMB

Read Matthew 28:1-9

Each of the four gospels gives an account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Each account has different facets, but there are three things that are common to each account: people went to the tomb early in the morning, the tomb was empty, and the first response of the people when they saw Jesus was to worship Him.

There are many scriptures that tell us to seek Jesus early. Psalm 5:3 says, “In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice...” Matthew 6:33 says, “...but seek ye first the kingdom of God...” Why does God’s Word stress the importance of seeking Jesus early? I believe that when we do that, our entire day is put in line with the Lord. We need to focus on Jesus each morning because we need Him so badly in our lives.

The tomb of Jesus is the only tomb in history which contains no body. In fact, opponents of Christianity have always had one sure way of eradicating our faith: produce the body of Jesus. But it’s never been done. Why? Because the tomb is empty! Jesus is out! He has risen from the dead! I wonder how our days would be affected if, each morning when we wake up, our first thought is, “There’s no body in the tomb...Jesus is alive!!” What a difference that would make in our lives!

What was the first response of those who were the first to see Jesus alive again? Worship. Matthew 28:9 says, “...they came to Him, clasped His feet, and worshiped Him.” These people were still grieving His death! And they found Him alive! This was confusing to them! John 20:9 says, “They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.” But even in the midst of incomplete understanding, they worshiped Jesus! Let us follow their example and offer our lives to Jesus Christ in worship. Let us worship Him even when we are confused, when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances, even when nothing makes sense. Let us awake each morning with the cry on our lips, “He is risen! He is alive!” And let us watch what our Risen Savior will do in our lives and in the lives of others through us!

Kay Clifton

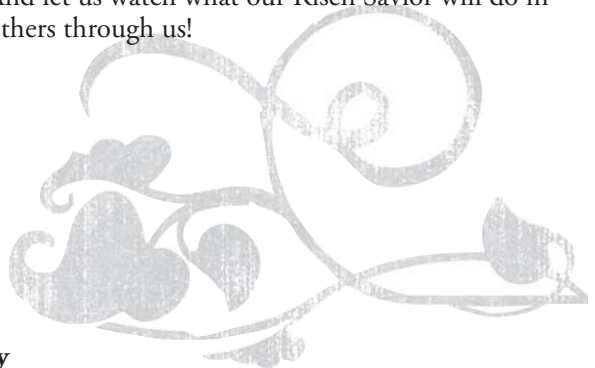
Worship Leader

Riverside Baptist Church

kayclifton@windstream.net

DAY THIRTY-FIVE:

Pray for Celebrate Recovery



BEGINNING TO END

Read Genesis 1:1, John 1:1, Matthew 28:20b and Revelation 22:20-21

These verses give Christians the full assurance that God's providential care is bestowed upon us forever. This is made evident by observations that imply that the entire universe and our precious planet has been uniquely handcrafted for our benefit just so we would have a pleasant home. Would a God that went to this much trouble for us ever forget us? The obvious answer is a resounding NO!

However, more convincing of His devotion to us than a universe that must be just so is the fact that He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to die so that we might avoid the consequences of our arrogant sinfulness. It's an unfathomable mystery to me. I am continuously awed by the wonderful wonderfulness of it all. The guarantee that Christ gave us when He said "...lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the world", fills me with a sense of worth and value I could never have as a result of any meager achievement of my own. I trust Him because He knew me before I was formed in the womb (Jer. 1:5) and promises to be with me 'til the end of time. I challenge anyone to find a better warranty. Thank you, Jesus.

This same invitation that I accepted is open to everyone and I urge you to move responsively to accept God's grace, free to all. But time is important, the invitation may not be open tomorrow for in Hebrews 9:27 we are told "...it is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment." Give Christ a chance to change your life and save it for eternity.

Frank L. Churchman

Finance Team Member

Riverside Baptist Church



DAY THIRTY-SIX:

Pray for Sime and Suzanna Petrovski, missionaries to Macedonia

EXPERIENCE LIFE OR DEATH

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” John 5:24

Jesus simply tells us that to accept Him is life and to resist Him is death. What does it mean to listen to Jesus’ words and to believe in the one who sent Him?

It means to believe that God is who Jesus says He is.

1. God is a God of love and when you believe this you enter into a new relationship in which fear is destroyed.

2. It means to accept the way of life Jesus offers us no matter how difficult or what sacrifices may be involved. Accepting Him is the ultimate way to peace and happiness.

3. It means to accept the help, guidance and strength given by the Holy Spirit as we follow the ways of Christ.

When we believe, we enter into three new relationships.

1. We enter into a new relationship with God. The judge becomes Father, the distant becomes near, the strange becomes intimate and fear becomes love.

2. We enter a new relationship with man. Hatred becomes love, selfishness becomes service and bitterness becomes forgiveness.

3. We enter into a new relationship with ourselves. Weakness becomes strength, frustration becomes achievement and turmoil becomes peace.

The person who accepts the way of Christ has passed from death to life. In this world, life becomes new and thrilling. In the world to come, eternal life with God becomes a certainty.

I encourage you to accept Jesus today! The following is an example of a prayer you can pray from your heart to receive eternal life:

Lord Jesus, I want to know you personally. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive you as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.

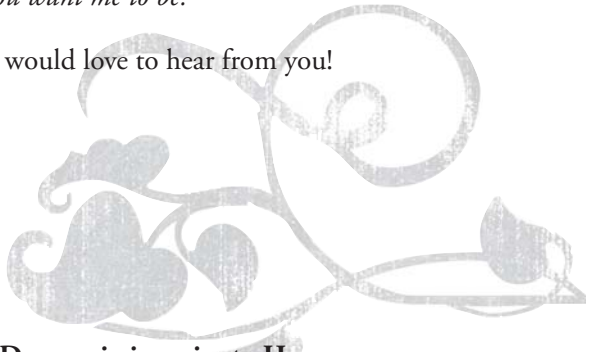
If you prayed this prayer, I would love to hear from you!

Max Peck

Leadership Team Member
Riverside Baptist Church
mcalliep@bellsouth.net

DAY THIRTY-SEVEN:

Pray for Tommy and Dana Dove, missionaries to Hungary



CONTINUE TO PRAY

Read Luke 18:1-8

In Luke chapter 18 Jesus is speaking to the disciples and begins telling the parable of the persistent widow. Jesus is offering encouragement to continue to pray and to bring things before God even when we feel He may not be listening or that His answer may not be what we are looking for. Jesus is contrasting that if persistence pays off for those who do not know Him, how much more will it pay off for those who do know Him?

The message is one of encouragement to pray and not give up. Verse 1 reads, “Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart”. Jesus then describes a widow who needed protection from an enemy and goes to the local judge and requests mercy. But the judge is a man who does not fear God or regard man. In short this man while in an esteemed position was not a good or righteous man. Yet because the persistence of the widow He agreed to protect her so she would quit bothering him. Jesus is basically saying that if this man would do good for the widow, how much more would the God who loves us perfectly do for one who continually cries out to Him in prayer?

Has there been a time in your life when you have felt like the widow in this parable? How do you think God would prefer you to pray?

When difficulties arise in our lives, we tend to ask God for help right then. Often we get discouraged when our prayers appear unanswered. Whether we are praying for the lost, for the sick or the hurting, or for our trials, Jesus wants us to keep our requests before Him as we place our trust in Him daily. When we continue to pray and believe that He will answer, we experience growth in our relationship.

May God richly bless you,

Chris Broome

Leadership Team Member
Riverside Baptist Church
crbroome@yahoo.com

DAY THIRTY-EIGHT:

Pray for Tomo and Beti Josovik, missionaries to Macedonia

CALL UNTO ME

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” Jeremiah 33:3

We live in a time when communication with each other is just a touch of a number on a cell phone. We can walk in a park, go to a movie, and even shop in our malls and always have a direct line to somebody through our phones. We can always call someone for help at any time.

But have you been told that the God of the universe says for us to call out to Him and He will answer us and show us great and mighty things?

I was able to see this scripture come alive to me in 1980. My husband, Warren, and I and our ten year old daughter Necole moved to Whiteville, North Carolina. This was a move that I was not looking forward to. I had to leave the new home we had built, a good paying job, all my family and friends. Plus, I was seven months pregnant. Leaving the security of what I had for the unknown was beyond my understanding.

But when I least expected it, my love relationship with the Lord Jesus came alive. We moved and were invited to a small church where people showed me Christ-likeness that I had never seen before. The pastor spoke from the book of Jeremiah. For the first time in my life this verse leaped off the page and straight into my heart. I was in a position where I had no family, friends or anything familiar to lean on. I began calling out to the Lord for direction and comfort and found He truly answered my call! He began to show me gently and so sweetly His love for me. I saw He was interested in me and my life. I started a journey of letting Him speak to me through His Word!

I can share boldly now and with total confidence these 26 years later that Jesus is always listening for my call. Do you feel your back is up against a wall and no one really listens or cares? Just call out to Jesus! I promise you will never get a busy signal. His line is always open. Go ahead – give Him a call! Start your new journey today. You’ll be glad you did.

Paulette Naylor
Connections Teacher
Riverside Baptist Church



DAY THIRTY-NINE:
Pray for Goce and Dragana Pecov, missionaries to Macedonia

BEING A WATCHMAN

“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me.” Ezekiel 33:7

In this passage we find Ezekiel called by God to be a watchman for the Israelite exiles in Babylon before the destruction of Jerusalem. The watchman’s role was dangerous, yet essential. Watchmen were stationed on the highest part of a city’s wall to “peer into the distance” and be a lookout for danger. When danger was spotted it, was the watchman’s job to sound the alarm. Otherwise, he would be held accountable for the lives of those inside the city walls (Ezekiel 33:6).

Do we often see people in danger, but turn our heads and say it isn’t our business? Do we try to warn them or opt out because of fear or because we don’t think they will listen?

As children of God, we have a responsibility to be watchmen. Ezekiel was told to “hear the word” and “give them warning.” We are called to let others know about God’s plan of salvation as well as the danger of continually rejecting God.

In order to fulfill this role we must first be familiar with what God says. It is impossible to share God’s Word with others if we do not know it ourselves. First we must know what God is saying, then we must share with others. How can a person be saved if the message is never shared with them (Romans 10:14)? It is hard to hear, but as watchmen when we do not share the message of salvation with others, we have a share in their hopelessness and death because of our negligence.

As you go about your day, ask God to help you be a faithful watchman and to share His love and plan of salvation with someone who needs to hear it.

Stephanie Pridgen

Office Administrator

Riverside Baptist Church

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DAY FORTY:

Pray for Scott and Scarlett Smith, evangelist