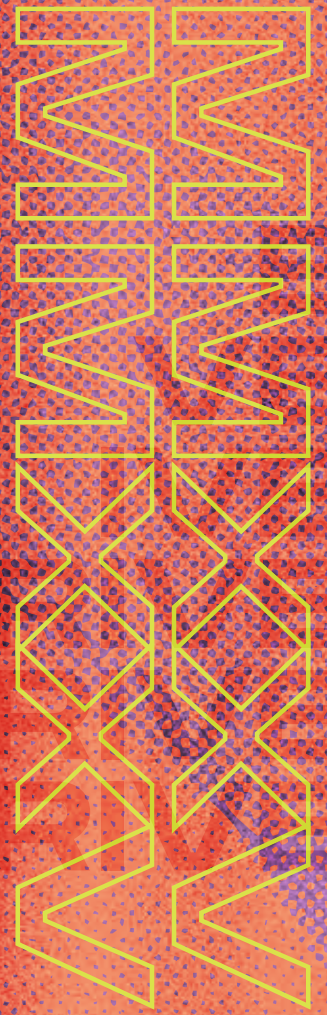


DEVOTIONAL

2025

JANUARY 13TH –
FEBRUARY 2ND



Day 1: You Can Fast!

January 13th

Pray for the courage and strength to participate in the 21-Day Fast on some level.

Ask God to lead you over the next three weeks and pray for our church to experience supernatural breakthrough during this season of fasting.

“Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.”

Luke 2:36-38

I am so thrilled that you are reading this and that you've decided to embark on this 21-day journey of prayer and fasting. Whether this is your first time trying to fast or it's your regular rhythm every January, I want to encourage you to approach your season of fasting confident that you *can* fast!

One of the obscure stories about the birth of Jesus is found in Luke 2. Jesus had just been born and Mary and Joseph brought him to the temple in Jerusalem to be dedicated to the Lord and to fulfill some customs found in the law. As they arrive at the temple, an elderly widow named Anna excitedly greets them and prophesies that their little baby boy is the hope of the world! (Luke 2:38).

I love what Luke says about Anna in Luke 2:37 (ESV), “She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.” Unlike my experience growing up in church, Anna was very familiar with and accustomed to fasting. There is so much to Anna's story that is worth reflecting on: she dealt with the loss of a spouse, she never had children, and she understood disappointment. Anna was familiar with pain, but never stopped pursuing God and had a passion for His presence and purpose in the world.

But what I want you to see in her story and be encouraged by in your fasting journey is her dedication to making fasting a regular part of her spiritual discipline and worship. She worshiped *with* fasting and prayer day and night. It was while she was fasting and praying, while she was being obedient to what God had asked, that Anna got to see Jesus and experience His presence literally in her life. If an elderly woman (some scholars insist that she stayed in God's house from the time she lost her husband, meaning that those 84 years were after she was widowed, so she may have been more than 100!) can fast and pray, so can you!

You *can* fast! As you undertake this 21-day journey, know that God's power and presence are available to each of you as you invite Him to change your life, your circumstances, and our city. I can't wait to see how He moves in your life!

-Pastor Paul Taylor

Day 2:

January 14th

Pray for God to create spiritual hunger in His people and draw them to passionate prayer. We cannot produce a genuine prayer movement on our own.

“For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.”

Philippians 2:13

We need God. We need Him to move in our lives, in our families and in our church. If more people are to find Jesus, we must chase after the Lord in prayer. Today, we ask God for more vision, more patience, and more devotion. We beg to be included in His awesome and miraculous plan to reach those around us. Let's remember Jesus' closest companions who witnessed His miracles and teaching firsthand. After sharing yet another parable, Jesus encouraged them, “But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Mathew 6:16-17). Let us pray bold prayers to see and hear more than we can currently imagine.

How will we catch “God moments” without having constant communication with God? We won't. How are we drawn into passionate prayer? By praying! Praying about everything, big and small. Having both dedicated prayer time (think 5am with your coffee mug in hand) and talking to God throughout your day. From the quiet, “Thank you, Lord” when you find your car keys, to the joyous, “THANK YOU, LORD!” when your family member's medical test comes back negative. Prayer is simply the pathway through which we communicate and grow nearer to God. When we spend time with God, we cannot help but become more patient, more loving, more honest, and ultimately more of who He created us to be.

The Apostle Paul encouraged the church in Phillippi to continue their journey to live out the Gospel. Paul then reaffirmed that God is already working through and in them. Sound familiar? God is already working through us as we start week one of our fast. How has God already begun to move in your life?

Today, we ask God for more. We seek his presence. We seek to see what He sees and hear what He hears. We seek to love like He does. We seek Him. We take a deep breath, relax our minds, and say, "Thank you, Lord."

Day 3:

January 15th

Ask God to bring deep conviction of sin, spiritual brokenness, a holy fear of God, and genuine repentance at Rivers Crossing. Only God has the power to produce these in His people, and there can't be revival without them.

“For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There’s no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.”

2 Corinthians 7:10

Many people grow up in very legalistic environments. Follow all of the rules. Never sin. Always pray. Don't sin. Always read the Bible. For the love of God... DO. NOT. SIN! And always be at church. That kind of environment creates a bar that's simply impossible to hit and so, many people shy away from any interest in faith at a very young age. Even when wanting to explore Christianity later in life, it can be a slow and cautious journey.

The ideas of “deep conviction,” “holy fear” and “repentance” can be terrifying. An image is conjured up of the big bad God from a legalistic childhood who is impossible to please.

But we need to unlearn that toxic image of God and remember that repentance leads to communion with God. Just read what the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth in today's scripture.

No regret. No shame.

Repentance isn't easy, but it is important. Not a quick “sorry God” to escape Hell, but true repentance. On your knees in your bedroom asking God to cleanse your heart and mind. True repentance. Laying before the Lord asking Him to set your feet on a better path. True repentance. An authentic apology to the Lord who saved you and a commitment to turn away from sin with His help.

Take a moment today and stop. Truly repent. Name the sin that is holding you captive. And then realize that when you name it, it loses some of its power. Then repent from it. And watch God bring revival to your heart.

Day 4:

January 16th

Pray for genuine repentance and spiritual power to engulf our leaders. Renewal in our leadership is crucial to a move of revival in our day!

“Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”

Ephesians 6:14-20

“Ambassador in chains.” Quick, go look that up. That has got to be the name of a Christian heavy metal band.

Maybe you’re somewhat familiar with the armor of God; perhaps from years of deep study of the book of Ephesians. Or maybe a craft from a kids' church project you did many years ago. Or, maybe something you heard preached along the way. Or perhaps you’ve never heard of it before.

The Apostle Paul doesn’t always use symbols in his teachings, but he leans in here. He describes Roman armor and intentionally ties it back to the areas of our bodies that it will protect. It’s beautiful. This is why it gets taught in every setting from kids' church to youth group to Sunday mornings in every church across America.

His letter to the church in Ephesus is short—only 6 chapters. And the armor of God comes almost at the close. But he gives space afterward to close his letter by asking for prayer. “Pray for me, as I am an ambassador in chains.”

Paul has fought the fight. He has planted churches. He has given his life to spreading the Gospel of Jesus. And now from a jail cell, he writes letters to encourage churches that he helped plant along the way. A spokesperson for Christ in literal chains.

Church, asking for prayer is something our leaders do not do often. Maybe they feel like it is selfish. Maybe they are just too exhausted. Maybe they are just so selfless that they want to focus on their church and not themselves. But let's take Paul's request for himself and apply it to our leaders.

Stop right now, and pray for your leaders. Ask God to give them strength. Strength to lead. Strength to grow. Strength to finish and finish well. And then maybe, drop them a two-sentence email to let them know that you prayed for them. That encouragement could very well fill them with a fire to keep fighting and racing.

Day 5:

January 17th

Pray that God will bring loving unity in our church. We want everyone to know that God is alive at Rivers Crossing.

"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 13:35

There's something undeniably powerful about a community that genuinely loves one another. It goes beyond polite gestures and social niceties—you can get that from other communities, your gym, your school, your coworkers. But true love paired with action transforms lives. Jesus said that the world would recognize us as His followers by the way we care for each other. When Christians live in unity, it becomes obvious that God is alive and moving at Rivers Crossing. It draws people in who are longing for a place to be accepted and loved as they are.

In a broken and increasingly divided world, it can feel impossible to love others the way Jesus calls us to. We're all ordinary people with flaws, baggage, and hurts, and sometimes that makes relationships messy. We disagree. We have different views. It can be easy to view others through the lens of culture—judging and villainizing people who disagree with us. But when we decide to set aside our differences and lean into the love God calls us to, even when it's hard, we show the world something different—something real. We show them Jesus.

Today, let's pray for loving unity in our church. Ask God how you can play a part—whether through offering forgiveness, extending grace, or simply being present for someone who needs it. When we love like this, we aren't just talking about Jesus—we're showing the world who He truly is.

Day 6:

January 18th

Pray for God to fill us with a passion to see people saved. Until we consistently pray for the lost, intentionally invest in them, and lovingly invite them to follow Jesus, a revival won't happen. Continually pray for those on your 8 to 15 and ask God to reveal more people to add to it.

“With Christ as my witness, I speak with utter truthfulness. My conscience and the Holy Spirit confirm it. My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them.”

Romans 9:1-3

When was the last time you felt a deep, burning passion for the lost? In Romans 9, Paul speaks with heart-wrenching urgency about his desire to see his people saved. He was willing to sacrifice everything if it meant people would come to know Jesus. That kind of passion doesn't just happen—it comes from being so transformed by the love of Christ that you can't help but want the same for others. If we've truly been transformed by the Gospel, we should want to see as many people experience the life-changing power of Jesus as we have.

Here at Rivers Crossing, we believe revival starts with prayer. We have to ask God to break our hearts for those who don't know Him yet. Take the time to pray that He opens our eyes to people in our lives that need Him. But it doesn't end there. We also need to take action—investing time and love into the people in our circles who don't know Jesus. Reaching out. Providing care. Revival happens when we pray boldly for the lost, intentionally invest in their lives, and lovingly invite them to follow Jesus.

So today, pray for God to ignite a passion in your heart for the people in your life who don't yet know Him. Ask Him to open doors for conversations that lead to life change. Let's be a church that's hungry to see people saved, knowing that revival begins when we pray and live with purpose.

Day 7:
January 19th

Pray for new churches being established across our country and around the world. Pray that believers carry out the great commission to make disciples of all nations. We believe there's no better way to spread the Gospel than through establishing new churches.

"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."

Matthew 28:19

Although Jesus may have been speaking directly to his eleven disciples at this moment, the command to "go and make disciples" was for His Church. This is one of the reasons many people call this passage of scripture "The Great Commission."

The Church was commissioned by God to go and make disciples wherever God calls them. One of the most strategic ways of fulfilling The Great Commission is by planting churches led by called and passionate people committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Although it may seem like churches are on every corner in our communities, churches are closing faster than they are opening. At the current rate, only one church opens for every four churches that close. Now more than ever, we need to plant churches in our city and around the world.

It's easy to forget that every church was once a church plant! The church you came to faith in or were discipled in only exists because a group of people committed to the Great Commission stepped out in faith. That's why all churches must decide if they will be the end of the road or if they will invest resources and people into starting new churches to reach new people in new places.

Spend some time today asking God to create a passion in your life and your church to see new churches started. Who knows, maybe He is calling *you* to plant a church!

Day 8:
January 20th

Pray that God will call people into ministry, mission work, and service. We desire to be a church that trains people up and sends them out to spread the Gospel. We can only start as many churches as we have church planters to lead them.

“Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.”
Matthew 9:37-38

Jesus urges his disciples to pray this after visiting many towns and villages, teaching, preaching, and healing. There were crowds of people who were desperate for Him and the good news He had to offer, and the compassion He had for them.

Today, we are still surrounded by people who are desperate for Jesus. We have personally experienced the life change, hope, peace, joy, and love that’s available in Christ, and yet we’re so timid to offer it to those around us. Why?

“I don’t want to offend them.”
“What if they ask a question I don’t know the answer to?”
“I don’t have the time.”
“What if they say ‘no,’ and then our relationship becomes awkward?”

There’s no denying that sharing your faith requires risk. At a recent evangelism conference, one of the speakers said, “Someone saying ‘no thank you’ to your invitation to an event at your church is not suffering for Jesus.”

How easy is it to make excuses when the Holy Spirit prompts us to extend an invitation or offer to pray with someone? The reality is, most of us don’t know what it means to truly suffer for Christ or experience persecution for our faith. Persecution was the catalyst in the early church that caused the Gospel to spread like wildfire. No matter what the early followers of Jesus faced (whether it was prison, beatings, or even death), they continued to share the good news wherever they went. If God can even use persecution for his glory, what do we have to be afraid of?

Evangelism is a spiritual gift (Ephesians 4:11); however, we are all called to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5). We are the workers for the harvest! God desires for us

to declare and demonstrate the Gospel to the lost people in our lives, the next generation, and to the ends of the earth. Consider the privilege that we have to participate in the Great Commission and partner with God to see lost people saved.

You are on mission wherever He has you. Pray that God would provide an opportunity for you to share the Gospel with someone this week and for a heart that's willing to take the risk.

Day 9:

January 21st

Pray that God will fill us with His Holy Spirit. Allow us to hear His voice and follow His call.

“You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.”

Luke 11:11-13

There are two kinds of people: those who love surprises, and those who hate them. People who love surprises want to give a gift and have the recipient be surprised when they open whatever waits. The recipient would rather know what it is before it's opened. It's a whole thing.

No matter how you find out what your gift is (because really, either way it's a surprise, isn't it?), part of the joy of giving is showing people they are loved. That they've been thought of, anticipated and celebrated, from the selection of the gift all the way through to the tying of the bow.

Receiving a truly “good” gift does make us feel all of those things, doesn't it? Any gift is a good gift. But you know those unexpected gifts that take your breath away? The ones you never would have thought of and maybe even feel unworthy to receive? Those rare gifts are the ones that truly make us feel known.

And those are the gifts that God specializes in.

Sometimes it can be easy to doubt that God will give us good things. But this promise, that our Father will give us His Spirit when we ask, is about receiving a gift that is far beyond anything else we could imagine. We are actually asking God to come live in us and He is actually promising that He will.

What gift could be better?

Yet, as we load groceries or the dishwasher for the millionth time, and get wrapped up in daily life—or when life gets hard and God feels far—we can all forget how incredibly special this gift is. How very good He is. How close He actually is.

Earlier in Luke 11, Jesus teaches us how to pray and then tells us to ask, seek, knock. In the Greek, these actions are ongoing—the original language encourages us to keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking. We're told to be persistent. This includes how we ask for His Holy Spirit. One variation of the Greek word for "ask," *aiteō*, means beg or crave. We can keep begging for the good gift that He has promised. We can make it a practice to keep craving, even in the mundane or hard or painful moments of our lives. Let's keep asking, seeking, and knocking. Let's keep listening.

May we pray to be filled again and again and know that He will be so very good to us.

Day 10:

January 22nd

Pray for addictions to be broken. Pray for the ministry of Celebrate Recovery. You cannot enjoy the fullness of life in Christ when addictions bind you.

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”

2 Corinthians 3:17

Change can be intimidating, can't it? There's a quote that says, "without change there would be no butterflies." Butterflies are the ultimate visual image of change and transformation. To go from a caterpillar to a butterfly is an intense transformation as the insect fights for its freedom out of its cocoon into the new life that was formed. It *fights* for freedom. Will you fight for yours?

Change doesn't come easily for most of us. We often find ourselves saying things like, "I can't change" or "This is just who I am." But if that's how we think, we'll stay stuck right where we are. Change is uncomfortable, and stepping outside our comfort zones can make us anxious.

Many of us seek comfort in all the wrong places, trying to create a false sense of security. True comfort comes from Jesus—not from alcohol, drugs, numbing out, or any other Earthly pleasure. Jesus is the ultimate Comforter.

If you are you wondering if change is actually possible or whether you'll just fail yet again, there is hope! Real change *is* possible and Jesus wants to do it in your life! The question is, will you let Him? Will you trust Him enough—even if it's just a mustard seed of faith—to show you the next right step and give you the courage to take it?

Freedom and peace can be found when stepping outside your comfort zone through a relationship with Christ, especially in community settings like Celebrate Recovery. We cannot change or break an addiction in our own power, and we cannot do it alone. God designed us to support one another.

What mindset are you living in? What identity are you answering to? What we believe has a dramatic effect on our lives. Jesus said, *“What you have believed will be done for you!”* It is a principle of life that works negatively or positively. Remember, courage

isn't the absence of fear; it's moving forward despite it.

Don't think about changing *forever*. Think about changing *today*. Let today be day one instead of just one day! Nothing *changes* if *nothing* changes– so what is one tiny change you can make just for today? Ask God. He will tell you!

So, are you ready to say yes to change? Let's embrace the journey toward freedom together!

Day 11:

January 23rd

Pray for a hunger for God's word for our church. At this halfway point, most of us are thinking about what we will eat after the fast! This is the time to press in and ask God to give us a hunger and an honoring attitude toward His word.

*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.”*

Matthew 5:6

As we hit the halfway mark of the fast, it's totally normal if some of our initial excitement has faded. When we start, we're excited to seek God together, but by now, a little fatigue, some discouragement, or just plain tiredness might have crept in. It's easy to find ourselves thinking about the foods and comforts we've set aside.

But hey—this is actually a key moment! Now's the time to lean in deeper, asking God to spark a new hunger in us for His life-giving Word. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” That promise is for us, too! So let's go confidently to God, asking Him to give us a renewed craving for the sustenance in Scripture.

The psalmist talks about how God's words are “sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalm 119:103). When we start feeling weary or distracted, we can look to verses like this to remind us of how full of beauty, wisdom, and nourishment the Bible really is. This fast isn't just about giving up food; it's about feeding our spirits. Let's ask God to help us crave that deeper connection with Him through His Word.

Maybe your personal quiet time has felt a bit dry or routine lately. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring a fresh spark of curiosity, to help you discover insights you've never noticed before. Pray that, as a church, we'd approach the Bible not just as a rulebook or history, but as the living message of our loving Father who genuinely wants to connect with us.

The second half of this fast is an awesome opportunity to go deeper and ask God to give us a thirst for His truth that can't be satisfied anywhere else. As we do, may we feel our souls refreshed and our spirits strengthened by the bread of life!

Day 12:

January 24th

Pray for God to work in marriages at Rivers Crossing. God-honoring marriages should be the norm for Christians, not the exception. Outdo one another in showing honor within your marriage.

“I will boast only in the LORD; let all who are helpless take heart. Come let us tell of the LORD’s greatness; let us exalt His name together.”

Psalm 34:2-3

Premarital counseling is a great tool to prepare you for marriage. A counselor’s job is to put tools in our toolkits so we can walk with our spouse through whatever lies ahead in marriage. This word of premarital advice is so relevant for anyone in a marriage.

“Your marriage is about two people—and you’re not one of them.”

For those of us who are married—the days we don’t embrace this truth, the days we choose not to live in light of Psalm 34:2-3, can be the days that our marriages feel extra tough. On the contrary, if we choose to surrender to the Lord and selflessly serve one another, our marriages will shine brightly. Why the difference? Because that’s truly the way God designed this covenant partnership.

Anyone reading this who is married: you are one flesh. Therefore, our marriages have to be about far more than individual preferences. Instead, they need to be focused on the other person and centered on the work and love of Jesus. When we find that sweet spot, we can do the work of Psalm 34 and shout His name. You can be a shining testimony to God’s greatness because only He could unite two imperfect people and use them to draw one another closer to Him.

The goal of our marriages should be to outdo one another in showing honor and to honor God and this covenant above everything else. That’s a tall order unless you’re choosing each day to realign and reprioritize your life toward His will and way.

If you find yourself in a place in your marriage today that feels hopeless, take heart. God’s word tells us that our only prerequisite to coming to Him is our helplessness. We admit we need help and He shows us He’s already made a way - what a gift! Come to Him with empty hands and a need and He will be faithful to fill and restore.

Day 13:

January 25th

Pray for doors to be opened for Gospel-centered relationships. Pray that new connections can be made with our 8 to 15, so we see thousands of people say yes to Jesus in 2025!

“I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God’s mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments.”

Colossians 2:2-4

A lot of us are overthinkers. Have you ever found yourself adding a brand new activity to your calendar and thinking of how this new circle of people might mean new ways to share Jesus? But we can let ourselves get tangled up, worrying we’ll make things awkward. What if they see us coming and head the other way?

Why do we do this? Why do we overthink the places where Jesus is taking us?

Jesus lived His life with 100% intentionality, with each interaction or conversation a continuous opportunity to minister. That means He sees our going-to-church lives and our at-home lives as connected too. All of it. Where we live and who we are in community with is not a coincidence. The circles where we spend our time are filled with His purpose.

If we know that, then we don’t need to overthink everything.

But what comes with that understanding is the necessity to begin with Jesus. Before focusing on our calendars, we must first spend time with Him. Living out Gospel-centered relationships means we first grow our roots down into Him. We build our lives on Him (Col 2:7).

Then it’s Jesus in us who connects us in our communities. Then it’s His guidance and direction that joins us with others. Jesus is the foundation from which we are rooted in the places we live. The overflow of Jesus grows strong ties of love in all the places we go, from church to the grocery store to the bleachers.

Let's pray these things: *To be rooted in Him. To be rooted with others IN HIM. To meet and flourish in new Gospel-centered relationships.*

May we know the love of Christ deeply so that we live out the love of Christ authentically with those near to us. May we share the joy of pursuing Jesus together

Day 14:

January 26th

Pray that God will reveal spiritual gifts to our church body. Eagerly desire spiritual gifts. God has gifted His church with spiritual gifts to minister to each other and reach the world for Christ.

“Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.”

1 Corinthians 14:1

Paul writes to the Corinthians and at the start of chapter 14 he tells us to “pursue love and spiritual gifts.” (*1 Corinthians 14:1*) That’s a lot in 5 words.

If you were asked, “How are you pursuing love,” how would you respond? Are you? If you were asked, “How are you pursuing spiritual gifts,” what would you say? Honestly, this feels like one of those things that feels good to write down and makes sense in theory, but when you go to put it into practice, where in the world do you start?

A pastor shared a powerful story about his relationship with his Dad. We want to share his words with you:

“When I was little, I was pretty scared of my father. I don’t think he ever gave me a reason to be scared. But he was a large, intimidating man. He was quiet. He was slow to speak. He was hard on us, for sure. And like most little boys, I just wanted his attention, his love, and to know that he was proud of me.

I remember one time he was watching a football game and I asked if I could sit with him. I was young, and he gave me a passing nod. I recall moving close to him and cheering whenever he cheered. And the next part of that memory that I have is waking up laying in my father’s lap.

The TV was quiet. He was in the same spot he had been in for however long I had been asleep. My mom had placed food for him on a TV tray and he was eating it with his left hand—his right hand was rubbing my back. I remember laying there pretending to be asleep for as long as I could. I just couldn’t believe that this giant of a man wasn’t bothered by me laying on his lap. And during a football game, no less!

I felt so loved. And do you know what the first step in me finding that love was? The pursuit of it.”

This little boy pursued love and found it. His relationship with his father transformed.

Stop right now. Truly stop. Shut out the noise. Get alone. Really, do it. Take 5 minutes and close your eyes. Imagine just laying in the lap of your father. And then in that moment, ask Him to fill you with his love, so that you can give it to others. And then ask Him for spiritual gifts—that you might use them for His glory.

God has love for you. And He has spiritual gifts for you. And receiving them starts with the pursuit of them. So stop...go pursue.

Day 15:
January 27th

Pray for the culture of honor to be strong in our church. A person who honors God first will in turn honor those around him. Ask for Jesus to move miraculously in our church as we seek to honor Him.

“Then Jesus told them, “A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his relatives and his own family.” And because of their unbelief, he couldn’t do any miracles among them except to place his hands on a few sick people and heal them.”

Mark 6:4-5

Honor is a hard-to-describe concept. It’s like love and kindness, but not really. We might confuse it with respect. It might even feel a bit outdated or even authoritarian, with notes of obedience mixed in. But if we really look at our Bibles, we’ll find honor is mentioned all over its pages, evidence of how significant honor is in God’s eyes.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for honor means “heavy.” In the New Testament, the Greek word for honor means “of value.”

We might say that choosing to honor looks like placing a heavy value on someone. If we truly honor someone, it comes from a deep place. We can’t fake honor.

At its root, our honor for others is evidence of our honor for God.

Though it might be hard to admit, sometimes we do things that look like kindness or love, but they lack honor. You know, they’re the right thing to do, or doing them makes us feel better—but we might miss the part where we’re also placing “heavy value” on someone. God references half-hearted honor in Isaiah: *“...these people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me...”* (Isaiah 29:13)

True honor, then, is from the heart. And without it, as Jesus shared with His disciples in Mark 6, we’re limited in what we’ll see God do in our lives. Jesus couldn’t minister in His own town because of unbelief and their lack of honor.

That means that deep faith and authentic honor invite God to come closer:

1 | Honoring others honors God.

“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” (Romans 12:10-11)

2 | Honor makes room for God to move.

“...for those who honor Me I will honor.” (1 Samuel 2:30)

Let's pray for God to show us how to hold “heavy value” for others and for Him. May we ask Him to move both in our hearts and our church.

Day 16:

January 28th

Pray for Rivers Crossing's local, national, and international mission efforts. God is doing amazing things through Joshua's Place, the church plants we support, and our local and global missions in Uganda and Guatemala. Pray for favor, impact, and protection on all our mission efforts.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 1:8

After Jesus rose from the grave, He spent 40 days with the apostles. He spoke with them about the Kingdom of God, and told them about the Holy Spirit. But Jesus' final words before ascending to heaven are powerful. "You will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere... to the ends of the earth."

That last phrase is key. Jesus wasn't only commanding the apostles to share the Good News across Jerusalem. He didn't even want them to stop in Israel— Jesus wanted the entire world to hear the Gospel. His heart was for all of Europe, for all of Asia, for Africa, and Oceania, and the Americas (thank you, Lord!). If there are people living in Antarctica, Jesus is for them, too!

So, what does this mean for us? Our job as followers of Christ is to make Jesus' vision a reality (through the power of the Holy Spirit). It's up to us to share the good news that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried and resurrected, and that we can spend eternity with Him if we simply believe. This starts with people in our lives who aren't yet followers of Christ. It continues when we share the love of Christ while meeting practical needs through Joshua's Place. It's the entire reason that we plant churches across our country and around the world; because we know that nothing has the potential to transform a community like a church committed to the gospel. And finally, this command is why we sponsor children in Kagadi, Uganda, and Guatemala City— because we know that God wants every child to know Him personally.

Today, let's pray for God's blessing over Joshua's Place, new churches in the Extraordinary Church Collective, The Maisha Foundation (Kagadi, Uganda), and the Tesoros de Gracia church planting network (Guatemala City). Ask the Holy Spirit how

He wants you to get involved. Ask Him to open your eyes to the people He has strategically placed in your life that need the hope of the Gospel. And finally, ask Him to fill you with the power of the Holy Spirit as you prepare to share the Good News of Jesus with them.

Day 17:

January 29th

Pray for family ministries at Rivers Crossing. Pray for a continued strong partnership between families and the church to equip the next generation to be fully engaged followers of Christ. Pray for students to continue to lead their peers to Christ and to be leaders in our local schools. Pray for the kids' hearts to be open to hear God's word.

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Proverbs 22:6

As we keep leaning into this season of fasting and prayer, let's shift our focus to the huge work of teaching the next generation about Jesus. Building strong connections between families and the church is important to help raise kids who grow up to love and follow Christ wholeheartedly.

God created families as a beautiful picture of His relationship with us, and He cares deeply about them. But we know that today's culture often challenges God's design for families. That's where the local church comes in—it's here to come alongside parents, giving them extra support, resources, and community to help kids grow in their faith.

Raising up the next generation to know Jesus is a big job, and it's one we can cover in prayer. Let's pray that the bond between families and our church grows even stronger. Pray that the RC Kids staff and volunteers will have the wisdom they need to lead and inspire these young hearts. Ask God to fill moms, dads, and guardians with fresh passion to “train up their children in the way they should go” (Proverbs 22:6), so they stay rooted in their faith as they grow.

Pray for the babies, toddlers, preschoolers, elementary kids, and preteens—these little ones are just starting to learn about the love of God and the truths of Scripture. Let's ask God to captivate their hearts so they grow up loving Him deeply and living for Him.

Let's also pray for the students at Rivers Crossing. Pray for their small group leaders, staff, and parents as they guide these students in their faith journeys in a culture that can be really challenging. Ask God to make these students bold witnesses for Christ, helping their friends experience the life-changing power of the gospel. Pray that they

stand strong in their faith, and secure in their identity in Christ, even when they face opposition.

Ask God to make Rivers Crossing a safe and encouraging place where families are strengthened, where students grow in courage, and where kids of all ages fall in love with Jesus. As we work together, let's believe in faith that we'll see young lives fully committed to Christ and making an impact on the world around them.

Day 18:

January 30th

Pray for our church to stand up against Satan and resist his attacks. Pray that we stand against him in the full armor of God.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”

Ephesians 6:10-12

We all have those days when everything seems to go wrong: the alarm doesn't go off, plans fall apart, and frustrations pile up. It's easy to get caught up in the chaos and start blaming ourselves or those around us for the mess. But sometimes, these moments are more than just bad days; they can be spiritual attacks.

In Ephesians, Paul reminds us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces of evil. When you find yourself in conflict—whether it's a fight with a loved one or overwhelming feelings of anxiety—pause and consider whether the enemy is trying to sow discord and confusion in your heart.

C.S. Lewis wisely noted that the enemy loves to distract us with two errors: disbelieving in his existence or becoming excessively obsessed with him. But as believers, we must recognize that Satan's main objective is to undermine God's work in us. He's the accuser, the liar, and the adversary seeking to destroy our joy and unity.

Think about a time when you felt like you were under attack from every angle. Perhaps it was a series of setbacks that left you questioning everything. There are so many times we can feel overwhelmed, convinced that everyone around us is against us. When we feel this way, we need to remember who the real enemy is. That shift in perspective changes everything. Our eyes can be opened to see that it's not the people around us causing strife; it's the enemy using circumstances to create division and hurt.

When we acknowledge that Satan is the true adversary, we can stop fighting each other and start fighting the real enemy. It's crucial to guard our hearts against animosity and bitterness, which only create cracks for the enemy to exploit. By drawing near to Christ, we can discern His voice from the lies of the enemy.

Next time you feel overwhelmed or attacked, remember you have the power in Christ to take every thought captive. Align the enemy's lies with God's truth, and watch how those lies lose their power. As you invite the Spirit of God to fill you anew, you'll find clarity, strength, and the ability to rise above the chaos. You are an overcomer because of the mighty God who lives in you!

Day 19:
January 31st

**Pray for God to propel us towards a generous lifestyle. God loves a cheerful giver.
Ask God to increase your capacity to give to his church and missions so that we
can reach people who don't yet know Jesus.**

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

2 Corinthians 9:7

Take a moment to think about your view of generosity. Do you consider that all people are called to be generous regardless of how much or how little they may have? Generosity is more about your heart and less about what you have. Do you know that God can use your generosity to reach people far from his heart? The scriptures actually propel us towards a heart of generosity and God promises to provide for your needs in return.

"You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves a person who gives cheerfully. And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. As the Scriptures say, "They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever." (2 Corinthians 9:7-9)

The Lord loves a cheerful giver and He wants to use you to bless others. He doesn't need your money, but He invites you in because He wants you to be a part of His story. He wants you to know the joy and the blessing of giving. If you already have a heart of generosity, ask God to increase your capacity to give to his church and missions. If you are not quite there, ask God to change your heart and give you a desire to be a generous giver. Take a step of faith and trust God with your resources.

Day 20:

February 1st

Pray for spiritual growth at Rivers Crossing through Sunday services, community groups, Discipleship School, and other discipleship groups!

“But they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.”

Psalm 1:2-3

Caring for a plant takes tender loving care. Despite our best efforts, the leaves of the poor plants who foolishly enter our homes wither and there is no fruit to bear at the end of their very short lives. Caring for a plant and watching it grow and thrive takes time, attention, and faithfulness to the craft.

It's no wonder the Bible uses agriculture and horticulture illustrations so many times—it's all so reminiscent of our spiritual lives and growth. When we are planted and rooted in Him, watering and nourishing ourselves with His word and time with Him, we grow and produce fruit - exactly as we were created to do. When we neglect that time, attention, and faithfulness—we wither spiritually.

But while we are saved as individuals, the Bible is also clear that we are saved *to* community. It's not fun nor effective to do the Christian life alone. We need the wisdom, guidance, and encouragement of others to continue staying rooted, staying faithful, and staying fruitful.

If you're in a season that feels dry or weary spiritually, if you know you're not bearing fruit, take some time today to pray for community. Ask the Lord to open your spiritual eyes to the opportunities around you to connect with others—be it through a community group, men's/women's group, or Discipleship School. No matter where you find community, it's so much easier to delight in the law of the Lord and grow spiritually alongside others who are rooted and desiring the same.

Day 21:

February 2nd

Reflect on what God has done during this fast and thank Him. As God moves in our personal lives and our church, we must give thanks regularly for the goodness of His grace. Stop and thank Him now for both the blessings and challenges in your life.

“All of this is for your benefit. And as God’s grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.”

2 Corinthians 4:15

God’s glory is everywhere. Look around—do you see Him? If your eyes are open, you’ll find His glory in today’s sunset, through the Sunday worship set, and in the faces of your loved ones. Every good thing (big and small) comes from God and reminds us of His goodness. As you break your fast tomorrow, this might feel more tangible than ever. Even a Michelin-starred pastry chef can’t compete with the flavor of a sweet, pillowy glazed donut after 21 days of fasting from sugar (stay strong– you’re almost there!).

In 2 Corinthians 4, the Apostle Paul tells us that our physical bodies are like fragile clay jars, filled with the light of God’s glory. After the last three weeks, you might resonate with that analogy more than ever. Fasting gives us a tangible reminder that life on earth is not always easy, but when we trust God through hardship, His light can shine even brighter through the cracks.

Most of us will never experience the kind of suffering that Paul did for the sake of our faith– he was physically abused and thrown in prison, he survived shipwrecks, starvation, and nights in the cold. But he continued to travel the world, sharing the Good News about Jesus, because his eyes were set on heaven. Not only did he trust God through his suffering– he thanked God for it.

Paul knew that God’s glory was present in every moment. God sustains us when we go through hardship, and ensures that every situation we face, even death, will bring Him glory. Once the Holy Spirit is within us, His light can’t help but shine for the world to see, and that’s something to praise Him for.

As the 21 Day Fast ends, let's set our eyes on eternity, and aim to bring God glory regardless of our circumstances. Take a moment to praise God for the big and small blessings in your life. Thank Him for your salvation, thank Him for sustaining you over the last 21 days, and thank Him for His unending grace. Ask Him to help you keep your eyes set on Jesus, today and every day. And finally, ask God to fill you with the confidence to share His Good News, bringing Him glory every day of your life.