

Byerland Mennonite Church
Prayer Guide
2018



Compiled by
Evana Network
Byerland Mennonite Church

To the Church that meets at Byerland,

What could God do through us if we were completely open to His will and power? How would our lives be different than what they are today? The Lord taught us to pray, "Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven". How would our lives need to be rearranged in order for God to accomplish His will on earth as it is in Heaven? We believe these are prayers that we need to take seriously and pray. This is how he taught his disciples to pray. As a church we must learn to pray for His will in heaven to be done here on earth for our marriages, our families and our communities that we live and work in. We believe that God answers such prayers. We believe that God does desire all people to be rescued from sin. We believe that the church at Byerland exists for such a time as this. The mission of God is to rescue those who are now in the kingdom of darkness to come into the Kingdom of his Son Jesus Christ. Take a look at these scriptures:

"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."- Colossians 1:13-14

"Look at the nations, and see! Be astonished! Be astounded! For a work is being done in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told." - Habakkuk 1 :5

"O Lord, I have heard of your renown, and I stand in awe, O Lord, of your work. In our own time revive it; in our own time make it known." - Habakkuk 3:2

The first describes the mission of God then there is a call to observe ... look where God is at work around you. The last is a way we can respond ... revive us, make it happen here and now.

Over the next few weeks we're going on a journey together as a church family in pursuit of God - His face, His presence, His will, and His power. This devotional guide is a tool to help us stay focused on Jesus and the road he's set before us.

He's called us to great things. William Carey once said, "Attempt great things for God, expect great things from God!" A few things before we get started:

1. These great things don't start with us; they start with God. Let's repent of our sins, ask for mercy, and set aside some time to pray and fast, "speak, Lord, your servant is listening."

"The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth." Jonah 3:5

2. You can't do it alone. You need mentors, friends, and other believers to partner with in expanding God's kingdom. Ask God to bless you with a mentor and friends that can help guide and encourage you.

3. You'll face temptation. Expect resistance. Meet it with prayer.

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." James 5:16

These readings are intended for personal and family use. They have a weekly theme and daily readings and prayers. Please find a way to incorporate them into your daily rhythms and conversations. We can't wait to see what God has in store for us!

With great anticipation,

Pastor Joe Garber

Pastor Jay Hess

Week 1: Breaking Stagnation

Sunday 1/21

God, you have my permission to rearrange anything in my life however you see fit.

Opening Thought:

People who have a seeking heart still make mistakes. But their reaction to rebuke and correction shows the condition of their heart. It determines what God is able to do with them in the future.

The Christian church is suffering from a major illness today. Our vital signs are not good. Now we face a choice. We can stay hard hearted and justify our backsliding by saying, 'Don't tell me that my spiritual life needs correction. I'm getting along; everything is still 'working,' isn't it? Leave me alone.' Or we can admit the truth.

Anything and everything is possible with God if we approach him with a broken spirit. We must humble ourselves, get rid of the debris in our lives, and keep leaning on him instead of our own understanding. Your future and mine are determined by this one thing: seeking after the Lord. The blessings we receive and then to pass them along to others all hang on this truth: 'He rewards those who earnestly seek him.'" (Hebrews 11:6).

- Jim Cymbala, Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire

Week 1: Breaking Stagnation

Day 1: Monday 1/22

Scripture:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit 'from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit - Psalm 51:10-12

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven; where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal: For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also:" - Matthew 6: 19-21

Reflection:

The Christian way is different: harder and easier. Christ says, "Give me all. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want you. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think are innocent as well as the ones you think are wicked- the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours. - C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

Exercise:

Four Questions ...

Eliminate: What in my life must I get rid of?

Reduce: What am I doing that I need to do less of?

Increase: What am I doing that I need to do more of?

Introduce: What must I add to my life?

Prayer:

God, you have my permission to rearrange my life however you see fit. Reveal the areas that are not pleasing to you and grant me the grace and courage to follow where you lead.

Week 1: Breaking Stagnation

Day 2: Tuesday 1/23

Scripture:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit 'from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit - Psalm 51:10-12

"The end charge is this: love that comes from a pure heart, a clean conscience, and a faith without hypocrisy." 1 Timothy 1:5

Reflection:

I remember once when I had been giving a talk in the U. K. to the Royal Air Force, an old, hard-bitten officer got up and said, "I've no use for all that stuff. But, mind you, I'm a religious man too. I know there's a God. I've felt him: out alone in the desert at night: the tremendous mystery. And that's just why I don't believe all your neat little dogmas and formulas about him. To anyone who's met the real thing they all seem so petty and dull and unreal!"

Now in a sense I quite agreed with that man. I think he probably had a real experience of God in the desert. And when he turned from that experience to the Christian creeds, I think he really was turning from something real, to something less real. In the same way, if a man has once looked at the Atlantic from the beach, and then goes and looks at a map of the Atlantic, he also will be turning from real waves to a bit of colored paper. But here comes the point. The map is admittedly only colored paper, but there are two things you have to remember about it. In the first place, it is based on what hundreds and thousands of people have found out by sailing the real Atlantic. In that way it has behind it masses of experience just as real as the one you could have from the beach; only, while yours would be a single isolated glimpse, the map fits all those different experiences together. In the second place, if you want to go anywhere, the map is absolutely necessary.

As long as you are content with walks on the beach, your own glimpses are far more fun than looking at a map. But the map is going to be more use than walks on the beach if you want to get to America. - C.S. Lewis, *The Joyful Christian*

Exercise:

Revisit the four questions and create a weekly plan that incorporates your responses to them.

Prayer:

Please pray for the churches in our region. Pray for their leaders and ask God to bless our churches with vision, unity, and faith.

Grace Community Church

New Danville Mennonite

Ascension Lutheran Church

Boehm's United Methodist

Community Fellowship Church

Willow Street Mennonite Church

River Corner Mennonite

Marticville United Methodist

West Willow United Methodist
Church

New Life Church

Week 1: Breaking Stagnation

Day 3: Wednesday 1/24

Scripture:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit" - Psalm 51:10-12

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, giving thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Holy Spirit. Do not despise the word of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil." - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

Reflection:

"To live a God-centered life, you must focus your life on God's purposes, not your own plans. You must seek to see from God's perspective rather than from your own human perspective. When God starts to do something in the world, he takes the initiative to come and talk to somebody. For some divine reason, he has chosen to involve his people in accomplishing his purposes. God was about to destroy the world with a flood when he came to Noah. When God prepared to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, he came to tell Abraham about it. God came to Gideon when he was about to deliver the Israelites from the oppression of Midian. God came to Saul (later Paul) on the road to Damascus when he was ready to carry the gospel message to the Gentiles around the known world. Without doubt, the most important factor was what God was about to do

... You never find God asking persons to dream up what they want to do for him.

We do not sit down and dream what we want to do for God and then call God in to help us accomplish it. The pattern in scripture is that we submit ourselves to God and wait until God shows us what he is about to do, or we watch to see what God is doing around us and join him.

Why do we not realize that doing things God's way is always best? We cause some of the wreck and ruin in our churches because we have a plan. We implement the plan and get out of it only what we can do. Jesus is the head over the body, the church. Oh, that we would discover the difference when we let Christ be the head of that body. He will accomplish more in six months through a people yielded to him than we could do in sixty years without him." - Experiencing God, Henry Blackaby

Exercise: Prayer and Fasting (one meal or multiple meals)

Schedule 5-10 minute times of prayer into your day: break time, children's nap time, children's play time, lunch time, supper time...seize the opportunities that God gives you today to pray, asking God to reveal his will. Reflect on where God is at work around you.

Week 1: Breaking Stagnation

Day 4: Thursday 1/25

Scripture:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence; and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation; and sustain in me a willing spirit." - Psalm 51: 10-12

"But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted; but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies." - 2 Corinthians 4: 7-10

Reflection:

When God lets you know what he wants to do through you, it will be something only God can do. What you believe about him will determine what you do. If you have faith in the God, who called you, you will obey him; and he will bring to pass what he has purposed to do. If you lack faith, you will not do what he wants. That is disobedience.

When God calls a person to join him in a God-sized task, faith is always required, Obedience indicates faith in God. Without faith, a person cannot please God. Without faith, a church cannot please God.

We forget that when God speaks he always reveals what he is going to do...not what he wants us to do for him. We join him so that he can do his work through us. We don't have to be able to accomplish the task within our limited ability or resources. With faith, we can proceed confidently; because we know that he is going to bring to pass what he purposes. - Experiencing God, Henry Blackaby

Exercise/Prayer:

Take some more time today and pray; asking God to reveal his will. Use the line in the Lord's Prayer, "your kingdom come, your will be done" and focus it on certain areas that are a concern for you (e.g., family; neighbors, friends, work, ministry).

Week 1: Breaking Stagnation

Day 5: Friday 1/26

Scripture:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit." - Psalm 51:10-12

'So now, O Israel; what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul; and to keep the commandments of the Lord your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being ...

You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."-Deuteronomy 10:12-13, 19

Reflection:

Slavery is many different things. We must take care that we do not drive a wedge between people who are physically poor and deprived and so suffer, and people who have lots of 'stuff' but still do not live free lives. We cannot pit against each other sociological and psychological forms of slavery-either saying they are the same or arguing that one is deeper and hurts more than another. Whatever the slavery that binds a person that is the one that counts.

Let us characterize slavery simply as that which keeps us from being joyous. When we locate that, we shall be very close to the source of our oppression.

I have tried to reflect on the things that preclude joy. They include at least these: fear, a feeling of worthlessness, a lack of food, a lack of love, devotion to phony loyalties, and frantic, nonproductive obligations. You can continue the list as it touches your life, but they are all things that keep us coerced as though we always served our [cultural status quo], and so do not rejoice. - Living Toward a Vision, Walter Brueggemann

Exercise/Prayer:

Spend some time trying to locate "that which keeps you from being joyous." What are the forms of oppression that you're struggling to break? Bring this question before the Lord in prayer and establish some action steps that might help you break free. It will also help to enlist the help of a trusted friend/your mentor.

Week 2: Which Way Are We Changing?

Sunday 1/28

Weekly Scripture:

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying: this is the way, walk in it:" - Isaiah 30:21

Opening Thought:

The spiritual life is a gift. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit, who lifts us up into the kingdom of God's love. But to say that being lifted up into the kingdom of love is a divine gift does not mean that we wait passively until the gift is offered to us!

Jesus tells us to set our hearts on the kingdom. Setting our hearts on something involves not only serious aspiration but also strong determination. A spiritual life requires human effort. The forces that keep pulling us back into a worry-filled life are far from easy to overcome. - Henri Nouwen

Week 2: Which Way Are We Changing?

Day 8: Monday 1/29

Scripture

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying: this is the way, walk in it." - Isaiah 30:21

"Those who drink the water I give them will never again be thirsty. The water I give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." - John 4:14 (PAR)

"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." - Matthew 5:16 (NIV)

Reflection:

"The amazing promises given to those who devote themselves to this new world leap out at us from the page. We read Jesus' words that those who give their lives to him will receive "living water," the Spirit of God himself. This water will keep them from ever being thirsty again - from being driven and ruled by unsatisfied desires. This water will become a fountain "gushing up to eternal life" (John 4:14, PAR). Indeed, it will even become "rivers of living water" flowing from the center of the believer's life to a thirsty world (John 7:38, NRSV). What an astonishing vision! The water of heaven flows through our being until we are fully changed people. We wake each morning breathing the air of this new world; we experience a new consciousness, and our character is transformed. We drop our deceitful practices, our insincerity, our defensiveness, our envy, and our slander, and we move outward toward others in genuine love. (Dallas Willard with Don Simpson, *Revolution of Character, Discovering Christ's Pattern for Spiritual Transformation*, pg. 9)

Exercise: Find a quiet place, take a few moments, and consider these questions:

How do you quench your spiritual thirst?

What are you most thirsty for?

Are you ever ruled by, or are you ever driven by desires that don't satisfy you?

How would you like to be a changed person?

Prayer:

God, guide us by Your Word and Spirit this week, that in Your light we may see ourselves as You see us. Capture us with Your joyful vision of quenching our spiritual thirst with rivers of living water. We ask for Your special blessing upon all who care for our children, at church, in our schools, in our friendships, and in families, may Your special blessing touch their lives anew for all that they give. In Jesus' name, amen.

Week 2: Which Way Are We Changing?

Day 9: Tuesday 1/30

Scripture:

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying: this is the way, walk in it." - Isaiah 30:21

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight O Lord, my strength and my redeemer." - Psalm 19:14 (NW)

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." - Proverbs 3:6 (NLT)

"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails." - Proverbs 19:21 (NLT)

"Jesus said 'come, follow me...'" - Matthew 4:19a (RSV)

Reflection:

For many centuries, those wisest among us about the spiritual life have insisted that this one line is the door that opens the heart to the presence of God. There is no greater expression of love than a freely submitted will - "As you wish." Jean Pierre de Caussade writes, "Every moment, and in respect of everything, we must say like St. Paul. 'Lord, what should I do?' Let me do everything you wish." Jesus said, "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." Brother Lawrence writes, "Let us often remember, dear friend that our sole occupation in life is to please God." "At the heart of communion with God," writes Gary Mood, "is the whisper, 'As you wish.'" (John Ortberg, *God Is Closer than You Think*, pg. 138)

Commentary /Exercise

This can be a daily struggle. Sometimes it is a moment by moment struggle of lining up our wills with God's will. Sometimes it means putting aside our conveniences to do what God wants us to do. Sometimes it means giving something up in our lives so that we can follow God more fully. Sometimes it means having to step out of our comfort zone so that God's strength can be made perfect in our weakness. Whenever God comes to us, our first response should be "As You wish."

Find a quiet place, take a few moments, and consider these questions:

What have your responses been lately?

Where do you want to grow?

Prayer

Lord, what are You telling me today? You have called me to "follow" you. Help me to understand; and in understanding, help me to follow You in obedience to "Your wish," seeking Your honor and Your glory in all that I do ... as You wish. In Jesus' name, amen.

Week 2: Which Way Are We Changing?

Day 10: Wednesday 1/31

Scripture:

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying: this is the way, walk in it." - Isaiah 30:21

"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice-the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect: - Romans 12:1-2 (NLT)

"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult; I put an end to childish ways." - I Corinthians 13:11 (NIV)

"Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long." - Psalm 25:4 (NIV)

Reflection:

The ultimate freedom we have as human beings is the power to select what we will allow our minds to dwell upon. It is in our thoughts that the first movements toward the renovation of the heart occur. Thoughts are the place where we can and must begin to change. There the light of God first begins to move upon us through the word of Christ, and there the divine Spirit begins to direct our will to God and his way. We are not totally free in this respect, but we do have great freedom here. We still have the ability and responsibility to try to retain God in our knowledge. And those who do so will surely make progress toward Him; for if we truly do seek God as best we can, he, who always knows what is really in our hearts, will certainly make himself known to us. (Dallas Willard,

Transformation of the Mind, Spring Arbor University JOURNAL, Summer 2003)

Exercise: Prayer and Fasting (one meal or multiple meals)

Schedule 5-10 minute times of prayer into your day: break time, children's nap time, children's play time, lunch time, supper time...seize the opportunities that God gives you today to pray, asking God to reveal his will. Reflect on where God is at work around you.

Find a quiet place, take a few moments, and consider these questions:

What have you been thinking about lately?

How do you make room for God's ideas to live in your moment-to-moment thought life?

By the grace of God, how is the Spirit leading you to make changes?

Prayer: Lord of our lives, You give us Scripture for our learning. Grant us Your power to hear Your Word, read, mark, and inwardly digest it, that we may embrace and ever hold fast to the hope of becoming more like Jesus Christ. Empower us by Your Spirit to think your thoughts and see ourselves and the world around us as you see it. We ask Your special blessing on those who will teach and preach the Word of God to Your people this week, give them insight and the power to hear Your Spirit more abundantly than all we can ask or imagine. In Jesus' name we gratefully pray, amen.

Week 2: Which Way Are We Changing?

Day 11: Thursday 2/1

Scripture:

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying: this is the way, walk in it." - Isaiah 30:21

"Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart; and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."
- Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)

"Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed." - Proverbs 16:3 (NIV)

Reflection:

We are guided by the apostle Paul's prayer that believers will "know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that they may be filled with all the fullness of God ... by the power at work within us, that is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3: 19-20, PAR). And we find the Apostle Peter's words that those who love Jesus "rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy" (1 Peter 1:8, NRSV) and "genuine mutual love" pouring from their hearts (1:22, NRSV), which rids them of "all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander" (2:1, NRSV). It isn't always true that where there is a will, there is a way. When it comes to transforming human nature, we also need an understanding of the depth of our problem and how Christ works to redeem each element of our nature. Jesus invites us to leave our burdensome ways of heavy labor - especially our "religious" ones - and step into the yoke of training with him. His is a way of gentleness and lowliness, a way of soul rest. His is a way of inner transformation in which carrying our burden with him is easy and light. What we thought was so

difficult about entering fully into the divine life is entirely due to our failure to understand and take the small steps that quietly but surely lead to our transformation. This is a hopeful, life-saving insight. It means that all the hindrances to our putting off the old person and putting on the new one can be removed or mastered. This "soul competence" will enable us to walk increasingly in the wholeness, holiness, and power of the kingdom of the heavens. No one needs to live in spiritual and personal defeat. A life of victory over sin and circumstance is accessible to us all. (Dallas Willard with Don Simpson, *Revolution of Character, Discovering Christ's Pattern for Spiritual Transformation*, pg. 10)

Commentary /Exercise:

Let the words from Ephesians 3: 19-20 sink into your thoughts. They are a loving plea to YOU ... precious child of God "know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that" YOU "may be filled with all the fullness of God ... by the power at work within" YOU "that is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine" Taking time to understand more and more how much God loves YOU is the experience ... the catalyst for big changes in our life. This is Good News. The power to change comes from God. Change is not something we have to "muster up." We do not have to grab our "boot straps" and lift ourselves. The yolk is a harness oxen wear as their owner guides them to overturn the soil. Jesus calls us to wear his yolk and be guided into overturning the soil of our lives for new planting. Re-read the passages above and find a few minutes to listen to God and consider these questions:

How can your life be more in-the-yoke of Christ?

How are you being guided today?

Prayer: (Adapted from the writings of Richard Foster)

Spirit of the Living God, be the Gardener of my soul. For so long I have been waiting, silent and still-experiencing a winter of the soul. But now, in the strong name of Jesus Christ, I dare to ask:

Clear away the dead growth of the past,

Break up the hard clods of custom and routine, Stir in the rich compost of vision and challenge, Bury deep in my soul the implanted Word, Cultivate and water and tend my heart, until new life buds and opens and flowers.

Week 2: Which Way Are We Changing?

Day 12: Friday 2/2

Scripture:

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying: this is the way, walk in it." - Isaiah 30:21

"God grabbed me. God's Spirit took me up and set me down in the middle of an open plain strewn with bones. He led me around and among them-a lot of bones! There were bones all over the plain-dry bones, bleached by the sun. He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "God, only you know that God, told the dry bones, "Watch this: I'm bringing the breath of life to you and you'll come to life. I'll attach sinews to you, put meat on your bones, cover you with skin, and breathe life into you. You'll come alive and you'll realize that I am God!" ... I'll breathe my life into you and you'll live ..."

- From Ezekiel 37:1-14 (The Message)

"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God." - 2 Corinthians 1:20 (NIV)

Reflection:

Are you ready to live? Maybe you have messed up an endless number of times. You've said to God, "This time I'm going to get it right. I'm serious. I'm going to do it." And as soon as you came out of the gate, you came crashing down and, in your own mind, you are nothing but dry old bones. You can't even find your grave. God wants to ask you one more question: can these dead bones live?

What must you face? What fears haunt you? What failures have marked you? What darkness has consumed you and stolen from you, robbed from you, sucked out of your soul the dream God created you to flesh out? Maybe there's a dream buried deep inside your soul, and God is waiting to reconstruct it, to put all the bones back together. He is waiting to put muscle and sinew on it and wrap skin around it.

God is waiting for you to recognize that you cannot control everything, but he can. If he commands you to act, and if you will trust him, you will see all of creation move in concert to accomplish in you what you were created to do. You were created not simply to sleep through your dreams but to live dreams bigger than you, bolder than you. (Erwin Raphael McManus, *Wide Awake*, pg. 30-31)

Exercise:

Find a quiet place, take a few moments, and consider these questions:

What failures haunt you?

What dream does God want to make a reality?

What must you overcome to dream with God?

... Long; before you took your first breath, you were a dream—a dream in the mind of the one who made you. He saw you before you were created, and he alone knows the full extent of your creative potential. (Erwin Raphael McManus, *Wide Awake*, pg. 31)

Prayer: (Adapted from the writings of Richard Foster)

I have, O Lord a noisy heart and entering into outward silence doesn't stop the inner clamor. In fact, it seems only to make it worse. When I am full of activity, the internal noise is only a distant rumble; but, when I get still, the rumble amplifies itself. And it is not like the majestic sound of a symphony rising to a grand crescendo; rather it is the defeating clamor of clashing pots and clanging pans. What a racket! Worst of all, I feel helpless to hush the interior pandemonium. Dear Lord Jesus, once You spoke peace to the wind and the waves. Speak Your shalom (peace) over my heart I wait silently ... patiently. I receive Your loving command into the very core of my being, Your loving command, to "Live." In the strong name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Week Three: Meeting Resistance

Sunday 2/4

How Do We Respond to Adversity?

Weekly Scripture:

"Be still and know that I am God." - Psalm 46:10

Opening Thought:

Motion creates friction. It's to be expected. What matters is how we respond.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the Devil's schemes." - Ephesians 6:11

Week Three: Meeting Resistance

Day 15: Monday 2/5

Scripture:

"Be still and know that I am God." - Psalm 46:10

"God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble and the waters surge!" - Psalm 46:1-8

Reflection:

There is a deep hole in your being, like an abyss. You will never succeed in filling that hole, because your needs are inexhaustible. You have to work around it so that gradually the abyss closes.

Since the hole is so enormous and your anguish so deep, you will always be tempted to flee from it. There are two extremes to avoid: being completely absorbed in your pain and being distracted by so many things that you stay far away from the wound you want to heal.

God will send to you the people with whom you can share your anguish, who can lead you closer to the true source of love. - The Inner voice of Love by Henri Nouwen

Commentary:

Life brings pain, hurt, resistance, and choices. Who is your refuge? What is it that gives you strength? We will respond to it, either by being open to God's leading or pain's weight. This week, where is there pain in your life and where do you need to be open to God's leading?

Prayer:

God please lead me and provide a road map that will help me deal with pain today. Teach me to see you as my source of strength and refuge in the world today. May the pain and suffering that I am experiencing take me to deeper levels of intimacy with you that otherwise would have been unattainable. In the Merciful name of Jesus I pray, amen.

Week Three: Meeting Resistance

Day 16: Tuesday 2/6

Scripture:

"Be still and know that I am God." - Psalm 46:10

"A river brings joy to the city of our God, the sacred home of the Most High. God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed. From the very break of day, God will protect it. The nations are in chaos, and their kingdoms crumble! God's voice thunders, and the earth melts! The Lord of Heaven's Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress.· - Psalm 46:4-7

Reflection:

Gary Thomas was driving home to tuck his daughter Kelsey into bed. While running late, he called to tell his family NOT to tell Kelsey he was coming home, hoping to surprise her. When he got home, he walked down the hall to her room, only to hear her say, "Hi there, dad." She KNEW it was her DAD. "Did you know I was coming home?" Gary asked. "No, but I heard your footsteps coming down the hall so I figured you were coming to tuck me in." Apparently, Kelsey had become so familiar with the cadence of her father's footsteps that she would know them anytime, anywhere. May we also become so familiar with God's footsteps that when he breaks into our lives, we'll know it's him, regardless of what environment we're in or where we're sleeping. -Authentic Faith, Gary Thomas

Commentary:

God is consistently walking around with us. Do we know that He is there? Do we realize the God of this region is around us, that his voice is calling to us? The rolling thunder speaks of His direction and purpose in our lives. Our God is familiar with all our ways. Are we familiar with his ways?

Prayers:

Give us eyes to see where You are at work in my life and ears to hear your voice when You call our name. Lead us to let You lead! We are blessed when we listen to You, watching daily at Your door, waiting at Your doorway. When we find You we find life! Awaken us morning by morning, waken our ears to listen like one being taught. Your presence brings joy— You will protect us no matter what storms are happening around us. You are our fortress!. Proverbs 9:34-36, Isaiah 50:4-5.

Week Three: Meeting Resistance

Day 17: Wednesday 2/7

Scripture:

"Be still and know that I am God." - Psalm 46: 10

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to lose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in. Isaiah 58:6-12

Reflection:

If you truly want to experience an authentic faith, go where people are hurting the most and get involved in their lives. You'll not only see God at work, you'll also gain his heart and very likely become transformed in the process. -Authentic Faith, Gary Thomas

Commentary:

God is always about the business of giving us opportunities to be His example and His instrument to be the difference in the world. Where is there pain in the world around us? The heart of God is for us to be a part of his work in the world, bringing peace to hearts. Be ready to step up and ready to respond (Ephesians 6: 10-14). God is moving and impacting the world around us; where are we and what are we doing?

Exercise: Prayer and Fasting (one meal or multiple meals)

Schedule 5-10 minute times of prayer into your day: break time, children's nap time, children's play time, lunch time, supper time...seize the opportunities that God gives you today to pray, asking God to reveal his will. Reflect on where God is at work around you.

Pray for God to open your eyes to see where He is bringing peace and impacting the world around you. Where can you join in?

Pray for the courage to act and to resist the temptation to not be involved. Where is God moving and what will you do?

Week Three: Meeting Resistance

Day 18: Thursday 2/8

Scripture:

'Be still and know that I am God:" - Psalm 46:10

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God. And the peace of God; which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." - Philippians 4: 4-7

Reflection:

Brother Lawrence described for me the foundation of his faith: a lofty view of God and a lofty love of God. Once he recognized this, he rejected everything else on the spot so he could live, work, and breathe for the love of God. - Practicing God's Presence by Brother Lawrence and Robert Elmer

"Oswald Chambers once wrote: We are not here to prove God answers prayers; we are here to be living monuments of God's grace.' That means the issue is not whether God does what we ask when we ask in the way we ask- that's not what life is all about. Rather, it means we receive the grace of God each day and, knowing things are messy, knowing we're imperfect beings, we stand and show how God works through any and all of the circumstances in our lives, even the messy ones." - Authentic Faith, Gary Thomas

Use the following thoughts and phrase them into personal prayers:

May we have ears to hear His voice and His call in our world.

May we turn off the devices around us and the stuff that distracts us from hearing God in our lives today.

Week Three: Meeting Resistance

Day 19: Friday 2/9

Scripture:

"Be still and know that I am God!" - Psalm 46:10

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God; which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." - Philippians 4: 4-7

Reflection:

You can tell a lot about people by their hands. When it comes to our hands, we have a choice. We can either go through life with them closed: tightfisted, fearful, angry, reluctant, withholding, comparative, and empty. Or we can go through life with our hands open: generous, expressive, grateful, helping, and full. The way we hold our hands reveals a lot about our hearts. - Looking for God, by Nancy Ortberg

Commentary:

A biographer of John Wesley gives us an amazing picture of the great revivalist's last moments:

On Tuesday Mr. Wesley could with difficulty be understood, though he often attempted to speak. At last, with all the strength he had, he cried out, "The best of all is, God is with us." Again, raising his hand and waiving it in triumph, he exclaimed with thrilling effect, "The best of all is, God is with us!" These words seemed to have expressed the leading feature of his whole life. God had been with him from early childhood; His

providence had guided him through all the devious wanderings of human life; and now, when Wesley was entering "the valley of the shadow of death," the same hand of God sustained him.

What will your hands look like in the end, open to God and all he has done or closed and resistant to His call?

Prayer:

Hands, You gave us hands. Hands that bring life or death. You stretched out Your hands to a lost and dying world...but we took those hands and nailed them to a cross and said "stay there". But You didn't! You are still reaching out Your hands, wounded for our healing. So we fold our hands in reverent submission to Your work in our lives, homes, church and community. We rejoice in Your nearness, and lift up holy hands in worship.

Week Four: Harnessing Emotion

Sunday 2/11

How Are Our Emotions Guiding Our Decisions?

Weekly Scripture:

"Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts ... and be thankful." - Colossians 3: 14-15

Opening thought:

The Lord's chief desire is to reveal himself to you, and in order for him to do that, he gives you abundant grace. The Lord gives you the experience of enjoying his presence. - Madame Guyon

Week Four: Harnessing Emotion

Day 22: Monday – Tuesday 2/12-13

Scripture:

"Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts ... and be thankful." - Colossians 3: 14-15

"With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams; with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" - Micah 6:6-8

Reflection:

Only by a stronger passion can evil passions be expelled, and a soul unoccupied by a positive devotion is sure to be occupied by spiritual demons. The safety of the Master in the presence of temptation lay in his complete and positive devotion to his mission: there was no unoccupied room in his soul where evil could find a home; he knew what Dr. Chalmers called, "The expulsive power of a new affection." When Ulysses passed the Isle of Sirens, he had himself tied to the mast and had his ears stopped with wax, that he might not hear the sirens singing- a picture of many a man's pitiful attempts after negative goodness. But when Orpheus passed the Isle of Sirens, he sat on the deck, indifferent, for he too was a musician and could make melody so much more beautiful than the sirens, that their alluring songs were to him discords. Such is the Master's life of positive goodness, so full, so glad, so triumphant, that it conquered sin by surpassing it. Have you such a saving positiveness of loyal devotion in your life?" - Harry Emerson Fosdick

Exercise:

Identify those areas in your life where "evil can find a home."

Rather than approaching these areas with the goal of a "negative goodness" how might you become more like Orpheus, conquering evil by surpassing it? May the fellowship of the Holy Spirit that brings forth a melody equip you to rise above the clamor that you will face today.

Place a copy of the following quote somewhere you can view it regularly (take a picture of it and save it):

"The safety of the Master in the presence of temptation lay in his complete and positive devotion to his mission."

There was no unoccupied room in his soul where evil could find a home.

Prayer:

Father, I pray that in the presence of temptation my safety would be found in complete abandonment and devotion to the mission and destiny that you have called me to.

Week Four: Harnessing Emotion

Day 23: Wednesday - Thursday 2/14-15

Scripture:

"Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts ... and be thankful." - Colossians 3: 14-15

"Look at the nations, and see! Be astonished! Be astounded! For a work is being done in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told." - Habakkuk 1:5

"O Lord, I have heard of your renown, and I stand in awe, O Lord, of your work. In our own time revive it, in our own time make it known." - Habakkuk 3:2

Reflection:

Habakkuk prayed, "O Lord, revive your work." Do you hear his groaning for revival? Our problem is this: there are many who say they want revival but they do not groan for it, they do not long for it.

The true believer, when he is confronted with his need for revival, will long for it. He will not be happy, but will at once begin to strain after it. The true believer will pray day and night, "O Lord, revive your work!"

And what is it that will make that true Christian groan for revival? When he reflects on what Christ has done for him, he will groan for his own revival. When he hears someone tell a story about a fellow believer who is experiencing great joy in the Lord, he will groan for his own revival. When he attends a lively fellowship and feels no emotion in his heart, he will groan for his own revival. - Charles Spurgeon, Spiritual Revival

Exercise: Prayer and Fasting (one meal or multiple meals)

Schedule 5-10 minute times of prayer into your day: break time, children's nap time, children's play time, lunch time, supper time...seize the opportunities that God gives you today to pray, asking God to reveal his will. Reflect on where God is at work around you.

Father, I pray that I will return to my first love. I repent for those areas in my life where I stopped doing the things I did when I first fell in love with You. I pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal to me any areas in my life where I need to do what I did at first. I pray that my ears will be open to hear what the Spirit is saying to me personally and to us as a congregation. I pray that me and my family, my church and my country would turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, so that we can receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus. Amen. Revelation 2:4,5,7 and Acts 26:18.

Week Four: Harnessing Emotion

Day 24: Friday - Monday 2/16-19

Scripture:

"Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts ... and be thankful." - Colossians 3: 14-15

"... And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance; and endurance produces character, and character produces hope and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that he has given to us." - Romans 5:3-5

Reflection:

Listed below are three "red light" emotions and three "green light" emotions. Consider a time during the past week when each light was flashing most brightly for you. We suggest that you briefly describe the most important condition associated with the emotion, and then offer a prayer that the signal may become part of your journey of transformation. For example, think of the time this week when you felt the most anger. Analyze that time using the five "w's" of journalism (who else was involved; what was going on; when did you feel this emotion; where were you; and why were you angry?)

Red Light Emotions: Anger; Depression; Anxiety /Fear

Green Light Emotions: Love; Joy; Peace

Prayer /Exercise:

Anger: Please teach me what I need to learn from this signal of anger. While it may simply mean some goal of mine was temporarily blocked, help me see that experiencing your love and living in your kingdom are my highest goals- and you offer both freely. Replace my anger with the love of your presence. Amen. '

Depression: Reveal to me, Father, what this painful signal means. I'm sure I am experiencing something as a loss. Comfort me in this as a parent comforts a child. Help me grow in the assurance that I can never lose your love. My place in your kingdom is reserved for me. Amen.

Anxiety/Fear: Teach me through my anxiety. My shoulders are too small to carry the ' weight of the world. Being God is not my job. Help me relax in your strength and trust that you have my best interests at heart- and they cannot be prided from your hands. Amen.

Week Four: Harnessing Emotion

Day 25: Tuesday - Wednesday 2/20-21

Scripture:

"Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts ... and be thankful." - Colossians 3: 14-15

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God- what is good and acceptable and perfect. - Romans 12:1-2

Reflection:

Here are some "thought ruts" that we can fall into which lead to feelings of anger, fear, and anxiety:

- Filtering is where you isolate one circumstance as more important than the bigger picture. Despite a thousand words of affirmation, your mind focuses on the one criticism.
- Polarized thinking knows no shades of grey. A person or situation is "either" this "or" that. Combinations and middle ground are impossible, which leads to extreme reactions.
- Overgeneralization is the act of making a conclusion based on much too little information. You failed a test so you'll never graduate from the program.
- Mind Reading assumes your assumptions aren't assumptions at all. They're a fact. You naturally project how you feel about a situation onto the other.

- Catastrophizing is taking a glass that is half-empty and poking a hole in it so it drains completely. Endless "what if" scenarios plague your imagination and leave only the worst possible response as "most likely."
- Personalization is a complex and highly common phenomenon today where you get stuck in endless comparisons. Your value as a human being fluctuates like the market. You also tend to think it's always about you. You're the cause of the event, whatever the event happens to be.

Exercise: Prayer and Fasting (one meal or multiple meals)

Schedule 5-10 minute times of prayer into your day: break time, children's nap time, children's play time, lunch time, supper time...seize the opportunities that God gives you today to pray, asking God to reveal his will. Reflect on where God is at work around you.

"Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh." Romans 13:14 (NIV)

Identify which of these "thought ruts" you fall into.

Spend a couple minutes at the start of each day for the rest of this week with a short Bible reading and prayer. Use the Romans 12 passage as a meditation, asking God to transform your mind and help you discern his will.

Week Four: Harnessing Emotion

Day 26: Thursday - Friday 2/22-23

Scripture:

"Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts ... and be thankful." - Colossians 3: 14-15

And the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" – 1 Kings 19:9-13.

Reflection:

From all that I said about our worried, overfilled lives, it is clear that we are usually surrounded by so much outer noise that it is hard to truly hear our God when he is speaking to us. We have often become deaf, unable to know when God calls us and unable to understand in which direction he calls us.

Thus our lives have become absurd. In the word absurd we find the Latin word “*surdus*”, which means "deaf." A spiritual life requires discipline because we need to learn to listen to God, who constantly speaks but whom we seldom hear.

When, however, we learn to listen, our lives become obedient lives. The word obedient comes from the Latin word “*audire*”, which means "listening." A spiritual discipline is necessary in order to move slowly from an absurd to an obedient life, from a life filled with noisy worries to a life in which there is some free inner space where we can listen to our God and follow his guidance. - , Henri Nouwen, Here and Now

Exercise/Prayer:

Speak Lord, for your servant is listening. 1 Samuel 3:10b

Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10

Meditate on God’s question to Elijah, “What are you doing here _____ (your name)?”

1 Kings 19:13

What a Beautiful Name it Is by Hillsong

Revelation Song by Phillips, Craig and Dean

Sovereign Over Us by Aaron Keyes

Continue to spend time for the rest of this week with a short Bible reading and prayer. Use the Romans 12 passage as a meditation, asking God to transform your mind and help you discern his will.

Week Five: Who Are You Learning From and Who is Learning From You?**Sunday 2/25**

Weekly Scripture:

"As iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens another." - Proverbs 27:17 NIV

Opening Thought:

We each need three people in our lives:

A "Paul" to mentor us.

A "Barnabas" to walk beside us.

And a "Timothy" to mentor.

If you don't have these three people, ask God to bless you with a mentor, friend, and someone to help.

Week Five: Who Are You Learning From and Who is Learning From You?

Day 29: Monday and Tuesday 2/26-27

Scripture:

"As iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens another." - Proverbs 27:17 NIV

"Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus. You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others." - I Timothy 2:1-2 NLT

Commentary:

Drafting is a technique where two vehicles or objects align in a close group reducing the overall effect of drag due to exploiting the lead object's slipstream. Drafting is used to reduce wind resistance and is seen most commonly in bicycle racing, car racing, and speed skating.

The Bible calls us as Christ followers to do a type of spiritual drafting in our relationships with other Christians. The most popular term for this is mentoring. Dr. Robert Clinton defines mentoring as "a relational experience in which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources." Remember a person who taught and encouraged you in a skill or project? Mentoring. Think of that teacher in school who gave you special attention. You'll never forget his/her name. Possibly a relative made you feel valuable, opened a "door" for you, or shared resources. Again, mentoring.

Apostle Paul was at least briefly mentored by Ananias immediately after he became a follower of Jesus Christ (see Acts 9: 10-19). Later, Paul clearly became a mentor of Timothy (Acts 16:1-5; Philippians 2:19-23). And in the 2 Timothy passage above, Paul assumed that Timothy would mentor trustworthy people who would then mentor others. This mentoring progression is one of the key reasons that the Christian faith multiplied exponentially in the first few years of its existence. What would happen

today if every Christ follower had a spiritual mentor and committed themselves to mentor just three additional people?

Reflection:

Are their people who have mentored you by passing a skill on to you, or they gave you special attention and encouragement, or invested resources to help you become who you are?

Who are the people who have created a spiritual slipstream for you? Can you identify at least one person that is riding in your slipstream whom you are mentoring?

If you don't have someone you are mentoring, can you identify the barriers that keep you from investing in others (feelings of inadequacy, busyness, etc.)?

Prayer:

Thank you God for the persons (name them) who have invested in me. Thank you for the ways You have used them to encourage, teach, strengthen and help me. Lord, help me to be intentional about finding those whom I can mentor. I ask You, Lord to bring names to my mind, people into my path today that you might want me to mentor. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Week Five: Who Are You Learning From and Who is Learning From You?**Day 30: Wednesday and Thursday 2/28-3/1**

Scripture:

As iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens another. - Proverbs 27:17 NIV

Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.

- Mark 3:13-15 NIV

Commentary:

Our supreme model to follow is Jesus Christ. For three years, day and night, Jesus taught and modeled a life worth copying with his disciples, the twelve He called to be with Him. Sermons weren't the major tool Jesus used to shape these men. Jesus wanted these guys to share His life. Jesus sent them out to preach after training them in ministry and imparting His vision. Life on life was Jesus' ultimate mentoring method.

Reflection:

Jesus was an intentional leader.

Jesus did His disciple making in relational environments.

Jesus followed a process that can be learned and repeated.

An intentional leader + a relational environment + a reproducible process = an infinite number of disciples.

John Wesley said, “The Church changes the world not by making converts but by making disciples.” Jesus commanded us to: “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19,20)

“Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.” (1 John 2:6)

Wesley’s Four Basic Convictions for Discipleship:

1. The Necessity of Discipleship:

John Wesley wrote, “I am more and more convinced that the devil himself desires nothing more than this, that the people of any place should be half-awakened and then left to themselves to fall asleep again.”

2. The Necessity of Small Groups for Discipleship:

In 1743 John Wesley organized a society. “Such a society is no other than a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their own salvation.” Discipline was the key to this level of holy living.

Wesley created 3 strands of discipleship: Societies, Classes, and Bands.

Society: Strand 1 – **The Crowd** (these were the multitudes)

Purpose: To Bring About A Change in Knowledge

This meeting included those in a geographical area, much like a typical, congregational meeting in today’s church. These large groups of people met once a week to pray, sing, study scripture, and to watch over one another in love. There was little or no provision made at this level for personal response or feedback. John

described a society as “a company of people having the Form, and seeking the Power of Godliness.”

Class: Strand 2 – **The Cell** (these were Jesus’ 12)

Purpose: To Bring About Behavioral Change

A class was the most basic group structure of the society. The class was composed of 12-20 members, both sexes, mixed by age, social standing and spiritual readiness, under the direction of a trained leader. It was not a gathering for academic learning. They met weekly in the evening for mutual confession of sin and accountability for growing in holiness. This group provided the structure to more closely inspect the condition of the flock, to help them through trials and temptations, and to bring further understanding in practical terms to the messages they had heard preached in the public society meeting. Membership in a class meeting was non-negotiable. If you wanted to continue in the society you had to be in a class. In 1742 in one society in London there were 426 members, divided into 65 classes. Eighteen months later that same society had 2200 members, all of whom were in classes. Every week each class member was expected to speak openly and honestly on the true state of his or her soul.

Band: Strand 3 – **The CORE** (these were Jesus’ inner circle made up of Peter, James, and John)

Purpose: To Bring About A Change of Direction, Heart and Position
Composed of 4 members, all the same sex, age, and marital status. They were voluntary cells of people who professed clear Christian commitment, who desired to grow in love, holiness, and purity of motive. The environment was one of ruthless honesty and frank openness. There were specific rules about punctuality and order within the meeting. He introduced accountability questions which everyone answered openly and honestly in the meeting each week: 1) What known sins have you committed since our last meeting? 2) What temptations have you met with? 3) How were you delivered?

4) What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not? 5) Have you nothing you desire to keep secret? You can see from these questions that there was no place to hide in a Band. Bands became the training ground for future leaders. This group held to extreme confidentiality in a “safe place”, mutual submission where matters of indifference were yielded to the released leader, and godly stewardship. This was the group that could intensively pursue goals and vision together.

3. The Necessity of Leadership in Discipleship:

A small army was needed to provide the leadership for this 3-Strand Discipleship Model, and, just as is true today, professional paid staff simply was not available. Wesley trained and mobilized a massive army of leaders, putting as many as 1 in 10 of his members into leadership roles – barbers, blacksmiths, bakers, men and women. The job description of those who looked after societies and classes was: “preach, teach, study, travel, meet with bands, classes, exercise daily and eat sparingly.”

4. Holiness and Service as the Goals of Discipleship:

Wesley’s goals for this entire process were: godliness and goodwill – spirituality and service to others. This system and process produced a new kind of citizen at a period of history when crime and every form of public sin were rampant. These men and women reformed both the church and the society in which they lived.

Exercise: Prayer and Fasting (one meal or multiple meals)

Schedule 5-10 minute times of prayer into your day: break time, children's nap time, children's play time, lunch time, supper time...seize the opportunities that God gives you today to pray, asking God to reveal his will. Reflect on where God is at work around you.

“7 Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, 8 so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. 9 Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. 10 You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. 11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, 12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory. “ 1 Thessalonians 2:6-12 (NIV)

“1 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. 3 Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” 2 Timothy 2:1-3 (NIV)

Questions to reflect on and answer:

What is preventing you from participating in a discipleship relationship?

Who is the Holy Spirit leading you to share your life with?

Prayer:

Thank you God for giving us the model mentor in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Help me to get more connected with my church family. Lord, show me what I need to let go of so that I can have more time to "do life" with your people so I can grow to be the fully devoted follower you have called me to be. I invite you to show me any other reasons why I resist getting connected to my brothers and sisters in Christ. Lord, please break down any walls and barriers in my life that prevent me from responding to all that you are calling me to be. In Christ's name I pray, Amen.

Week Five: Who Are You Learning From and Who is Learning From You?

Day 31: Friday – Monday 3/2-5

Scripture:

"As iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens another." - Proverbs 27:17 NIV

"Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal; but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you live at peace with everyone." - Romans 12:9-18 NLT

Commentary:

"If we're going to make disciples and move out in mission, we need to go from managing boundaries to integrating family and mission into one life, a cohesive framework and fabric that empowers a culture of discipleship and mission, not just occasional events and periodic programs."

For Jesus, making disciples is about building a family and not brick and mortar.

"Family on mission is how we stop thinking of discipleship as a task that we do and start living out discipleship as a way that we are."

"The message was clear: to be a disciple meant that you learn how to make disciples — an ever-multiplying movement meant to bless the whole world."

"As we make disciples and mobilize God's people for mission, the methodology we use must be congruent with the way of Jesus. We need to learn how to do family on mission."

Family on Mission, by Mike and Sally Breen

Reflection:

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love" (Romans 12:10, NIV)

"In honor preferring one another" (Romans 12:10)

"Owe no man anything but to love one another" (Romans 13:8)

"Accept one another" (Romans 15:7 NIV)

"By love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13)

"Be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2)

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another" (Ephesians 4:32)

"Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ" (Ephesians 5:21 NIV)

"Forbearing one another and forgiving one another" (Colossians 3:13)

"Teaching and admonishing one another" (Colossians 3:16)

"Comfort one another" (1 Thessalonians 4: 18)

"Build up (edify) others" (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

"Encourage one another daily" (Hebrews 3: 13)

"Consider how we may spur one another on to love" (Hebrews 10:24)

"Confess your faults one to another and pray for one another" (James 5: 16)

Prayer:

Loving God, forgive me for my self-centered tendencies and actions. Help me to love others as you love me. Today bring to my mind these small, but very important, steps of action in every interaction that I have with others in my family, my church, my work place, my neighborhood and even among strangers. Today I invite you to fill me with your love. Come Holy Spirit and empower me to bless others with these actions which display your nature and character. May your kingdom come on earth today, as it is in heaven. Thank you. In Christ's name, Amen.

Week Five: Who Are You Learning From and Who is Learning From You?

Day 32: Tuesday and Wednesday 3/6-7

Scripture:

"As iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens another," - Proverbs 27:17 NIV

"When the uproar was over, Paul sent for the believers and encouraged them. Then he said good-bye and left for Macedonia. While there; he encouraged the believers in all the towns he passed through. Then he traveled down to Greece, where he stayed for three months. He was preparing to sail back to Syria when he discovered a plot by some Jews against his life, so he decided to return through Macedonia. He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia."

-Acts 20:1-4

Commentary:

When geese are migrating, they fly in a "V" formation. You might be interested to know what scientists have discovered about why they fly that way. It has been learned that as each bird flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in "V" formation, the whole flock adds at least 71 % greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own.

People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of one another. Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front. If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those who are heading in the same direction as we are.

Apostle Paul, arguably the greatest church planter who ever lived, very intentionally mentored young leaders like Timothy. In the passage above, we also see that a "flock" of seven young men traveled with him as he went from place to place encouraging believers. Paul did not live his life in isolation. A careful reading of the Book of Acts shows he constantly modeled the importance of community.

Reflection:

Do you find that you naturally tend to fly with a flock or usually try to fly alone?

If you tend toward flying alone, what do you think are the hindrances in your life that keep you from joining the flock?

What step is God speaking to you to take this week about joining the "flock" and getting more spiritually and relationally connected to others?

Exercise: Prayer and Fasting (one meal or multiple meals)

Schedule 5-10 minute times of prayer into your day: break time, children's nap time, children's play time, lunch time, supper time...seize the opportunities that God gives you today to pray, asking God to reveal his will. Reflect on where God is at work around you.

Lord, I see the importance of connection and community. Help me to face the temptation to isolate and insulate myself from others. Even you lived in community as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Show me at least one person today that I can provide some uplift and encouragement for in their faith flight. And Lord, help me to see and appreciate the people around me who I need to stay in formation with so that I can strengthen my endurance on my journey with you. In Christ's name I pray, Amen.

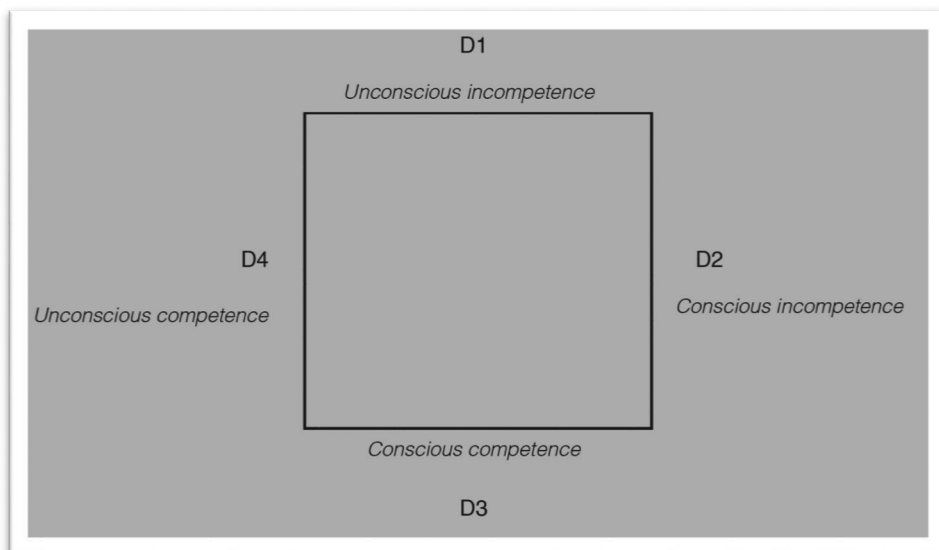
Week Five: Who Are You Learning From and Who is Learning From You?

Day 33: Thursday to Friday 3/8-9

Scripture: "As iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens another," – Prov. 27:1

Commentary:

Jesus was able to take a group of 12 men, invest in them, and teach them to carry on His mission in less than three years. How was he able to multiply his life into theirs so quickly? Jesus understood that at different points in their journey, he needed to lead them in different ways. At first, he was DIRECTIVE (D1) with them, casting vision, calling them to do as he did. Then he was brilliantly and compassionately COACHING (D2) them when they ran into brick walls and wanted to give up. When they started to see more success than failure, both in character and competencies, he was more about COLLABORATION (D3). Finally, as he ascended and sent them out into all the world, to make disciples as he had taught them, he DELEGATED (D4) all his responsibility to them. As disciples we can learn to lead as Jesus led, to teach and train disciples in the way of Christ.



Dr. John Maxwell said, "We teach what we know -we reproduce what we are."

Reflection:

What are you reproducing? What legacy will you leave? Are you living today with tomorrow in mind?

What are the barriers that keep you from investing in others?

Who are you mentoring in your family, your business, your church that will multiply your impact many times over for many generations to come?

Prayer:

God, forgive me when I've been short-sighted in my thinking and living. I confess that I get so focused on the urgencies of today that I miss the priorities of the future. I confess that I often settle for the good and miss out on the best. Today, I ask you to open my eyes to see the future you see, Lord. Reveal to me who I need to invest in. Help me to live my life today so that I'm not ashamed of what I have reproduced tomorrow. By your grace and with your power, Lord, I commit myself to invest in others, starting today. Amen.

Week Six: Becoming a Conduit**Sunday 3/11**

What will it take for the Gospel to pass freely through you to others?

Weekly Scripture:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God:" -2 Corinthians 1: 3-4

Opening Thought:

There was a Syrian rabbi whose name was Zuscha. On his deathbed someone asked him what he thought the kingdom of God was going to be like. The old rabbi thought for quite a while and then gave his answer: 'I really don't know. But one thing I do know; when I get there, I am not going to be asked, 'Why weren't you Moses?' or 'Why weren't you David?' I am going to be asked, Why weren't you Zuscha?'

May we have the discernment and faith to embrace our God-given identity and calling!

Week Six: Becoming a Conduit

Day 36: Monday and Tuesday 3/12-13

Scripture:

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ; and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their sins against them and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us:" - 2 Corinthians 5: 18-19

"The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth; • -Psalm 145:18 (NAS)

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." - Matthew 7:7 (NIV)

"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all of your heart." - Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV)

Reflection:

The painting is traditionally called The Creation of Adam, but some scholars say it should be called The Endowment of Adam. Adam has already been given physical life - his eyes are open, and he is conscious. What is happening is that he is being offered life with God. "All of man's potential, physical and spiritual, is contained in this one timeless moment," writes one art critic.

Apparently one of the messages that Michelangelo wanted to convey is God's implacable determination to reach out to and be with the person he has created. God is as close as he can be. But, having come that close, he allows just a little space, so that Adam can choose. He waits for Adam to make his move. Adam is more difficult to interpret. His arm is partially extended toward God, but his body reclines in a lazy pose, leaning

backward as if he has no interest at all in making a connection. Maybe he assumes that God, having come this far, will close the gap. Maybe he is indifferent to the possibility of touching his creator. Maybe he lacks the strength. All he would have to do is lift a finger. (Max Lucado, *God is Closer Than You Think*, pg. 12)

Exercise

Find a quiet place, take a few moments, and consider these questions:

Observe how you live each day, each moment. What does God see?

In your day-in and day-out, what do others see? What do you want them to see? Heaven rejoices over the smallest steps we take. Do you have a first-step to take?

Or, as Max Lucado asks, "will you lift a finger?"

Prayer

God-you are El-Roi, you are "God who sees me." You are near to me all of the time, even when I wish you weren't watching. Forgive me for the things I have done and the things I have left undone. Help each of us this week to step back and consider our lives, what you see, and what we hope others will see. Breathe into us your Spirit that we may bear witness to your gentle presence and your powerful love, for we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Week Six: Becoming a Conduit

Day 37: Wednesday and Thursday 3/14-15

Scripture:

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ; and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their sins against them and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us:" - 2 Corinthians 5: 18-19

'But seek you first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you.' - Matthew 6:33 (NIV)

"Give and it will be given to you. A large quantity, pressed together, shaken down; and running over will be put into your lap ' - Luke 6:38a (NIV)

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will BE my witnesses in Jerusalem; and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 (NIV)

Commentary:

An analogy from the field of electricity can help us think about our response to God. The difference between a conductor and a resistor can be put like this: A conductor is willing to let go. Floating around the periphery of its atoms are electrons that can quite easily pass from one atom to another. They are more or less free agents. So a conductor has what we might call a generosity of spirit when it comes to electrons. In previous times writers used to speak of this as a sense of detachment. Ignatius of Loyola said we are to cultivate a sense of indifference. The idea is not that we should be apathetic about all our circumstances. Instead, it is that our deepest desire is for God and His kind of life, and every other desire has to take a backseat to this one absolute quest. A resistor, by

contrast, does not want to let go. It hangs onto its little electrons. It clings to the status quo. It is afraid to let go because it wants to keep its little possessions intact. And so it does. But the resistor never knows much power. The secret of the conductor is that it is not generating its own power. The conductor is not particularly strong or clever; it is simply a conduit. It is open and receptive to the flow of current that can change the world from darkness to light. The resistor prays, "Leave me alone." The conductor prays, "As you wish." Each prayer gets answered. (Max Lucado, *God is Closer Than You Think*, pg 139-140)

Exercise: Prayer and Fasting (one meal or multiple meals)

Schedule 5-10 minute times of prayer into your day: break time, children's nap time, children's play time, lunch time, supper time...seize the opportunities that God gives you today to pray, asking God to reveal his will. Reflect on where God is at work around you.

Find a quiet place, take a few moments, and consider these questions:

Is your prayer "leave me alone" or "as you wish"? Each prayer gets answered.

Do you have desires that must take a back seat to God's one absolute quest?

How will you live as a conductor ... willing to let go ... generous in your giving?

Prayer:

Today, O Lord, I yield myself to you. May your will be my delight today. May your way have perfect rule in me. May your love be the pattern for my life. I surrender to you, my hopes, my dreams, and my ambitions. Do with them what you will, when you will, as you will. I place in your loving care my family, my friends, and my future. Care for them with a care, that I can never give. I release into your hands my need to control, my craving for status, and my fear of uncertainty. May my prayers always become "as you wish," in Jesus name, Amen.

Week Six: Becoming a Conduit

Day 38: Friday –Monday 3/16-19

Scripture:

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ; and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their sins against them and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us:" - 2 Corinthians 5: 18-19

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under a bushel basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." - Matthew 5: 14-16 (NIV)

"Dear friends, do you think you'll get anywhere in this if you learn all the right words but never do anything? Does mere talking about faith indicate that a person really has it? For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say; "Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!" and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup- where does that get you? Isn't it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense?" - James 2:15-16 (The Message)

"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore to send out workers into his harvest field:" - Matthew 9:37 (NW)

Commentary:

Remember if you will those students in an earlier Carnegie study, Arthur Levine's *When Dreams and Heroes Died*. These were the students who thought, 80 to 90 percent of them, that the world was going to hell in a

hand basket, that its future was dim and grim. But when I asked about their own personal futures, 80 to 90 percent of them said, "Oh, no problem. It's rosy, I'm getting a good education, good grades, I'm going to a good school, and I'm going to get a good job." A psychoanalyst looking at this data would say, "Schizophrenia."

I want to argue that it's a trained schizophrenia: It is the way these students have been taught to look at reality through objectivist lenses. They have always been taught about a world out there somewhere apart from them, divorced from their personal lives; they never have been invited to intersect their autobiographies with the life story of the world. And so they can report on a world that is not the one in which they live, one they've been taught about from some objectivist's fantasy.

They have also been formed in the habit of experimental manipulation. These students believe they can take pieces of the world and carve out for themselves a niche of private sanity in the midst of public calamity. That is nothing more than the ethical outcome of the objectivism in which they have been formed or, deformed. It is a failure to recognize their own implication with society's fate. (Parker J. Palmer, January 8, 1999, Lecture at Scottsdale Community College)

Exercise:

Find a quiet place, take a few moments, and reflect on the question, "How am I 'spending myself well right now?'" Are there areas where love requires you to sacrifice something you'd rather hold onto or inconvenience yourself for another?

Prayer:

O Lord, forgive me of my selfishness and give me your heart for people. Help me see people and this community as you see them. Raise up workers for the ripe harvest and give me the discernment to say 'yes'

Photo credit:

(<https://www.gospeltruth.net/booth/whocaresphoto19smaller.JPG>)



Week Six: Becoming a Conduit

Day 39: Tuesday and Wednesday 3/20-21

Scripture:

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ; and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their sins against them and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us:" - 2 Corinthians 5: 18-19

"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." - Matthew 28:18-20 (NW)

"For I will give you words and wisdom ... - Luke 21:15a (NW)

Reflection:

Parker Palmer, tells the following story. ... In the middle of that week, I faced the challenge I feared most. One of our instructors backed me up to the edge of a cliff 110 feet above solid ground. He tied a very thin rope to my waist-a rope that looked ill-kept to me and seemed to be starting to unravel-and told me to start "rappelling" down that cliff. "Do what?" I said, "Just go!" the instructor explained, in typical Outward Bound fashion. So I went-and immediately slammed into a ledge, some four feet down from the edge of the cliff, with bone- jarring, brain-jarring force. The instructor looked down at me: "I don't think you've quite got it." "Right," said I, being in no position to disagree. "So what am I supposed to do?" "The only way to do this," he said, "is to lean back as far as you can. You have to get your body at right angles to the cliff so that your weight will be on your feet. It's counterintuitive, but it's the only way that works." I knew that he was wrong, of course. I knew that the trick was to hug the mountain, to stay as close to the rock face as I could. So I tried it again, my

way-and slammed into the next ledge, another four feet down. "You still don't have it," the instructor said helpfully. "OK," I said, "tell me again what I am supposed to do." "Lean way back," said he, and take the next step." The next step was a very big one, but I took it-and wonder of wonders, it worked. I leaned back into empty space, eyes fixed on the heavens in prayer, made tiny, tiny moves with my feet, and started descending down the rock face, gaining confidence with every step.

I was about halfway down when the second instructor called up from below: "Parker, I think you'd better stop and see what's just below your feet." I lowered my eyes very slowly so as not to shift my weight-and saw that I was approaching a deep hole in the face of the rock. To get down, I would have to get around that hole, which meant I could not maintain the straight line of descent I had started to get comfortable with. I would need to change course and swing myself around that hole, to the left or to the right. I knew for a certainty that attempting to do so would lead directly to my death-so I froze, paralyzed with fear. The second instructor let me hang there, trembling, in silence, for what seemed like a very long time. Finally she shouted up these helpful words: "Parker, is anything wrong?" then she shouted ten words I hope never to forget, words whose impact and meaning I can still feel:

"If you can't get out of it, get into it!"

I had long believed in the concept of "the word become flesh," but until that moment, I had not experienced it. My teacher spoke words so compelling that they bypassed my mind, went into my flesh, and animated my legs and feet. No helicopter would come to rescue me; the instructor on the cliff would not pull me up with the rope; there was no parachute in my backpack to float me to the ground. There was no way out of my dilemma except to get into it, so my feet started to move, and in a few minutes I made it safely down." - Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, pp. 82-85

Exercise: Prayer and Fasting (one meal or multiple meals)

Schedule 5-10 minute times of prayer into your day: break time, children's nap time, children's play time, lunch time, supper time...seize the opportunities that God gives you today to pray, asking God to reveal his will. Reflect on where God is at work around you.

Find a quiet place, and consider the reading above. Then pray the prayer below and listen to what God is saying to you. Take your time. Wait. Write it down. Make a commitment ... "lean back" make "tiny moves" ... "get into it."

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, Lord of the harvest, all around us are men and women, boys and girls who do not know you, whose sins are unforgiven and whose lives lack true meaning and purpose. Have mercy on them and awaken us to their need. May we as a church and as individuals reach out to them in love with the message of the gospel - that Jesus Christ died for their sins and rose again that they and we might have new life and hope for eternity, freed from guilt and the fear of death. In the power of your Holy Spirit, may we do this in many right and appropriate ways, devoting to the task our personal, financial and creative resources - our love, our time, our energy and our priorities. Make us a generous and open community, loving and serving both old friends and newcomers, So that Jesus may be glorified and many souls added to his kingdom. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Week Six: Becoming a Conduit

Day 40: Thursday and Friday 3/22-23

Scripture:

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ; and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their sins against them and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us:" - 2 Corinthians 5: 18-19

"It is news I'm most proud to proclaim, this extraordinary Message of God's powerful plan to rescue everyone who trusts him, starting with Jews and then right on to everyone else! God's way of putting people right shows up in the acts of faith, confirming what Scripture has said all along: "The person in right standing before God by trust He really lives." The basic reality of God is plain enough. Open your eyes and there it is! Try taking a long and thoughtful look at what God has created, people have always been able to see what their eyes as such can't see: eternal power for instance; and the mystery of his divine being. So nobody has a good excuse· - Romans 1:16-20 (The Message)

Reflection:

Mia's agnostic beliefs would surface from time to time. She recalls an argument her fiancé Jeff had with a friend who was an atheist. "I found myself pulling for the atheist," Mia said with a smile. "When he would make a point, I would say, 'Yeah, that's what I believe.' But Jeff kept pressing this guy. Like when the atheist friend said that humanity was created by evolutionary forces, Jeff would ask him where the evolutionary forces came from. Jeff kept pushing him to say where the beginning of everything was. The guy finally gave in and said 'I guess it must be God.' Those words hit me hard; I couldn't get them out of my mind." Thom Rainer, *Conversations With People Who Turned From Other Beliefs To JESUS*, pg. 103

Exercise:

Find a quiet place, take a few moments, and consider these questions:

How do I regularly initiate conversations allowing other people to talk about their spiritual journeys?

How do I actively try to sense how God is moving in someone's life as they search for God, and draw that out in a positive way?

How can I utilize church gatherings as a resource for investing in my friends who are spiritually curious?

Prayer:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.

