The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a sunset over a calm body of water. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a bright orange near the horizon. A small sailboat is visible on the horizon line. The water reflects the colors of the sky.

J Prayer & Fasting JOURNAL 2023

Devotional

A publication of the Basseterre and Conaree Wesleyan Holiness Churches

Dear Fellow Christians,

Another year has dawned. Some persons have predicted that this will be a year of unprecedented challenges. Others see a year of exciting possibilities ahead of us. I believe both views are true. I also believe that praying, fasting and Bible reading are spiritual disciplines we must engage in if we are to overcome the challenges and change possibilities into realities.

I am therefore inviting you to be a part of the church's Prayer and Fasting Journey for 21 days. Let us spend some quality time in the presence of the Lord so we can be renewed in our being and empowered in our service to God and our fellowmen.

Have a Christ-centred and Spirit-directed journey!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sylvester Herbert". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev Sylvester Herbert
Senior Pastor

Table of Contents

7 BASIC STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL FASTING AND PRAYER	5
WHAT TO DO ON YOUR PRAYER & FASTING JOURNEY	10
DAILY PRAYER LIST	11
NETWORK EVANGELISM	11
Day 1: SAT. Jan. 14	14
How To Be a Success	14
Day 2: Sun. Jan. 15	16
“My Voice Shall You Hear In The Morning”	16
Day 3: Mon. Jan. 16	18
I Am Still Important to My Majestic God	18
Day 4: Tue. Jan. 17	20
Abide in God, Remain Firm	20
Day 5: Wed. Jan. 18	21
All You’ll Ever Need	21
Day 6: Thur. Jan. 19	23
Graceful Under Pressure	23
Day 7: Fri. Jan. 20	25
He Restoreth My Soul	25
Day 8: Sat. Jan. 21	27
Intimate Training And Guidance	27
Day 9: Sun. Jan. 22	28
God of the Silent Days	28
Day 10: Mon. Jan. 23	30
God Is Our Refuge	30
Day 11: Tue. Jan. 24	31
Cast Me Not Away	31

Day 12: Wed. Jan. 25	33
A Thirst For God	33
Day 13: Thur. Jan. 26	34
Keep Your Focus On The Almighty!	34
Day 14: Fri. Jan. 27	35
Door Keeping	35
Day 15: Sat. Jan. 28	37
Trusting The Supreme God	37
Day 16: Sun. Jan. 29	38
Gracious Lord, I Bless You!	38
Day 17: Mon. Jan. 30	40
Fear - Freedom Experienced Above Religion	40
Day 18: Tue. Jan. 31	41
Trusting God Completely In All Of Life's Situations	41
Day 19: Wed. Feb 01	43
Walking Wholeheartedly With God	43
Day 20: Thur. Feb 02	45
Our Weeping Can Lead To Joyful Reaping	45
Day 21: Thur. Feb 03	46
God Still Answers Prayer	46

7 BASIC STEPS to Successful Fasting and Prayer

I believe the power of fasting as it relates to prayer is the spiritual atomic bomb that our Lord has given us to destroy the strongholds of evil and usher in a great revival and spiritual harvest around the world.

STEP 1: Set Your Objective

Why are you fasting? Is it for spiritual renewal, for guidance, for healing, for the resolution of problems, for special grace to handle a difficult situation? Ask the Holy Spirit to clarify His leading and objectives for your prayer fast. This will enable you to pray more specifically and strategically.

STEP 2: Make Your Commitment

Before you fast, decide the following up front:

- How long you will fast - one meal, one day, a week, several weeks, forty days (Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts.)
- The type of fast God wants you to undertake (such as water only, or water and juices; what kinds of juices you will drink and how often)
- What physical or social activities you will restrict
- How much time each day you will devote to prayer and God's Word

Making these commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it.

STEP 3: Prepare Yourself Spiritually

The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin will hinder your prayers. Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:



- Ask God to help you make a comprehensive list of your sins.
- Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
- Seek forgiveness from all whom you have offended and forgive all who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3,4).
- Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you.
- Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).
- Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Master (Romans 12:1,2).
- Meditate on the attributes of God, His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, compassion, and others (Psalm 48:9,10; 103:1-8, 11-13).
- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart (Hebrews 11:6).
- Anticipate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16,17).

STEP 4: Prepare Yourself Physically

Fasting requires reasonable precautions. Consult your physician first, especially if you take prescription medication or have a chronic ailment. Some persons should never fast without professional supervision.

Do not rush into your fast. Eat smaller meals before starting to fast. Avoid high-fat and sugary foods. Eat raw fruit and vegetables for two days before starting a fast.

While You Fast

- Avoid drugs, even natural herbal drugs and homeopathic remedies. Medication should be withdrawn only with your physician's supervision.
- Limit your activity; exercise only moderately.
- Rest as much as your schedule will permit.
- Prepare yourself for temporary mental discomforts, such as impatience, crankiness, and anxiety.
- Expect some physical discomforts, especially on the second day. You may have fleeting hunger pains, dizziness, or the "blahs." Withdrawal from caffeine and sugar may cause headaches. Physical annoyances may also include weakness, tiredness, or sleeplessness.
- The first two or three days are usually the hardest. As you continue to fast, you will likely experience a sense of well-being both physically and spiritually. However, should you feel hunger pains, increase your liquid intake.



STEP 5: Put Yourself on a Schedule

For maximum spiritual benefit, set aside ample time to be alone with the Lord. Listen for His leading. The more time you spend with Him, the more meaningful your fast will be. A dietary routine is vital as well if you are on a partial or juice fast.

Tips on Juice Fasting

- Drinking fruit juice will decrease your hunger pains and give you some natural sugar energy. The taste and lift will motivate and strengthen you to continue.
- The best juices are made from fresh watermelon, lemons, grapes, apples, cabbage, beets, carrots, celery, or leafy green vegetables. In cold weather, you may enjoy a warm vegetable broth.
- Mix acidic juices (orange and tomato) with water for your stomach's sake.
- Avoid caffeinated drinks. And avoid chewing gum or mints, even if your breath is bad. They stimulate digestive action in your stomach.



STEP 6: End Your Fast Gradually

Do not eat solid foods immediately after your fast. Suddenly reintroducing solid food to your stomach and digestive tract will likely have negative, even dangerous, consequences. Gradually return to regular eating with several small snacks during the first few days. Start with a little soup and fresh fruit such as watermelon and

cantaloupe. Advance to a few tablespoons of solid foods such as **raw** fruits and vegetables or a raw salad and baked potato. Continue to drink your fruit / vegetable juices.

STEP 7: Expect Results

If you sincerely humble yourself before the Lord, repent, pray, and seek God's face; if you consistently meditate on His Word, you will experience a heightened awareness of His presence (John 14:21). The Lord will give you fresh, new spiritual insights. Your confidence and faith in God will be strengthened. You will feel mentally, spiritually, and physically refreshed. You will see answers to your prayers.

A single fast, however, is not a spiritual cure-all. Just as we need fresh infillings of the Holy Spirit daily, we also need new times of fasting before God. A 24-hour fast each week has been greatly rewarding to many Christians.

It takes time to build your spiritual fasting muscles. If you fail to make it through your first fast, do not be discouraged. You may have tried to fast too long the first time out, or you may need to strengthen your understanding and resolve. As soon as possible, undertake another fast until you do succeed. God will honor you for your faithfulness.

What To Do On Your Prayer & Fasting Journey



1. Engage in one of the types of fast best suited for you as an individual
 - *An absolute fast (no food or water). Do **not** engage in this type of fast for more than 3 consecutive days.*
 - *A normal fast (drink water or juice during the fast); you may fast from 6 a.m. – 6 p.m. then eat healthy foods during your eating window which would be any time after 6 p.m. and before 6 a.m.)*
 - *A partial fast (omitting one meal daily or eating exclusively one type of food such as vegetables)*

Fasts are **not** recommended for pregnant and nursing women. Persons with health challenges should consult their doctor.

2. Be a part of a prayer group
3. Participate in the early morning prayer chain
4. Spend extra time reading the Word (Daily passages are assigned – a psalm in the morning, a chapter / chapters from Matthew in the evening). Instead of reading the Word yourself, you can listen to someone read the Word.
5. Attend Weekly Prayer Meeting (at the church) – Sun. Jan. 15, Sun. Jan. 22, Thur. Jan. 26, Sun. Jan. 29, Fri. Feb. 3. Meetings begin at 6 p.m.

Daily Prayer List

“Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you;” (1 Sam. 12:23a)

- 1. The Salvation of Souls**
- 2. Church Growth (Spiritual, Numerical, Financial)**
- 3. Community Impact & Transformation**
- 4. Church Drop-Outs & Backslidden Christians**
- 5. Marriage & Family Life in Church and Community**
- 6. Leaders in The Wesleyan Church (Local, District, General)**
- 7. Vulnerable Groups in Society: The Differently Abled, Seniors, The Sick, Single-Parents, Non-nationals, etc.**
- 8. Good Governance of Nation**

You may wish to highlight one item on prayer list each day. For example, on Sunday you pray for church growth, on Monday you pray for the community, etc. Pray as specifically as possible. Pray every day for persons on your list with whom you intend to share the gospel.

Network Evangelism

When you begin thinking about who God has prepared for you to share the good news of salvation with, begin by looking no further than persons with whom you already have a relationship. Use your influence to evangelize those in your social network.

Who Is in Your Networks?

1. Familial Network—people in your family.
2. Geographical Network—people in your neighborhood.
3. Vocational Network—people at your workplace.
4. Recreational Network—people you hang out with.
5. Commercial Network—people you see at shops.

Identify at least seven persons from one or more of these networks and do the following tasks:

1. Pray for them—Get help from a prayer group / partner.
2. Invite them—Invite them over to eat dinner, to play sports, to go to a movie, to attend a church event.
3. Serve them— Babysit for them, pick up groceries for them, cut their grass, and so on.
4. Give resources to them—Ask them to read a book or article with you, or to listen to a sermon or podcast. Discuss these resources with them.
5. Share the gospel with them—Let your friend know you are part of a church and see if they ask questions. Listen to their problems with real concern, and then seize the opportunity to address the problems with gospel hope. Share some of your own struggles and talk about how you deal with them in light of your faith. Simply ask them what they believe, and just let them talk.

THE *List.*

Write the Names of Persons:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____



Daily Devotional



Day 1: SAT. Jan. 14

Morning Reading (Psalm 1); Evening Reading (Matt. 1 & 2)

How To Be a Success

by Rev Sylvester Herbert

Do you want to be successful in life? Of course, you do. Nobody really wants to be associated with failure. Psalm 1 gives some pertinent insights on how to be a truly successful person. Significantly, the successful life is the righteous life and is attainable by everyone who chooses to live that way.

As we continue our Christian pilgrimage, let us make a concerted effort to live out to the full the teachings of Psalm 1. Negatively, this means rejecting bad advice, avoiding bad company, and steering clear of everything that leads to spiritual and moral compromise. Positively, this means engaging in the daily discipline

of Christian meditation. Bible teacher, David Guzik, gives a clear explanation of what this looks like:

In eastern meditation, the goal is to empty the mind. This is dangerous, because an empty mind may present an open invitation to deception or a demonic spirit. But in Christian meditation, the goal is to fill your mind with the word of God. This can be done by carefully thinking about each word and phrase, applying it to one's self, and praying it back to the Lord.

For the believer who meditates on the Word of God “day and night” success is guaranteed, for it is said of him that “whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” Be sure to meditate on some portion of Psalm 1 today. Commit to meditate on the assigned Bible passages in the days ahead.



Day 2: Sun. Jan. 15

Morning Reading (Psalm 5); Evening Reading (Matt. 3 & 4)

“My Voice Shall You Hear In The Morning”

by Rev Sylvester Herbert

Prayer is something which can be done at any time. In fact, we are commanded to always pray (I Thess. 5:17). However, there are some special benefits which we enjoy when we make it a point to pray early in the morning. When we start our day with prayer, we meet God before we meet anyone else including the devil. It provides us with the opportunity to commit the entire day into His hands. The instructions we get from Him in these early hours will equip us spiritually to overcome the trials and temptations we are sure to meet with during the day. This is eloquently expressed in the poem “I Met God in the Morning” by Ralph Spaulding Cushman:

I met God in the morning, When my day was at its best

And His presence came like sunrise, Like a glory in my breast.

All day long the Presence lingered; All day long He stayed with me;

And we sailed in perfect calmness O’er a very troubled sea.

*Other ships were blown and battered, Other ships were sore distressed,
But the winds that seemed to drive them Brought to us a peace and rest.
Then I thought of other mornings, With a keen remorse of mind.
When I too had loosed the moorings With the Presence left behind.
So, I think I know the secret, Learned from many a troubled way;
You must seek Him in the morning If you want Him through the day.*

May our desire for the presence of God be much stronger than our desire for a warm blanket on a cold and windy morning. Let us demonstrate that this is true by waking up early tomorrow to pray. And let us keep doing this until Jesus comes 🌸



Day 3: Mon. Jan. 16

Morning Reading (Psalm 8); Evening Reading (Matt. 5)

I Am Still Important to My Majestic God

by Bro. Byun Morson

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? Psalms 8:3-4 NIV

"Who am I, God, that you love me the way that you do?!" It's such a personal question many of us ask God from time to time. I sure do, especially in deep reflections on my life. The answer I always receive to that question is that God has an important plan that involves me. He has an important plan for every one of us and that is why He is mindful of us. David is considering God's might and the way He has revealed His majesty in His creation. You may think, 'O.K. if God is capable of all this, truly He doesn't need us. What can we mere humans possibly do to add to who He is or to what He is able to do?' But this could not be further from the truth. In fact, we

can do so much for the glory of God. He was and still is mindful of us; and we are not just a mere thought to Him - No! We are important to Him, and He wants us to be involved in His work here on earth. This had to be such a mind-blowing thought for David that it prompted him to praise the LORD, "Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

When you think about Jesus Christ leaving the comfort of heaven, taking on flesh and coming down to our level, doesn't it prompt you to worship and praise God as well? The fact that God was mindful of us caused this event in time to take place. He saw the importance of coming down to us; He saw the importance of dying; He saw the importance of rising from the dead. He saw the importance of us all having salvation because it's essential for His important plan that involves you and me. I think when we come across this truth from the Word of God, it should be reason enough to rejoice, to lift our voices and praise the Lord for the way he intentionally loves and gently cares for us. His mindfulness towards mankind gives us worth and purpose, so fail not to praise the Lord because the most important thing to Him is you 🌸



Day 4: Tue. Jan. 17

Morning Reading (Psalm 15); Evening Reading (Matt. 6)

Abide in God, Remain Firm

by Sis Iona Simmonds

God's plan from creation was to remain in constant connection with us. But in order for this to happen we must "abide or dwell" in his presence. In the garden of Eden, God visited Adam and Eve daily. After they sinned, God came as usual looking for them, but they hid from Him. They could no longer be in His presence because SIN separated them from Him. God is Holy and, as such, no sin can enter His presence. Thank God for His work at Calvary that enables us to obtain redemption and salvation. In this division of the Psalm David describes the character we should display towards our friends, neighbours, difficult people and even ourselves. To remain in God's presence we MUST walk uprightly, deal righteously and speak truth inwardly. Such a character pleases God. This is essentially what makes us Christian or Christ-like. There is a tremendous blessing that comes from this character. We are promised stability and security. Once we remain connected to the vine our lives will bear fruit of His righteousness. Our lives will be free and complete 🌸



Day 5: Wed. Jan. 18

Morning Reading (Psalm 18:1-26); Evening Reading (Matt. 7 & 8)

All You'll Ever Need

by Sis Donnis McDonald

The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psal. 18:2

I can recall, as a child, listening to a song on *Radio Paradise* in which the parents were instructing their adult child that the Bible contained all he would ever need. The son was away from home and in desperate need of some financial help. He reached out to his parents for assistance, and in response, they sent him a Bible with a note that said the Bible contained all he would ever need. The son was so disappointed that his parents had sent a Bible rather than money that he never opened the Bible and made his way home by hitchhiking along the way. When he arrived at home, he expressed his disappointment to his parents. His father responded, "Son, it still contains all you'd ever need." The son finally decided to open the Bible and from the middle of the pages fell a crisp \$100 bill. He broke down in tears when he realized he

would have gotten the help he desired and much more if he had only opened the Bible sooner.

Unlike the young man in the story above, the psalmist David definitely recognized that God was all he would ever need. The introduction to the psalm states that David sang these words of praise in recognition of the deliverance God provided from all his enemies including King Saul. David recognized that God was and would always be there to protect and deliver him from his enemies regardless of what strategies they employed.

We, too, can embrace the words of this psalm and declare that God is our rock. He is dependable. He provides shelter from trials and temptations. We can declare that God is our fortress. He is a safe haven that provides protection from the plans of the enemy. The enemy will never be able to penetrate the walls of this fortress. We can declare that He is our deliverer and our salvation. God leaves nothing half-done. Not only does He shelter and protect us but He also delivers us. He makes a way of escape from any and every situation. Psalm 34;19 declares, *“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.”*

Prayer: Lord, we thank you that you are all we will ever need to be overcomers in the year ahead. Amen. 🌸



Day 6: Thur. Jan. 19

Morning Reading (Psalm 18:27-50); Evening Reading (Matt. 9)

Graceful Under Pressure

by Sis Donnis McDonald

He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he causes me to stand on the heights. Psalm 18:33

What does it mean to exhibit grace under pressure? When I visualize that term, I picture someone standing in the midst of chaos all around but that person remains cool, calm and collected and is able to diligently rectify each situation. Think of a student who has a number of assignments due within a short period of time. However, that student can manage their time well, prioritize what is important and complete all the assignments without ‘pulling out their hair’. Think of a single mom who faces the challenge of providing financially for her children but her children never know the sleepless nights she has because they are cared for and loved on a daily basis. Think of someone who you would describe as ‘aging gracefully’. This person, like everyone else, has certainly faced their challenges in life, but, their struggles are not evident physically. 🌸

In verse 33 of Psalm 18, David says that the Lord has made his feet like the feet of a deer. What does this mean? This comparison brings to mind gracefulness in motion. A deer is able to move gracefully and quickly over terrains that are sometimes rough. A deer is also able to climb steep inclines with little difficulty. So, David was praising God for allowing him to navigate the many difficulties he faced with grace. He was praising God for elevating him to heights above his problems.

We can praise God for the same. He is more than capable of helping us to be graceful under pressure. All we have to do is put our trust in Him. Trust Him to lead and guide us. He will navigate our pathway through the rough terrains of life. No obstacle we face would be too overwhelming. No mountain we face would be insurmountable. Visualize yourself even now being an overcomer. Will trials come? Yes. Will they hinder you? No. We have someone who is our strength when we are weak and causes us to escape the pressure of this world with beautiful grace.

Prayer: Father, you did it for David and you can do it for me. Give me grace under pressure so that the beauty of your grace would attract others to you. Amen. 🌸



Day 7: Fri. Jan. 20

Morning Reading (Psalm 23; Evening Reading (Matt. 10 & 11)

He Restoreth My Soul

by Sis Samantha Stokes

What does this really mean? It means our heavenly Father brings back the soul that has strayed away and is now back into a right relationship with Him.

A good shepherd takes care of his sheep; he makes sure they are well fed; have enough water; counts them to ensure none is missing; is alert for their bleating cries for help. No matter how many times a sheep would stray from the flock, the good shepherd always searches for that lost sheep and brings it back to the flock. No matter how many times a sheep gets stuck on its back and cannot get up, the good shepherd would help the sheep back on its feet. A good shepherd is aware of the dangers awaiting a sheep that is lost or has strayed away and so he is ready to help his sheep because he loves them dearly.

You may think that because a sheep has a good shepherd it would not need restoration; but a sheep can become distressed. When a

sheep has turned over on its back and cannot get up again on its own, it's said to be a 'cast down sheep'. A 'cast down sheep' would try frantically to get back on its feet but without help it cannot. If help does not arrive on time the sheep will die because this position would cut its blood circulation. So, a good shepherd stays alert and keeps watch over his sheep, ready to assist whenever this happens.

Sometimes as people we are burdened, frustrated with issues in our lives or may have fallen into sin's temptation and guilt has overpowered us. So, we feel just like a cast away sheep, helpless and hopeless. But just as a good shepherd watches over his sheep diligently, ready to assist it, our Lord is watching over us as well, ready to stand in the gap and to give us the help that we need. Our Lord, the good shepherd takes the necessary steps to help us set things right with our souls. Our experiences may be difficult at times, but we can be assured that He knows what He is doing for He is our good shepherd. When the pruning of our old selves is over, we have received his Great Restoration.

Lord God, You are our great Restorer. Help us to always turn to you in our times of need. Amen 🌸

SPIRITUAL CHECKPOINT # 1 How do you rate your spiritual progress over the last 7 days? (Use a scale of 1 – 10 with 10 being the highest). What new truth have you learnt during the past week? Has the Holy Spirit ministered to you regarding any change you need to make? If so, how would you go about doing it?



Day 8: Sat. Jan. 21

Morning Reading (Psalm 32); Evening Reading (Matt. 12)

Intimate Training And Guidance

by Sis Pat Herbert

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with my eye Psalm 32:8, (NKJV)

Could you imagine taking an unknown journey without a road map or specific instructions by which to be guided? So often in life we hear of people who undertake a journey through uncharted waters and endure much difficulty along the way. God does not leave us to the ravages of life or to pursue the journey of life alone. His word provides the steppingstones along the way. Examples of those whom he has led are also recorded for our benefit. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to teach, lead and guide the Christian believer all the way to eternity. It is heartening to know that the eyes of the Saviour can probe the deep forests, penetrate the thick darkness and extend beyond the circle of the earth. The child of God has the responsibility to follow closely to enjoy the benefits of such instruction and leadership. If God so sees the sparrow, I know he watches me (Matthew 10:29). The training and

guidance of many human teachers have been so beneficial. Our experiences at the feet of the Master should provide the response of the disciple “Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” (John 6:68)

Prayer: Lord we seek your teaching and guidance for every step of the way 🌸



Day 9: Sun. Jan. 22

Morning Reading (Psalm 42); Evening Reading (Matt. 13)

God of the Silent Days

by Sis Pat Herbert

“As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for you, O God. Why are you cast down, O my soul? hope in God.” Psalm 42:1 & 5

Where does one go in the midst of an unrelenting fiery storm that seeks to shake the bottom out of one’s foundation and the sails from one’s ship? To whom does one look for help? Is there an end to misery and disaster? How does the soul react in times of deep trial and affliction? The writer of Psalm 42 encourages his soul to cling to hope of better days in God. And yet as his soul attempts

to soar and rebound with such a hope of a brighter future the tortures of despair weigh heavily on his mind and sinks him again and again. How does one apply the truth and prevail in times of weak emotions? The deep longing and thirst that none else could assuage persist when it appears that the very countenance of God in the usual face to face fellowship has gone with the twilight. When it becomes so difficult to find a ray in the future, he calls up his experiences of the past. The memory of solemn worship with a merry group of persons whom he led to the house of God lends some encouragement. The practice of having positioned markers and memoirs of communication with God and recollection of the victories previously encountered give aid to triumphant thoughts. Nights of affliction will turn into days of rejoicing. Look now with the eyes of faith at the missiles and weapons that plunge your soul to deep despair and see them as the steppingstones to growth and maturity

Prayer: Captain of salvation, remind us how to trust you as you perfect us through suffering. 🌸



Day 10: Mon. Jan. 23

Morning Reading (Psalm 46); Evening Reading (Matt. 14 & 15)

God Is Our Refuge

by Sis Kathleen Hobson

In this psalm we are assured that God is our refuge. A refuge is a place of safety or shelter. We can all identify with a physical refuge when we are being pursued, or we are facing some danger or trouble. Dangers identified in this psalm include the worst convulsions of nature – storm and tempest (the roar of waters), and the shaking of mountains and the earth beneath us. These are pictures of the crises we sometimes experience in life.

No matter what is going on around us, it is comforting to know that we can run to God who is our protector, our safe shelter, and our sure refuge. Let us trust Him to bring resolution to the problems that we face. He can bring down the most formidable enemy by breaking their bows, shattering their spears, and destroying their shields. Even when we do not feel His presence, He is right there during our fiercest battles. How do we know this? His Word confidently affirms: “The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.” 🌸



Day 11: Tue. Jan. 24

Morning Reading (Psalm 51); Evening Reading (Matt. 16 & 17)

Cast Me Not Away

by Sis Kathleen Hobson

Psalm 51 is the prayer of a man who has committed the grievous sins of adultery and murder. That man is no other than King David, someone whom the Word of God describes as “a man after God’s own heart.” Yes, it is true that good people sometimes mess up. So, what should we do when that happens? In his confessional prayer David identifies some steps towards spiritual recovery that we must take:

- (1) Rather than blame others we must take responsibility for the sins we have committed.

For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. vs. 3

- (2) We should ask God to forgive and cleanse us.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. vs.2

- (3) We should pray for a restoration of His presence and power in our lives.

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. vv. 10-12

- (4) We should make a commitment to point sinners to the right way. Sharing our failures and our subsequent restoration can help to bring about change in their lives.

Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. vs. 13

If sin is weighing on your heart, take some time to work through the steps above so you can experience the wonderful blessing of God's forgiving grace 🌸



Day 12: Wed. Jan. 25

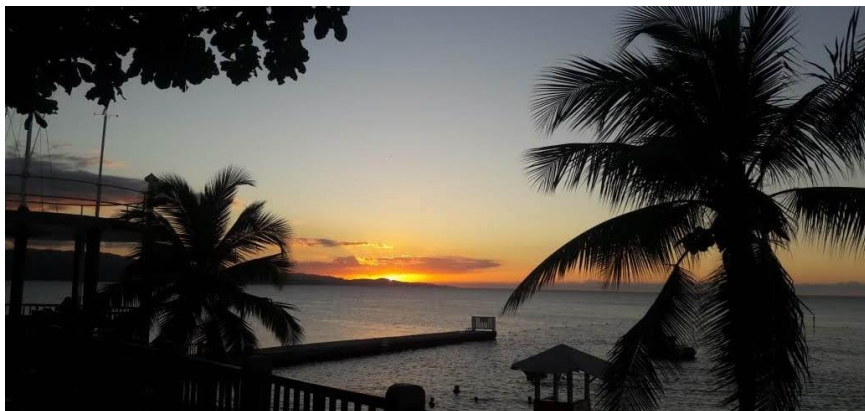
Morning Reading (Psalm 63); Evening Reading (Matt. 18 & 19)

A Thirst For God

by Sis Sandrine Liburd

Images of water as a symbol of renewal and a reminder of thirst, both physical and spiritual, are found throughout Scripture. On the physical level our lives depend on water and on the spiritual level on God, the source of living water.

In Psalm 63:1 David declares ‘O God, you are my God; I earnestly search for you. My soul thirsts for you, my whole-body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water.’ We all have experienced physical thirst – the burning sensation in our throats, the headaches and the dryness in the mouth. If this feeling is so acute, how much more acute is our spiritual thirst? Turning on a water faucet can remind us of our own spiritual thirst – what our souls long for and what could bring us refreshment. David found refreshment in remembering the presence of God in the sanctuary; he found fulfilment through prayer; he found satisfaction through praise and protection and help through meditation. His thirst fuelled his passion to seek the Lord. God calls us to acknowledge this thirst and to draw from the wells of prayer, praise and meditation through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, the source of lasting vitality 🌸



Day 13: Thur. Jan. 26

Morning Reading (Psalm 73); Evening Reading (Matt. 20)

Keep Your Focus On The Almighty!

by Sis Sandrine Liburd

Asaph, the writer of Psalm 73, confessed that his feet almost slipped when he took his focus off the Almighty. He became bitter and discontented when he turned his focus inward and on his circumstances. When he looked around and saw the prosperity of the ungodly and wicked; how no trouble seemed to come nigh their doorstep and that his portion was suffering and pain; he wondered ‘am I serving God for naught?’ But when he entered into the presence of The Almighty, his vision cleared and realization hit home – ‘Yet I still belong to you; you hold my right hand.’ God never forsakes His own. We must keep our focus on God even in our darkest hour and the omnipresent God will lead us to a glorious destiny! Let us be encouraged by Asaph’s words – ‘Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you’ and sing them continually, as we commit all our ways unto The Almighty who holds our right hand. 🌸



Day 14: Fri. Jan. 27

Morning Reading (Psalm 84); Evening Reading (Matt. 21)

Door Keeping

by Sis. Katherine Mascoll

For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand, I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. - Psalm 84: 10

As I read Psalm 84 my heart felt the warmth of the words which flowed from David's heart to his script. I believe he was reflecting on the wonders and goodness of God's protection, provision and power which were bestowed on him. He focused on the ultimate pleasure engaged as he delighted in knowing that, as a child of God, he can have such blessings. His submission caused his heart to be smitten by the deep love and peace that God entrusted to him. Verse 10 reinforces that one day in God's presence is better than one thousand days elsewhere. His heart and soul longed after God, he was willing to sacrifice and commit to the least job in the Kingdom of God as a doorkeeper.

Challenge: Are we willing to be a door keeper? Are we smitten by God's love? Let us set our minds and hearts on the things that will

keep us focused on God. Here are some of the lyrics of the song by Kari Jobe “The more I seek you”:

“I want to sit at your feet, drink from the cup in your hand.
Lay back against you and breathe, feel your heartbeat. This
love is so deep, its more than I can stand, I melt in your
peace, its overwhelming.”

Let this challenge you to seek God, just like the Psalmist who dwelt in the house of the Lord to retain his strength and to keep his heart postured towards the King.

***Prayer:** Father, strengthen our inner man that we will never ever stop pursuing you with diligence and zeal. May we continue to love being in your presence and fully submit ourselves to you even in the least of jobs. Amen 🌸*

SPIRITUAL CHECKPOINT # 2: You have been on the journey for two weeks now. Which verse / verses from your assigned reading has impacted you the most? Why?



Day 15: Sat. Jan. 28

Morning Reading (Psalm 91); Evening Reading (Matt. 22)

Trusting The Supreme God

by Bro Avery Mascoll

The earth is currently inhabited with close to 8 billion people and global wealth is estimated over US\$418 trillion. However, with all the resources available to mankind, no one alive, today or in the past, can or will predict the future with one hundred percent certainty. Therefore, for the Psalmist to “declare about the ¹Lord: He alone is my ²refuge, my place of ³safety: he is my ⁴God and I trust him (Psalm 91:2 NLT)” with confidence, is an example but also a challenge for us today.

Unfortunately, we are unable to taste every word in this short devotion, but a quick summary will show the Psalmist is saying; ¹Jehovah, the Self-Existent, Eternal Lord alone, ³⁻⁴provides true protection, physically, spiritually, financially and the list is endless. Additionally, we can place our complete reliance on the ⁴Magistrate of Magistrates, the Supreme God (Elohim). A simple glimpse with understanding shows a God with no limits who comes alongside us, and there is no challenge, place, or circumstance

where He is unable to reach us. Hence, we can place our complete trust in Him, The Supreme God.

Prayer: Father, give us the strength and wisdom not only to declare this truth, but ability to place our complete trust in the Supreme God just as the Psalmist did, both in our current and future unforeseen circumstances, Amen. 🌸



Day 16: Sun. Jan. 29

Morning Reading (Psalm 103); Evening Reading (Matt. 23)

Gracious Lord, I Bless You!

by Sis Iona Simmonds

8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever. 10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. Psalm 103: 8-10 KJV.

I am extremely appreciative of God's mercy and grace that He bestows on me daily. "Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me. Morning by morning new mercies I see." Pause for a moment and

think of how angry we get in slow moving traffic. Sometimes, we yell and get impatient because a learner is going too slowly. Sometimes we call them names like driving Miss Daisy or even honk our horns in irritation. We go from 0 to 100 on the fury scale in a matter of seconds and the driver did not do us anything directly. But even in that state of anger God's Holy Spirit speaks to us gently, reels us in and brings us to a place of forgiveness. He reminds us that we were once a learner and should exercise patience and tolerance in such situations. What about that lie that caused a project to be delayed? Or failure to forgive a loved one who disappointed you? Maybe you refused to work with a co-worker because he or she is a homosexual? Acts like this displease God. What if His anger boiled furiously and He dealt with us according to our actions or withheld forgiveness from us? When we say the Lord's Prayer, we ask that He forgive our debts as we forgive others. Our God is **Love, Just** and **Long-suffering**. He does not simply see us for who we are but what we can become if we walk in His ways.

Lord, I bless you for being plenteous in mercy and grace! ❀



Day 17: Mon. Jan. 30

Morning Reading (Psalm 112); Evening Reading (Matt. 24)

Fear - Freedom Experienced Above Religion

by Sis Iona Simmonds

1 Praise ye the Lord. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. 2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. 3 Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth forever. Psalm 112:1-3 KJV

Oftentimes when we think of fear, we think of it as a negative emotion. According to this passage we are blessed if we fear God. Thus fearing God can be seen as **freedom experienced above religion**. Christianity is not about religion but rather a relationship with God. One who fears God takes great delight in following His commandments. He walks in obedience not as a chore, punishment or out of mere respect for God but rather an act of worship unto the God he loves. In return God lavishes His blessings on his family, not just his children but for generations. Once we keep the statutes of the Lord and successfully lead our children to do the same and they do the same with their children the blessings from the Lord

are unending. What a legacy to leave. “Oh, may all who come behind us find us faithful.” The prosperity promised in these verses can be physical and spiritual. To fear the Lord is the key to unlocking everlasting blessings🌀



Day 18: Tue. Jan. 31

Morning Reading (Psalm 118); Evening Reading (Matt. 25)

Trusting God Completely In All Of Life's Situations

by Sis Dawnette Grenyion

It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in humans.

As human beings, circumstances and our emotions often cause us to break our promises or have a change of heart about something important we needed to do for someone else. Not so with God. In Psalm 118 we see a consistent depiction of God's awesome track record of deliverance. This leaves the psalmist to conclude that he must Give thanks unto the Lord for His love endures forever and that ***"It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in humans."***

Taking refuge in the Lord means to be completely vulnerable with **Him** so that we can experience His sovereignty in all areas of our lives. Human beings are finite and never able to respond comprehensively to any situation because we never have the complete picture of all that happens in our sphere. Just as He has delivered His people from oppressors, from impossible situations, the Lord will do the same for us once we allow Him. The Lord, in response to our needs, ensures that we know it is **He** who has acted on our behalf because we have placed our entire lives into His unfailing hands. 🌸



Day 19: Wed. Feb 01

Morning Reading (Psalm 119:1-16); Evening Reading (Matt. 26)

Walking Wholeheartedly With God

by Rev Sonia Herbert

The opening verses of this Psalm describe the person who “walks in the law” as a blessed, happy person. The metaphor of walking appears throughout the psalm to express the totality of one’s behavior and activities. Thus, to “walk in the law” is a poetic way of describing what it means to follow the law in every respect. According to Psalm 119, this type of walking — consistently choosing to follow the path that God has revealed through the law — leads to a happy, blessed life. However, walking contrary to the law only causes trouble and suffering (see Ps 1).

These verses also highlight the importance of a healthy heart. The happy ones are known by the way they walk *and* by the nature of their hearts. Verse 7a reads “I will praise you with straightness of heart when I learn your righteous laws.”: But what does a straight heart look like? We today understand the heart to be the seat of

one's emotions but the ancient Israelite understanding of heart would be most similar to our concept of the mind: the seat of our will, convictions, and intellect. So we could understand verse 7 to mean that learning God's law produces "straight minds." These minds comprehend the word of God clearly and allow that law to direct their actions. By contrast, a crooked mind leads one into trouble.

The psalm also describes the heart of the righteous as "whole" (verse 2), which is to say, undivided. If someone were to have a divided heart, that person would have his or her focus and attention split between God's law and something else. By contrast, Psalm 119 suggests that true happiness comes to those whose whole heart, or even better, whose whole *mind* is completely dedicated to understanding God's word. Let us resolve to devote our whole, undivided hearts to walking in God's laws. 🌸



Day 20: Thur. Feb 02

Morning Reading (Psalm 126); Evening Reading (Matt. 27)

Our Weeping Can Lead To Joyful Reaping

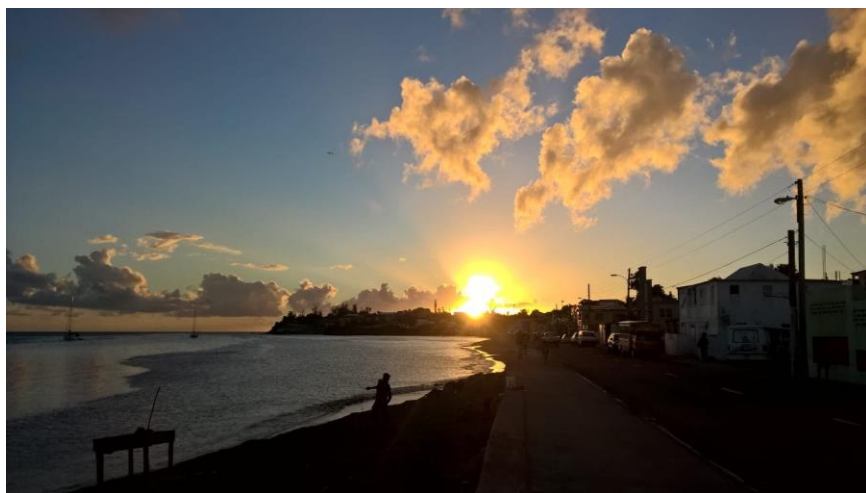
by Sis Dawnette Grenyion

Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.

Weeping can lead to joyful reaping. Many times when we are faced with negative and harsh circumstances, our thoughts and actions are dominated by the pain and emptiness we feel. The children of Israel were held captive for many years but when God decided it was time to restore them to their former glory, they were ecstatic and overwhelmed by His bountiful provision. We are to be guided by this example and trust God amid our trials to bring good from them. We must live in anticipation that our Father, who is the source of all that we need to live purposefully, will change our seasons at the right time. For us to be able to think this way, the truth of God's Word must actively dwell in our minds and hearts.

Whether we experience financial hardship, a broken heart, loss of a job or loved one or a home, we need to cultivate the posture of

hope and do what we can with what we currently have as we wait on God. In this Psalm we can clearly see God bestowing His grace as He replenishes materially, emotionally and spiritually what the captives had lost. Let us challenge ourselves to remember that the God of captive Israel is the same God we serve today and our seasons will change according to His will. 🌸



Day 21: Thur. Feb 03

Morning Reading (Psalm 145); Evening Reading (Matt. 28)

God Still Answers Prayer

by Sis Wilma James

My sister and I were travelling to Santo Domingo. Upon boarding the bus, I had to sit in a two-seater seat. Next to me sat a woman, of approximately 37 years, who held a Bible in her hands. She seemed worried, as she tried to read from the Book of Psalms with very little concentration.

I asked her, “Ma’am, what’s wrong? Are you a Christian?”

She answered, “No.”

“But you carry a Bible,” I said.

“Yes, because I have many problems. My mother is admitted to a hospital in the Capital. She is very ill and the doctor said she will have to have surgery. I have no money. I have no husband. I left my children alone at home in an unsafe neighbourhood. I am very worried. I don’t know what I’m going to do or how I’m going to get the money.

“Wouldn’t you like to be a Christian?” I asked.

“Yes, but the church I am attending told me that I cannot wear pants.”

I told her about how good and powerful our Lord is and about how much He loves her. We prayed and I told her I will continue praying all night and she is going to call me and tell me that they will no longer have to operate on her mother because Jesus Christ would do the work. I told her nothing would happen to her nor her children – they would be fine.

I was returning from my trip the next day at 1:00 p.m. and I had asked the lady to call me before I left the house. The time for departure came and as I got into the car that would take me to the airport, the phone rang. It was the lady, and her voice was full of joy.

She told me, “My mother is better. We don’t have to operate on her and my children are fine!”

Hallelujah! Glory to God! How good it is to serve the Lord, Jesus Christ, and trust that He has power. What peace we feel when we know we are not alone. Jesus saves, He heals, and gives us the peace that only He can give. Psalm 145:5 declares, “I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.” Amen! I thank the Lord for his goodness; for what the Lord Jesus Christ has done.

The young lady informed me that she would return to church and give her life to the Lord. Praise the Lord! 🌸

SPIRITUAL CHECKPOINT # 3: The 21-Day Prayer & Fasting Journey has come to an end, but your own spiritual journey continues. What will you be doing to keep up your spiritual momentum? What special experiences you had during your journey that you would like to share with others?
