



Be still

AND KNOW
THAT I AM

GOD

Solano Valley Church
Next Step Campaign 2018

40 DAYS OF PRAYER



welcome
TO 40 days
OF PRAYER

Solano Valley is getting ready to embark on a great journey. It will be an incredible opportunity to join together and watch God lead us to new heights of faith.

I'm so excited you have chosen to seek God's face with us. As we begin this journey, I'm reminded of a passage that talks about God's recipe for healing our land. It's the "If and Then" promise...

"Then the Lord appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him, 'I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.' " 2 Chronicles 7:12-14

When Solomon had finished the building of the temple, God appeared to him at night and told him He heard his prayer and that He chose the temple as the place for His presence. He also told him that when disaster strikes, what his people should do. When I see disaster in our world today, I hear people ask, "What should we do?" God has already given us His recipe for our part.

If we:

- Humble ourselves
- Pray
- Seek His face
- Turn from our wicked ways (the true problem in our world)

Then he will:

- Hear from heaven
- Forgive our sin (the true solution)
- Heal our land

As we begin this 40-day journey, the SVC leadership and I desire that we all experience this journey together and that it will be a faith building landmark for us. I'm convinced that if we join together in faith and commitment, we can see God do a new thing!

There are 4 key elements to this 40-day journey:

- Daily time in God's Word
- Daily Prayer
- Fasting
- Weekly attendance in the Worship Service

This 40-day prayer guide has been prepared for you to use as a guideline as we experience this journey together.

Joy Rounsavall
Prayer Leader
Sojoyful5@comcast.net

≡ day 1 is monday, january 29th. let's go! ≡

a short course in fasting

Fasting is the spiritual discipline of denying ourselves of something (typically food) to feast on the things of God. Here's some answers to practical questions about fasting.

Do I have to fast from food?

When we see fasting in the Bible, typically food is involved. But what the individuals eat (or don't eat) varies. For example:

- Moses had no bread or water for 40 days (Deut 9:9)
- Esther didn't eat or drink anything for 3 days (Esther 4:15-17)
- Daniel ate no delicacies, meat, or wine for 3 weeks (Daniel 10:3).

In other words, he ate to live but not for enjoyment.

The Bible doesn't give us strict rules about what we can and cannot eat during a fast because the focus is less on what we do (or don't do) and more on what we are asking God to do in our lives.

With that in mind, food isn't the only thing we can fast from. When considering a fast, ask this question, "What can I remove from my life for a season in order to make more space for prayer?" Here are some ideas:

- Fast from all social media.
- Fast from TV.
- Fast from your favorite show.
- Fast from a certain activity that is part of your daily routine.

How long should I fast?

Ask the Lord. If He is leading you to fast, He will make the specifics clear. Look at your calendar. Do you have a big event coming up that would make fasting difficult? Are you hosting a dinner at your house? In order to keep your commitment to the Lord, plan a fast that is manageable with your responsibilities and commitments.

What am I suppose to do during the fast?

You are supposed to pray like crazy! Fasting without praying isn't fasting. It's dieting or deprivation. The only reason to fast is to make space

for you to seek the Lord with greater urgency. Here is what that might look like practically:

- During the times when you would be eating, pray!
- Use those hunger pangs as a reminder to pray. When you belly rumbles, seek the Lord.
- Pray passages of Scripture related to hunger. Here are a few such prayers.
- Lord, Your Word says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matt. 5:6). Increase my hunger for You and Your Word just like my physical hunger is increased during this fast.
- Jesus, You said, “Man cannot live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matt.4:4) Teach me to be sustained by your Word.

But I’m a momma/parent! How can I stop cooking?

You can’t! Those little mouths will still need to be fed. Lunch will still need to be packed. Your family will still need your care. Explain to them what you are doing upfront and ask them to pray for you. Take meal times as an opportunity to explain what you are praying about and how God is answering. Use the opportunity to teach your kids about prayer and open a dialogue what God is doing in each of your lives.

Is it okay to tell others I’m fasting?

It will be impossible to hide your fast from your family, but the Bible clearly teaches that fasting should be a private as possible. Here is fasting 101 according to Jesus:

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:16-18).

A natural by-product of fasting should be humility. It doesn’t take long without food to realize that we aren’t really in charge. We cannot even sustain our own bodies without the food the Lord provides. When fasting becomes about impressing others or trying to impress or persuade God, we’ve missed the point.

This is taken from Erin Davis's article titled "A Modern Woman's Guide to Fasting" from the True Woman Blog at Revive Our Hearts.com.

Seek the Lord and ask Him how He would like you to fast during our 40 Days of Prayer. You can mark your commitment below.

my fasting commitment:

- I COMMIT TO FAST FROM _____
(PICK A MEAL) FOR _____ DAYS A WEEK.

- I COMMIT TO FAST FROM _____
DURING THE 40 DAYS OF PRAYER. (TV, SOCIAL
MEDIA, TYPE OF FOOD, DRINK, ETC.)

40 days of prayer and fasting

<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 1	Mon, January 29	Acts 2:42-47
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 2	Tues, January 30	Matthew 14:27-30
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 3	Wed, January 31	Luke 18:10-14
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 4	Thurs, February 1	Matthew 4:4 / John 6:35
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 5	Fri, February 2	Philippians 4:4-7
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 6	Sat, February 3	1 Samuel 14:8-10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 7	Sun, February 4	Deut 31:1-8,23 / Joshua 1:1-9
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 8	Mon, February 5	Luke 5:12-16
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 9	Tues, February 6	Malachi 3:13-18
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 10	Wed, February 7	Psalms 46:10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 11	Thurs, February 8	Philippians 3:13-14
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 12	Fri, February 9	Ephesians 6:10-17
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 13	Sat, February 10	Matt 26:36-47 / John 18:1-3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 14	Sun, February 11	Romans 10:14-15
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 15	Mon February 12	Psalms 130
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 16	Tues, February 13	Matthew 11:28
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 17	Wed, February 14	Luke 22:42
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 18	Thurs, February 15	Ecclesiastes 5:10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 19	Fri, February 16	Matthew 6:21
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 20	Sat, February 17	John 15:1-8
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 21	Sun, February 18	Psalms 50:10-12
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 22	Mon, February 19	Philippians 1:6
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 23	Tues, February 20	John 6:2-9
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 24	Wed, February 21	Psalms 63
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 25	Thurs, February 22	Exodus 35:4 - Exodus 36:7
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 26	Fri, February 23	Philippians 4:6-7
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 27	Sat, February 24	1 Samuel 14:6
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 28	Sun, February 25	1 Corinthians 15:58
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 29	Mon, February 26	2 Timothy 1:7
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 30	Tues, February 27	Proverbs 3:9-10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 31	Wed, February 28	1 Chronicles 29:11-13
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 32	Thurs, March 1	Matthew 16:18
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 33	Fri, March 2	Matthew 18:1-5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 34	Sat, March 3	Philippians 4:6-7
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 35	Sun, March 4	Psalms 31:3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 36	Mon, March 5	Hebrews 2:1-3, 4:14-15, 12:12, 13:20-21
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 37	Tuesday, March 6	Psalms 46:10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 38	Wednesday, March 7	Philippians 2:3-4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 39	Thursday, March 8	2 Timothy 3:16
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 40	Friday, March 9	Acts 4:31

take five to be still

1. S-Set an Appointment (Luke 6:12)

Choose a specific time and place to meet with God. Make it a place you love to be, free of clutter, full of beauty. Example: Coffee and candles. It should be a special occasion every day.

2. T-Thanksgiving and Praise (Psalm 100:4)

Write down 3 things you are thankful for. Tell God how awesome He is by praising His name. Listen to a worship song and enjoy His presence.

3. I-Invite the Spirit to teach you as you read the Word.

(Psalm 139:23-24, 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

4. L-Look for a verse that stands out to you.

5. L-Listen and write down what God is teaching you.

Acts 2:42-47 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."

As a young graduate student in seminary I had been reading through the book of Acts while praying and asking God, "How do you want me to invest my life in building your kingdom?"

While reading and praying, I fell in love with what the church can be and look like as described in Acts 2:42-47. I felt like God was telling me that He wanted me to invest my life in planting a new church. At first, I didn't want to. There is no paycheck when you start a church from scratch. There's just a lot of work and stress. So, I would tell God, "No," and then pray again, "How do you want me to invest my life in building Your kingdom?"

God's answer never changed, but my heart did. God continued to confirm through my reading and praying through the Scriptures that this was how He wanted me to invest my life.

Praying through the Scriptures has a way of transforming the affections of our hearts. The more I asked God how He wanted me to invest my life while reading through Acts, the more I felt the desire to plant a church that makes disciples, to make disciples that plant churches, and to plant churches to reach our world.

In the days and weeks ahead, I want to encourage you to pray this prayer, "God, how do you want me to invest my life in building Your Kingdom?" Ask God to give you a willing heart, and humbly listen to what God asks you to do.

Today's Prayer: God help me to be willing to do whatever You want to bring honor and glory to Your name.

Matthew 14:27-30 But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!" Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." "Yes, come," Jesus said. So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.

Peter and the other disciples had been straining against the waves and wind all night long when Jesus appeared to them, walking on the water. Peter – naturally impulsive and perhaps wanting to prove his courage to Jesus – said, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." These were rough seas, and Peter – looking at Jesus with confidence – was willing to literally step onto them. It went well for a short time. Seeing that the wind and waves were strong, Peter took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink (verse 30).

All of us have experienced difficult situations. Maybe you got disheartening news from your doctor or received word that a loved one died unexpectedly. These situations can cause us to take our eyes off Jesus. In these times, it can be helpful to remember that faith and fear are like peanut butter and mustard – they just don't mix very well. When fear is in control, faith is driven away. When faith is in control, fear begins to dissipate.

Peter had faith. He was doing the impossible. But he started to sink because he took his eyes off Jesus. In his case, he looked at the wind and waves. In our case, it might be something else. My hope and prayer is that we will keep our eyes on Jesus when things get tough. He can be trusted!

Today's Prayer: Heavenly Father – when we encounter difficulty, help us to choose faith over fear and keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Thank You for being a God we can trust. In Jesus' name, Amen.

✎ Matt Skinner

Luke 18:10-14 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

When I read the words of Jesus in Luke 18, I see Him looking in the heart of man. What's most important to Him is my heart, not my outward appearance. It goes against my sinful nature to do right for His eyes only. My flesh wants the world to look on and applaud. His eyes pierce through all the outside fluff, and He is most concerned with what's going on inside our hearts. Humility is not applauded by the world, but it is by our God.

Today's Prayer: Jesus, thank you for living a life of humility. You are my example. Help me, Lord, to live a life of humility. Help me esteem all others better than myself and to serve others for your eyes only. I am overwhelmed that You would use me at all. May your love shine brightly through me today. Amen.

Joy Rounsavall

God opposes the proud,
but gives grace to the humble.
— JAMES 4:6

Matthew 4:4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

John 6:35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

I used to participate in endurance sports like 100-mile bike rides and triathlons. On one of these all-day rides when we were supposed to eat around 100 calories every 15 minutes to keep our energy up, I became so distracted with the beautiful scenery that I had forgotten to eat! My coach, who would ride behind me, noticed through my body language on my bike that I was losing steam. She asked me, "When was the last time you fueled up? Have you had any water lately?"

Athletes know that food is fuel and will consider things such as the quality of their diet. They'll make sure they're eating enough, especially at the start of their day with breakfast. They think about the timing of their meals so they're sure to have enough energy to get them through their workouts, as well as what they'll eat post-workout to help their muscles recover well.


In the same way, we need to be mindful of our "spiritual diet," making sure to feast on the Word of God regularly - especially at the start of our day, like breakfast, before we endure situations that stretch our faith, as well as after particularly strenuous times to help restore our souls. And while overeating can make us gain weight physically, indulging in and engaging with the Word of God helps to make us spiritually FAT:

F – Faithful (Luke 16:10)

A – Attitude of a servant (Philippians 2:5-7)

T – Teachable (Proverbs 11:2)

Today's Prayer: Dear Lord, I know that to have my fill physically is not enough to satisfy my soul. May I hunger and thirst for You. I want to read your Word not just for information but for transformation. Lord, make me faithful, give me a servant's attitude, and teach me how to become more like You in every area of my life. Amen.

 Tessa Valle

Philippians 4:4-7 Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer & petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

In these verses, Paul writes the people of Philippi and gives final instructions to:

- Always rejoice in the Lord in all circumstances, whether good or bad
- Have consideration for others as Christ would
- Not be worried or anxious about things we have no control over
- Present those worries and requests to God by prayer with thanksgiving
- Accept God's peace as we commit our cares to God and worry about them no more

Prayer is such a vital part of my relationship with God. Every day, I need to give God permission to remind me of his presence in my life and what He wants to accomplish in me. When I think of prayer, I think of my Dad. Dad passed away in June; and to the family, he was an example of someone for whom prayer was a way of life. Day in and day out, at 5:30 in the morning, we could hear him praying in front of his fireplace or in his closet. Dad lived a life of prayer. He would pray by name for each family member, each member of his congregation, and each guest that visited his church. We could hear him stop and pray specifics for individuals as the Spirit of God gave him direction. Dad is missed, but he left behind lasting memories, a Godly legacy, and for me - an example of what a follower of Christ looks like.

Today's Prayer: God, thank you that we can bring our needs to You, and You hear us. I thank You for your Son, Jesus, and the sacrifice He made for me. My prayer is that You guide me throughout the day to keep my heart and mind aware of your presence. Help me to be a living example of your love and grace to those I encounter throughout the day. I thank You for all that you do; continue to make me into the person you want me to be. Amen.

 Andrew Valle

1 Samuel 14:8-10 Jonathan said, "Come on, then; we will cross over toward them and let them see us. If they say to us, 'Wait there until we come to you,' we will stay where we are and not go up to them. But if they say, 'Come up to us,' we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the Lord has given them into our hands."

As the story of Jonathan and his armor bearer unfolds, we hear the son of the king tell his young servant the plan of attack. Admittedly I am not a military expert. Most of my battle knowledge has been gained from the occasional Hollywood movie or watching my two sons play video games. But this plan of Jonathan's stinks! "Let them see us." Are you kidding me? There were only two of them, and only Jonathan would have had any training. Wouldn't sneaking up on them be a better idea?

Jonathan steps out and becomes visible to the enemy. He doesn't want to be a bystander and wait for someone else to make the first move, and he's definitely not playing it safe. I think too often as Christians, we play it safe; we want to be anonymous or even invisible. We must be willing to take risks. Moving out of the shadows of our insulated Christian circles and becoming visible to those who may not want hear God's word but need to IS risky. We need to be ready and willing to move when God calls us to action.

Today, what risks are you willing to take for the Kingdom? How is God speaking to you and asking you to change from being invisible to being visible?

Today's Prayer: Lord I want to be visible for You. Give me the confidence to step out of the shadows and be a light for You that shines brightly in our community.

Eric Klassen

what risks are you willing to take for
THE KINGDOM?

Deut. 31: 1-8, 23, Joshua 1: 1-9

Joshua 1: 9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Joshua is one of my heroes. He was one of two spies, out of twelve, who had the courage to depend upon God and recommend entering Canaan. When Israel did not, Moses recognized his leadership skills and his devotion to God, and chose him to be his right-hand man. For forty years, he learned directly from Moses. And yet, after Moses' death when his turn finally came to lead Israel into the Promised Land, a move he had advocated forty years earlier, he must have had self-doubts. After forty years of training, he must not have felt up to the task, because first Moses tells him three times to be strong and courageous, and then God tells him three more times.

I don't believe that Joshua doubted God. He showed otherwise forty years earlier. Joshua doubted himself. But both Moses and God knew better, and encouraged him. God did not get mad at him, He just kept encouraging him. After being told six times in a very short period to be "strong and courageous," Joshua faithfully stepped up.

When I question if I am up to a task that I know God wants me to do, when I doubt not God but my own abilities, I reflect on Joshua. I take heart that a mighty warrior for God, who implicitly trusted God and lived with Moses for forty years, still had to be reassured six times to take on the task he had been given. I take courage from the fact that God trusts me enough to give me the task and that He is there to insure the outcome He desires. And I am heartened knowing that God is patient and will keep encouraging me. Don't lose heart just because God has to nudge you multiple times. He even had to nudge Joshua six times.

Today's Prayer: Father God, thank you for the work you are doing in my life, preparing me for the works You choose to do through me. Accept my apology for when I reflect on my own abilities to accomplish the task, rather than on Your abilities to accomplish it through me. Help me to be strong and courageous in You, looking at all tasks through Your eyes and Your abilities. What a joy to do all things through You.

Rich Friederich

Luke 5:12-16 While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him. Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

This is the story of a man. His skin is as brittle as ash; and it might as well be ash, because his pallor glows like a ghost. His eyes seem hollow - damp and musty and forgotten - like that little crevice in the highest cabinet. Every inch of his body is itching and aching and burning. Dull hands rub a flaky brow. His desolation is tangible, a physical thing dragging and clawing and reverberating against his skull like the leprosy on his body. A single tear glistens down his especially swollen cheek. He utters a single word, barely audible over footsteps in the village, a safe distance away of course.

Please.

The tear turns the sand under his feet dark. But then...

Voices.

Shaking, he gazes up to see A Man. Not overly handsome or remarkable at first, except that a crowd seems to be positively clinging to him. He'd heard whispers of A Man like this. They said he could heal anything. Even lepers.

A face to the ground, an outcast laying prostrate.

A single plea.

And then.

The sensation of a hand on that same flaky brow.

Warm and gentle and not the least repulsed. And three small words to change his eternity.

I am willing.

In the words of my Uncle David, I like to think of the book of Luke as Jesus's theme of calling people from the outside in. Among these stories, my favorite is perhaps the shortest one of all - Jesus healing the leper. It's not the only one of such accounts, and yet, this always

seemed special to me because of the craziness of it. Not the fact that Jesus heals him (even though that is miraculous), but the fact that he touches the man.

We may not have lepers living on the edge of our cities in modern America, but we sure as heck have outcasts. They are everywhere: school, work, extracurricular activities. Everywhere. But the funny thing about outcasts is they're on the outside. Thus, it requires us to go outside to bring them in.

I like to think of this story as Jesus' challenge to be compassionate, even when no one else is or when it goes against the status quo. Not just any compassion, but a compassion like Jesus' – so strong that it moves us to action.

Today's Prayer: Jesus, thank you for bringing me in, even though I'm an outcast. Please give me the supernatural compassion to bring the outcasts around my life from the outside in.

∞ Faith Rounsavall

COMPASSION : noun | com·pas·sion | \ kəm-'pa-shən \

: sympathetic consciousness of others' distress
together with a desire to alleviate it

Malachi 3:13-18 "You have said harsh things against me," says the Lord. "Yet you ask, 'what have we said against you?' "You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the Lord Almighty? But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly, the evil doers prosper and even those who challenge God escape.'" Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in His presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored His name. "They will be mine," says the Lord Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possessions. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between those who serve God and those who do not.

In our current society, we have a multitude of opportunities to witness what we perceive as evil men succeeding. We have harsh words of criticism for any leadership we do not approve of. Some of us may wonder "what is the use of following God when evil is winning? The one who is doing wrong is getting promoted ahead of me! That person who is not a Christ follower has everything and I am struggling to make ends meet! Injustice is winning out over justice."

Do we really paint the Creator of the world so small? He is either in control of everything or he is not God at all.

Today's Prayer: Lord, today I recognize with my whole being that only You are in control. You place rulers in authority over me at your will, give gifts and struggles with both hands, and have a grander plan than any I could design. Help me to keep foremost in mind that You are sovereign. I follow You no matter what my circumstances may look like at any given moment. I am your treasured son/daughter, and my reward lies in blessings eternal and not in worldly treasures. Remind me daily that I am called to be your hands and feet in a broken world and that my faith in your sovereignty is attractive to those without hope. Use me to further Your Kingdom. All this I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

 Ruth DuCharme

Psalm 46:10 “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

In twenty-first century North America, we are addicted to busyness and allergic to stillfulness. Perhaps this is why so many of our lives are devoid of the power of God.

It's the rush and busyness of our lives that robs us of our spiritual vitality and leaves us weary and burned out. But, according to Isaiah, it's those who wait on the Lord who gain new strength. He says, “They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.” (Isaiah 40:31)

Are you weary and burdened today? Does the crushing weight of another day's responsibilities feel suffocating and exhausting before you even start?

Why not start your day differently? Rather than starting your day with the exhausting demands that are sucking the spiritual vitality out of your soul, start your day with Jesus.

Jesus is calling you. He is inviting you,

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden,
and I will give you rest.

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me,
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.

For My yoke is easy
and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30 (NASB)

Today's Prayer: God help me to live my life as a called-person who waits on You instead of a driven-person, bullied by the demands of life in a driven-world.

✪ Gary Rounsavall

Philippians 3:13-14 No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

“I can’t believe I messed up again!” How many times have you had that thought? How many times have you thought, “This time it’s going to be different. This time I’ll keep my commitment. This time I’ll do better.” Too often I find myself in this position whether it is regarding a new fitness plan, diet, budget, over-spending, losing my temper, etc. You name it; I’ve messed up. In these times, it’s so easy to blame yourself and tell yourself to give up, it’s no use, you’ve failed again.

When thinking of how to really apply this idea of forgetting the past, I’m reminded of a policy we have at work regarding our admission process. If you have a poor GPA and are not able to be admitted into the university, but your transcripts are older than 10 years old, you can apply for a fresh start. The fresh start policy is where the school will not look at anything 10 years and older. Your slate is wiped clean, and you can use your more recent grades where you hopefully did better. It gives you a second chance to start over.

In the same way, God wants us to be reminded each-and-every day that we are loved and forgiven and that our sins are removed as far as the east is from the west. God has given us a fresh start. He’s taken away all our mess ups and failures. The past is no more; it is completely gone. When we start beating ourselves up over past failures, we need to grab hold of the promises God has given us. Not just a half-hearted belief, but truly and completely believe that we are valued by God. With the fresh start we have, we then move forward. Today, ask God how He can use you and how He wants you to grow. God wants to use us despite our imperfections and failures, but we need to listen to him and let him do what only He can do in us.

Today’s Prayer: Lord, thank you that You came and died to take away ALL my sins. Help me to acknowledge my short-comings and truly seek your will in my life. Help me to live with purpose and the unshakeable faith that You will carry out your purpose in my life. I give myself to You today. Guide me in every aspect of my life and help increase my faith. Thank you for everything you’ve done for me and continue to do in my life. Amen.

Ephesians 6:10-17 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Satan has been around for a long time. He is very powerful and will use every trick in the book to keep you from your eternal life with God in His kingdom. He hates you. Don't be fooled either. Satan will make it seem like he isn't even there and that he isn't to blame for all the evil in this world. Paul states otherwise. It is him, not flesh and blood, we must stand our ground against. By ourselves, we are absolutely no match for the devil. Thankfully, we aren't alone, and God has given us His holy armor to stand firm against that deceiver. We can't just put on one piece either. Our God wants all of us, as he has given us all of Him. He is all or nothing, no in between. God has given us all that holy armor, and we must do all to withstand the attacks of the devil.

Today's Prayer: Lord, thank you for being my God. Without You I am a weak and easy target for the devil; I would surely be lost forever. Thank you for being with me and donning me with your full armor. I know You are always with me, Father, and since You are, whom shall I fear? No one. Thank you. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Joshua Tenty

Matthew 26: 36-47, John 18: 1-3

John 18: 2 Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with His disciples.


In the 2015 movie *War Room*, a young couple struggling with problems in their marriage encounter a wise old woman named Miss Clara. Miss Clara had a closet into which she retreated regularly to do battle in prayer. The walls in the closet were hung with the intentions of her prayers, and a Bible resided there. It was equipped to allow her to spend time there, separated from all the distractions of the world. It was there that she engaged in prayer over the most intense needs and issues. It was her 'war room.'

Jesus probably also had his "war rooms," isolated locations, places to which He would regularly retreat when He engaged in prayer. Through frequent use, they were "prayerfully comfortable," where He could enter easily into deep prayer simply by going there.

As He faced His greatest trial, He needed to prepare by spending some intense time with His Father. And it was to one of these "war rooms," a place familiar to the disciples because they had accompanied Him there many times, to which He retreated to engage in His final recorded prayer battle.

Do you have a "war room," a place dedicated to your times of more intense prayer? It does not have to be a physical room. The requirements are relative freedom from distraction and frequent use. The purpose is to spend dedicated time with your Father.

Today's Prayer: Father God, we come to You in awe that You would choose to meet with us anywhere and anytime. And that we have the freedom to always lift all our thoughts, concerns, thanks, needs, and joys to You. Guide us into prayer as a habit – a habit to pray throughout the day in all situations and locations, and a habit to spend more intense time with You on a regular basis. You give us many gifts, but the gift of time with You alone is one of the most precious. Thank You, Father.

 Rich Friederich

Romans 10:14-15 How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

I'm fascinated by the book of Daniel. In addition to the well-known and beloved miracles of the lion's den and fiery furnace are several instances of pagan kings of the most powerful kingdoms of the day giving praise to Daniel's living God. (Daniel 3: 28-29; 4:2-3, 34-37; 6:26-27). These statements of praise to God Almighty rival anything we find written by David in Psalms or any other "giant of faith" from God's chosen people. How can this be?

Darius, Nebuchadnezzar, and Cyrus were all impacted and affected by Daniel who never wavered in his faith and didn't shy away from sharing it with others. God saw fit to put Daniel in a godless kingdom to make a godly impact to the godless world of his day. Granted, Daniel wasn't the traditional missionary who voluntarily went to a foreign land for the express purpose of introducing God to others. But he was the epitome of "bloom where you are planted." Taken into captivity, he made the best of what life handed him. He honored God and blessed those with whom he came in contact, and God saw fit to use him to reach kings and kingdoms.

At SVC, we strive to be a church that makes disciples, to make disciples that plant churches, and to plant churches to reach our world. We want to be like Daniel, starting with Fairfield, and ultimately reaching the kings and kingdoms of our world for Christ.

Today's Prayer: Lord, I want to be like Daniel, blooming wherever You put me. I want to have the beautiful feet of those who bring good news. I want to invite people to follow Jesus so they become more like him. I want to touch those with whom I come in contact so that when we part they know a bit more of You than before we met. Help me to be ever ready to share my story and the hope that lives within me so that Your Kingdom is ever growing, their lives are saved, and Your name is ever glorified.


∞ Jacqui Stansfield

Psalm 130 From the depths of despair, O LORD, I call for your help. Hear my cry, O LORD. Pay attention to my prayer. LORD, if you kept a record of our sins, who, O LORD, could ever survive? But you offer forgiveness, that we might learn to fear you. I am counting on the LORD; yes, I am counting on him. I have put my hope in his work. I long for the LORD more than sentries long for the dawn, yes, more than sentries long for the dawn. O Israel, hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is unfailing love. His redemption overflows. He himself will redeem Israel from every kind of sin.

In this text the Psalmist cries out to God from a place of brokenness and despair (vv. 1-2). He calls on the Lord for help knowing that despite his sins, the Lord offers forgiveness so that we might honor, worship, trust, and serve Him (vv. 3-4). Finally, he reminds us to trust in the Lord, to count on Him for He will redeem us of our sins through His unfailing love (vv. 5-8).

This passage serves as a great reminder that when we feel we are at our lowest, when we feel lost and overcome with shame, when we are in the depths of despair, we should call out to God for help. He knows the secrets of our hearts, the sins that we commit; and yet, we are reminded that we can count on Him. We should long for Him with the anticipation of a watchman awaiting the safety of dawn's first light. Because of God's unfailing love, there is hope and overflowing redemption from our sins.

Today's Prayer: Lord, I cry out to you today. I long for You. You know the secrets of my heart and the sins that I am ashamed of, but I know that You offer unfailing love and forgiveness. Lord, please help me to put my trust and hope in You knowing that You will redeem me of my sins. Amen.

 Corry Smith


Matthew 11:28 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

The idea of self-care didn't originate with overwhelmed mothers who were on the verge of losing their sense of self while caring for and raising their young children, or with overworked employees who gave themselves to their jobs so much that the boundary between work life and personal life became blurred.

While it is true that one cannot take care of others if they don't first take care of themselves, I'm concerned that we've lost the true essence of what proper self-care is. Somehow the ideas of "self-care" and "living in the moment" have become license to do whatever I want to do to feel better about myself again. However, self-care is not self-indulgence, rather it is delighting in the Lord – the one who created us, the one who ultimately knows how to care of his creation.

Proper self-care is to accept Jesus' invitation to come to Him. It means to come, to stay awhile, to settle in, to be still, and to wait for the rest that He alone gives. It is enjoying these moments with our Savior, allowing Him to care for us, that revive our weary souls.

Today's Prayer: Dear Lord, I want to be the best I can be for those around me, but I'm tired of running from my past. I'm tired of trying to escape my current situation, and I'm tired of striving for a better future. Help me to live for moments with You. I accept your invitation to come and rest in You. I want to indulge myself in You, delight in You, because only You know what I truly need, not just for this life but also to impact others for eternity. Amen.

 Tessa Valle

Luke 22:42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

"Gimme, gimme, gimme!"

When my children were little I used to read books about the Berenstain Bears to them. In one book, the cubs went to the store with Mamma Bear. Every time they saw something they wanted, they began to pitch a fit and cry to Mamma Bear, "Gimme, gimme, gimme!"

Mamma Bear finally reached her limit. She told her cubs, in no uncertain terms, that in the future, they couldn't have everything they wanted. The cubs needed to understand that Mamma Bear was prepared to provide them with all they needed and to even give them some of what they wanted. But she was determined she would not spoil them by catering to their every demand.

Many people approach God and prayer the same way the cubs in the Berenstain Bears approached Mamma Bear. They constantly plead with God, "Gimme, gimme, gimme!" They want their way and will with God, and they want it now.

Jesus approached prayer differently. When he was facing the cross, he didn't hesitate to pray, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me." Luke 22:42a

But Jesus did not end his prayer there. He continued praying, saying, "...yet not my will but yours be done." Luke 22:42b

Prayer that pleases God isn't imposing our will on God. It is surrendering our will to his will.

Today's Prayer: "God forgive me for all the times I have demanded, "My will be done!" Help me to surrender my will to your will and trust in your goodness and faithfulness no matter where You lead me or what I go through."


~ Gary Rounsavall



Ecclesiastes 5:10 “Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income.”

I remember the first time I read this verse in the Old Testament shortly after becoming a Christian at the age of 53. It rang out loud and true to me. I was that person always seeking more. However, when we get caught up trying to measure our success by worldly standards, there will still be a void of emptiness in our life. True peace and contentment does not come from what we can earn but from our relationship with Christ. Once we turn over the leadership of our lives to Him, we can fully recognize our blessings and humbly accept His provisions. If we don't submit to His will, we will forever be trapped by the pull of this world.

Today's Prayer: Lord, make me a better person by aligning my ways with yours. Take my worldly desires away and replace them with a servant's heart. Do not let me be prideful in what I think I can do on my own. Help me be generous with all the blessings You have given to me.

 Steve Acord


where do you find
PEACE & CONTENTMENT?

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

This verse has always meant a lot to me since the 2003 "On Wings of Faith" campaign at SVC. That campaign changed not only my way of thinking about our giving, but also my attitude of gratefulness to God for how He has worked in our lives. The worldly treasures that we thought were so important and created by us didn't belong to us at all. They were blessings from God. This was the first time my husband, Steve, and I prayerfully asked God what He wanted us to do. It wasn't a calculation of what we could afford to give without affecting our life style, but so much deeper. Prayerfully turning to God, being still, and asking Him to guide us. This step was a little scary for us, because we always wanted to be in control of our finances. Yet, it was the most exhilarating experience to honor God with our gift.

Looking back, that campaign really was instrumental in growing us deeper in our faith and our walk together. I am looking forward to seeing how God will work again and what exciting challenges the "Next Step" campaign will usher into our lives.

Today's Prayer: Thank you, God, for how you have provided and blessed us. We will continue to honor You in all that we do and with what You have given us. May we always put You first.

 Sandi Acord

prayerfully ASK GOD what
He wants you to do.

John 15:1-8 I am the true vine, and my father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can You bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown in the fire & burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Jesus is the vine
God is the gardener
And I am the branch

The branch exists, grows, and bears fruit only if it stays attached to the vine. Without the vine, the branch will not grow, nor bear any fruit. It cannot do so on its own. Also, The Gardener will cut off branches that are not bearing fruit, and He prunes branches that bear fruit to allow for more fruit bearing. Jesus repeats "I am the vine, you are the branches" to emphasize who He is.

I need to have a daily, lasting relationship with Him to grow and bear fruit, the fruit of the spirit (Gal 5:22-23). If I am separated from Jesus, this cannot happen. God is pleased when He sees me grow in my relationship with his Son.

Today's Prayer: God, I thank you for this day that You have given me. Help me to grow through reading your Word and spending time talking with You in prayer. Prune me daily to become more fruitful and to have an impact on my family, my co-workers, and the people I meet, for You. I thank you for your faithfulness in my life and the lives of my family members. I want to honor You in all that I do. Amen.

∞ Andrew Valle

Psalm 50:10-12 For every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it.

1 Chronicles 29:11, 12 Everything in heaven and earth is yours. Wealth and honor come from you.

Psalm 23:1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Psalm 37:25 I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.

God is the source of everything in heaven and earth. So why does He ask us to give? Could He not just provide all that is needed whether it's for our personal use or for this church? Why not leave us out of the loop? What is gained by God first giving to us, and we in turn give back to him? Could it be He wants us to experience overflowing joy?

"Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity." 2 Cor. 8:2

This was possible because they had given themselves first to the Lord.

Today's Prayer: Help us God to first acknowledge that You are the source of every good thing. Everything comes from your hand; and in humble gratitude we give ourselves unreservedly to You. May we also joyfully give back to You.

~ Gladys Rounsavall (Gary's Mom)

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD,
I shall not want — Psalm 23:1

Philippians 1:6 “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

It's understandably tempting to picture the Bible as a book of superhero-level saints we should strive to emulate. Think about it: Abraham, Moses, Jacob, Samson, David, Paul, etc. But if you search the scriptures more closely, you'll find less than flattering character flaws in each case which, if seen by themselves, would cause us to view them quite differently. For example, how on earth could David be called a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14)? It's because God is sovereign and could see the entirety of David's life and what He had planned for him. You see, God doesn't want our primary focus to be on those characters but rather on Himself.

It's critical to remember that the Bible is ultimately a portrait of Jesus Christ. It tells one story: the story of how God rescues a broken and hurting world. And this is accomplished by THE superhero – Jesus! HE is the hero of our story. (Sorry, Superman!) Each character in the Bible is a picture of God's saving grace and rescuing power. You and I are unfinished masterpieces, and I think it would be good for us to think of each other in that way. When the final chapter is written on my life and yours, the resulting story will be a gracious narrative of God's faithful and redemptive work. The feature film of our lives – even the parts that show how fractured we are and reveal our great need for a Savior – will be a testament to God's determination and delight to finish the beautiful work He began, all for His glory.

He is actively working through the whole of our lives...every age, stage, circumstance, trial, high point, and even the lowest valley. God does not measure our lives by a single snapshot, but sees the glorious feature film He is creating, for our good and for His glory!

Today's Prayer: Heavenly Father – You are sovereign, you see the bigger picture, and I trust You. Help me to remember that You are working in every circumstance and stage of my life to write a beautiful story of redemption for my good and your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

 Matt Skinner

John 6:2-9 When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

As we read this passage, we see that Jesus already had in mind how He would provide food for the masses. He did this to test his disciples. When we follow Jesus, our faith will be tested. This is how we grow. I see 3 different responses to Jesus' test:

1. Philip said it was impossible (unbelief).
2. Andrew brought the boy's lunch with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish but questioned if that would be enough (doubt).
3. The boy gave all that he had (faith). I'm sure when he gave his lunch to the disciples he may have thought, "Well, I'll be hungry today, but if he can use my lunch, I want to give it all to Jesus."

Wow, the boy gave all that he had to Jesus. What an incredible example to us today. When we seek God's face and ask Him, "Lord, how do you want me to invest my life in building your kingdom?" then He will tell us. Will we give all that He tells us to give, even if it means we may go hungry? God already knows how He will provide for a permanent home for SVC. This opportunity to trust Him is a test for us. Will we give Him all He is asking us to give?

Today's Prayer: Lord, help me trust You like the boy did. Help me give all that You are asking me to give, even if I think it means I'll be hungry. I know You love me and will provide all my needs according to your glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Help me trust and obey You today.

 Joy Rounsavall

Psalms 63:1 "O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You."

As I stood at the front of our church as greeter, a young family walked through the door. The little boy, as he came in, looked up, and in the middle of the room saw his grandpa. His face lit up with utter joy; he shouted out his name, and broke from his parent's hands to run full throttle into his grandfather's arms. The joy on the little boy's face was matched only by the joy on his grandfather's face.

As I watched, I could imagine the grandfather's joyous look on God's face every time we stop in our busy day to turn to Him and say hi. God is always ready for time with us. He is never so busy as to ask us to wait a minute, to say "maybe later," or to act annoyed because He has more important things to do. When we look to our Father, He is ready and attentive, and probably with a look of joy on His face to meet with us.

How much might that joy be amplified when we come to Him like that little boy?

Today's Prayer: Father, like David, our soul thirsts for You. Like the little boy, we are excited to just be in Your presence. Just knowing that You WANT to meet with us gives us immense pleasure. Fill us with an unquenchable thirst to spend time with You - over and over - a desire to be with You that is always in the forefront of our mind. Fill us with the joy in Your presence that You feel in ours.

Rich Friederich

Exodus 35:4 – Exodus 36:7

As I was thinking about the campaign to give towards the purchase of a permanent home for SVC, I was reminded of a time when Israel had given so much that they were restrained from giving more. I began to search to find it. After some time without success, I got out my old KJV. To my surprise, I opened immediately to Exodus 36 and there underlined I saw, "So the people were restrained from bringing." By now God had my undivided attention, so I read the story beginning in verse 4 of Chapter 35 through 36:7.


What began to stand out was:

- Everyone who is willing (Exodus 35:5)
- Everyone who was willing (Exodus 35:21)
- All who were willing, men and women alike (Exodus 35:22)
- All the Israelite men & women who were willing (Exodus 35:29)
- And the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning (Exodus 36:3)

Then in Exodus 36:6-7 I read, "and so the people were restrained from bringing more, because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work."

I became so excited! I decided this is how I will pray for the "Next Step" campaign: I will ask God for a willing heart for our church family and myself. I need God to move in my heart and give me a willing spirit to give sacrificially. I do not have the gift of giving where it just comes easy. God has to move in my heart to make me willing. And I will pray for Gary and our leaders for wisdom as to how they can challenge us to have this willing spirit.

Today's Prayer: Father, I know there is great joy in giving from a willing heart, for if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable. Please give us at SVC willing hearts to do your will.

 Gladys Rounsavall (Gary's Mom)

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

That verse seems pretty simple, right? Don't worry and talk to God. If only it were that easy. Something I've found is that worrying is hard not to do. As people, it is hard for us to not worry. Simply put, worry is an ongoing concern for something, whether good or bad. We all have a genuine concern for one situation or another.

When I think about it, I see a yoke and plow in a field. The lines that we walk with the yoke is our life. Just like any field, there are rocks and weeds. Those rocks and weeds are our worries, fears, and regrets. They may be small individually, but all together, they are big, heavy, and overall nearly impossible to move. There may be times when we break down and are unable to move. In those times, we may try to get up and continue on ourselves. To that, I say don't even try to move on your own. There's only one thing to do at that point – that is to drop down, call out, and pray. We need to ask God to take our yoke from our shoulders and bear it for us.

Now here's the thing! After doing that, we, myself included, tend to think He now has everything under control and that's it! That's not the case, though. When we give our problems, our worries, our fears to God, it can build up again and again. It's not a one-time exchange. We need to give our worries to God every day of our lives.

Today's Prayer: God, I need You. I need Your help. Please take my yoke. Help me through the hard times, so that I can rejoice in the good ones. Help me to remember to give all my fears and worries to You moment by moment. In Jesus' name, Amen.

 Blaine Dorman


1 Samuel 14:6 Jonathan said to his young armor bearer, "Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised men. Perhaps the LORD will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few."

In 1 Samuel, we read about the nation of Israel battling the Philistines because they still inhabit the land God promised to Israel. Now the Philistines are amassing their troops for battle, and the Israelites get scared. King Saul, seeing some of his men abandon him, panics and makes a burnt offering to the Lord which was supposed to be done by Samuel before they would go to battle. Just as he's finished with the offering, Samuel arrives, chastises Saul, and tells him his kingdom will not endure. Now Saul, seeing his numbers depleted and Samuel having left, was just sitting around under a tree doing nothing.

Jonathan is tired of waiting for dad to do something so he says to his armor bearer "Come, let's go over to the Philistine outpost on the other side." Jonathan is ready to go and his young servants reply is basically – "Let's bring it on."

Jonathan was a man of action. He didn't know if this daring mission would fail or succeed; but he knew God promised this land to Israel, and he had to do something. That's what we need to do – we need to step out of our comfort zone. When an opportunity arises for us to make an impact for God's kingdom, we can't just let it go by. We can't follow God in neutral. We can't be content with just getting rid of the sin in our lives. We need to do something. We can't be afraid of failure. Erwin McManus writes in *Seizing Your Divine Moment*, "You cannot fail without risking. If you have never failed, it might be possible that you have never risked ... If you have never failed, you have never really lived. When you follow God, He takes you beyond your own capacities, forces you to go beyond your abilities."

Today's Prayer: Lord I want to take risks for You. Help me to step out of my comfort zone and be a bold witness for You.

 Eric Klassen

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Nothing we do for God is ever in vain! How exciting is this! We may not see the results or powerful impact our work is having but this verse is a promise from God. If we work wholeheartedly at the assignments He has entrusted to us they will bear good fruit.

This promise is predicated on our obedience. Walking in obedience is not always easy. Loving our neighbors, as ourselves can be hard when that neighbor is so unlike us. Caring for the orphans and widows can seem like an ocean of need and we are just one single drop of relief. Honoring our parents when we experienced a traumatic upbringing may feel as if we are excusing bad or destructive behavior. Bringing the first ten percent of our fruits can feel challenging when there is too much month at the end of the money. Rejoicing in the Lord always can feel impossible when the diagnosis is dire. Sharing the good news with my co-worker who continues to live in the bottle can feel like a practice in exhaustion. When we are committed to standing firm and obeying God and all His instructions, we can rest in the knowledge that doing so is not in vain but rather completing work God has assigned us to do.

Notice, also, that the verse and its promise directly correspond to GOD'S WORK, not the work we do on our own behalf or that we decide is worth doing. God created us, knit us together in the womb, knew us before we were born, and designed us to complete good works He created for us in advance. This means that we are to seek out what God would have us do and complete those tasks with an obedient heart.

Today's Prayer: Lord, thank you for creating work for me to accomplish. You created me with gifts unique to me, because there are jobs only I can complete. Please reveal to me the areas in which I am doing my own work and instill in me a desire to seek out YOUR assignments so that I may do my part for your kingdom and be obedient to your Word. Amen.

☞ Ruth DuCharme

2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love and self-discipline.

What do you fear? Bugs, snakes, heights, death? So often we seem to be shaken to the core with irrational fears. We want to be secure and safe. The world tells us this is the right way to live. I'm not saying there is anything wrong with security or safety, but when we start to rely on ourselves for this, we tend to push God out of the picture.

At Solano Valley we want everyone to ask the question, "Lord, what is my next step? Where do You want to grow me? How do You want me to support our church in finding a permanent home? How much do You want me to sacrifice?" I have to be honest: these questions both frighten and excite me. I am scared that God wants me to step out of my comfort zone—and as kids today would say "Well DUH!" I like being comfortable, but that is not what Christ has called us to be. Throughout the Bible we are told that our lives will not be easy; we will encounter trials, heartache, persecution and loss. However, we are also told not to be afraid, to be strong and courageous, have faith, and hold on to God.

The Next Step campaign also excites me as I get to see God provide and do miraculous things I would never see or experience if I remain comfortable and fearful—or if I try to do things on my own. The other day I heard the song "Lions" by the group Skillet. The song challenged me to be bold and face my fears and insecurities. I love the one part of the verse that says:

We're not waiting for permission
We defy our inhibition
Like our middle name is "fearless"
Unafraid

When we are living as Christ followers there is no room for fear.

Today's Prayer: Lord, today help me to be fearless. I ask that You help me to step out in faith and listen to your prompting in how You want me to grow. Thank you for your faithful provision in always providing for my needs. Today I trust You, and will follow and obey your plan. Your will be done Lord, not mine. Amen.

~ Elsa Klassen

Proverbs 3: 9-10 "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops, then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."

As a new Christian, I always preferred the New Testament to the Old Testament. But the book of Proverbs has been an exception. I am amazed at the wisdom and truthfulness discovered in Proverbs. If we follow God's Word and put Him first in all we do, work, marriage, service, spending, and our thinking, He blesses us beyond our expectations. God's blessings don't always come in the form of financial gain, but in ways that are much more precious and satisfying: Family, Friends, Children, Faith, and Health.

It took me a long time to recognize how God offers so much more than worldly riches. He provides rest after a hard day of work, the satisfaction from a job well done, the joy of birth, or a new baptism into His kingdom. I can't imagine my life today without my daily Bible reading with my wife, or my talks with Him acknowledging His abundant and faithful blessings.

Today's Prayer: Heavenly Father, let me seek your face in all I do. Let me honor You with my first fruits of my labor and wealth. Thank you for your Son and the salvation I have received by accepting Him into my life. Honor and glory to you. Amen.

Steve Acord

Follow GOD'S WORD and
put Him first in all you do.

1 Chronicles 29:11-13 "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom, you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now our God, we give thanks, and praise your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand."

King David was the 1st to give generously to the building of the temple. Not only did he give from his resources as king, he gave from his personal treasures for the building of the temple of His God. (1 Chronicles 29:2-5) After he gave, the leaders gave, then the people. They gave willingly, with their whole heart and with joy! In reflecting on the giving of all the people, he worshipped. He knew that God deserved to be worshipped and he lead in that worship. He also knew his place. God was God and he, even though he was king of Israel, knew he was just a man and that his life on this earth with his "treasure" would not last forever (29:15). He knew that all the treasure that he gave towards the temple was God's in the first place. He only had it because God had given it to him.

There is a joy when we give generously, knowing that God is the Giver of all that we have. (James 1:17) Let's continue to ask God, "Lord, how do you want me to invest in building Your kingdom?"

Today's Prayer: Lord, I know that all that I have is from You. You are so kind and generous to me. Thank you for your kindness and help me listen to Your voice. Help me trust and obey as I seek to give generously in a way that honors You.

 Joy Rounsavall

Matthew 16:18 "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The church is there when you are born. The church is there when you die. The church is there when you graduate from school, when you are sick, when a fire burns your house, when a tornado destroys your place of business, when your doctor says, "You have cancer." The church is there to teach your children. Why is the church so important? The church is a house of hope! Every Sunday, the first day of the week, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

What does the believer in the Lord Jesus do in the day of tragedy? "...You are my refuge in the day of disaster." (Jeremiah 17:17) Where do I go when war or weather or earthquake or wild fires or hurricane or tornado or mad-man shoots people or invades a home? Where do we go? We go to the House of Hope, the Church, who opens the Book of Hope - the Bible - and reads the following:

- "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope." Romans 15:4
- "We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain." Hebrews 6:19

The light in the window of a permanent home for Solano Valley Church would give hope to all who pass by, to all who come to worship, to all who come to be married there, to all who call for prayer in the crisis of life, to children who come to learn Bible verses that will guide their lives. Senior adults can find fellowship, and youth can find a compass for all the travels they face in life. The world does not need a new movie, a new mall, or new Mickey Mouse entertainment. Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Do your part to make this dream of a permanent home for SVC for today's families.

Today's Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, help me to make the dream of a permanent church building for my SVC family a reality. In Jesus' Name, Amen.


Dr. Vic Morlan (Joy's Dad)

Matthew 18:1-5 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child to Him, and placed the child among them. And He said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in My name welcomes Me..."

I love this scripture. Anytime I read scripture and Jesus speaks, especially when speaking of what must be done to get to the kingdom of heaven, I pay very close attention. There is so much to take from this scripture. The disciples' thinking of the kingdom of heaven was incorrect in asking who would be the greatest once there. They were most focused on their works here in this world, how well they perform them, and how it will translate to their position in the kingdom. Jesus replied telling them that they must change, take the position of, and become like little children and welcome them in His name. He was indicating to them to not worry about their stature in heaven but rather humble themselves, as Jesus Himself did, and concern themselves with being the Lord's servants, helping people in His name. We must humble ourselves and become like little children. We must surrender control to God so His will can be done through us.

How else do we become as children? Children are filled with such joy and belief, and we should feel and think about God the same way. The world is going to tell you to not believe and get a reality check. Well, the same reality that applies to this world does not apply to our omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God!

Today's Prayer: Lord, You were very clear in what we must be to enter Your Kingdom. Help me continue to change in my humble surrender to You and continue the re-making of me and my heart as that of a little child's. Help me to resist what the world says I should desire and the unbelief it screams and focus on what is truly important: Serving you and people in your name. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

 Joshua Tenty

Philippians 4:6-7 Don't worry about anything instead pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Over the last two years I had been struggling with hurt from a loved one. This year, God answered my prayer by enabling me to give my heartache over to Him as I tried to do what it says in Philippians 4:6-7. And now God is slowly starting to restore our relationship.

Sometimes we can struggle with something so deep in our hearts that we don't think we'll ever get over it. But God gives us clear instructions on how to deal with these things. He says not to worry about anything and to pray about everything. Tell Him what we need and thank Him for what He has done.

Whether it is relational conflict, the death of a loved one or a dream, or worry over finances, He will graciously guard our hearts and minds with His peace, but we must come to Him first.

Today's Prayer: Thank you Father for listening to me and taking this heavy burden from my heart and giving me peace only You can give. I will trust You always know what is best for me. I am truly grateful and blessed to have a loving caring Father.

∞ Sandi Acord

Don't worry about anything
instead PRAY about everything

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and he will make your path straight.

Sometimes it's frustrating as I get older; my physical body becomes weaker, and I'm not able to do some of the things I used to. After having back surgery, all I could do was sit, stand, or lie down for 3 months. I couldn't even bend, twist, or lift. But every twenty minutes I needed to get up and walk. I had to trust God had a plan for my life. I was reminded that I still have purpose and value in Him. I still have the ability to share with others in a way that encourages and teaches and brings glory to God.

As I examine my life, I ask myself, "Am I living each day trusting You? Is there enough evidence to convict me of being a Christian?" Each day I pray and ask God to show His plan for the day. I ask Him to change my heart and make me more like Him.

Today's Prayer: God, we give thanks to you. You have given each of us spiritual gifts. We trust You use us to fulfill your purpose as we serve one another.

John Spreadbury

Am i living each day
TRUSTING you?

- We have a Great Salvation: "We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away... how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?" Hebrews 2:1-3
- We have a Great High Priest: "We have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are-yet was without sin." Hebrews 4:14-15
- We are being cheered by a Great cloud of witnesses. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:12)
- We have a Great Shepherd of the sheep. (Hebrews 13:20-21)

How do we have a Great day? We share our Great salvation every week with our lost friends. Where is one place we can bring our friends to hear the good news of Christ? Our church! Since we have a Great High Priest who is praying for us, we are to pray for our lost friends to come to know Christ. Where is one place we can come together to pray for our lost friends? Our church! We are being encouraged by a Great cloud of witnesses, those believers who lived before us and passed the ball to us to share our faith with our lost friends. Where can we go every week to be encouraged to reach our friends for Christ? Our church! Our earthly shepherd, Pastor Gary, shares the Word of God each week and equips us to pray for and reach out to our lost friends. Where does he do that? Our church! It is time for Solano Valley Church to have a permanent home so we can worship, grow, serve, and reach others for Christ for decades to come!

Today's Prayer: Lord Jesus, show me what part I am to give towards a building so SVC can have a permanent home to feed His sheep every Sunday. I want to do my part. Give me the faith to do something big for You because gave Your life for me! In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.


☞ Dr. Vic Morlan (Joy's Dad)

Psalm 46:10 "He says 'Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.'"

This is a very well-known verse, almost too well known. It is so easily memorized and often quoted that I forget to really grasp and believe what is said. "Be still ...know ..." But I'm overwhelmed with life! I can't keep up with all that needs to be done! Busy, busy, busy, panic, panic, panic! How will I get it all done? Does God really see me? Does He know what I'm going through? How will He manage today's crisis? I'm not sure I can figure out how I'm going to make it through next week. How am I supposed to make a commitment for an extended period-of-time? I can't see that far into the future!

Exactly! We can't. He can. "Be still ... know ..." Trust Him. God cannot show His strength if we are doing life through ours. Be still and know. He alone is God. "I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth". If we already know how the problem will be solved or the goal will be achieved, then there is no faith involved. He will be exalted through our faith in Him. Be still and know.

Today's Prayer: Father, forgive me for my constant fears and doubts. Teach me, repeatedly as needed, to be still and know that you are God. You created the earth and all that is in it with only your word. You can certainly take care of me. There is nothing too great for you to do. Teach me to lay my burdens down at your feet, and to leave them there! I trust you to give me my daily portion...enough to meet my needs, but not so much I forget to rely on you. I ask you to help me trust you fully even when I have no idea what the future holds. Take my trust and use it for your glory so that others may be drawn to you, and your kingdom exalted.

 Jacqui Stansfield

Phil. 2: 3-4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

I often struggle in my Christian walk with selfishness and obedience. When I realize I'm being selfish (maybe not even outwardly to others, just in my thoughts about something) the realization comes creeping in that my selfishness equates to being disobedient in God's eyes.

I need to frequently remind myself of a verse in a song that says "... less of me, more of Him ..." When we are obedient to God, we show Him that we love Him and have more faith in Him than we do in ourselves. I believe if we remember that, it will help strengthen us to live a life that pleases God. With practice, it will overflow into bringing peace to our relationships, helping us to quit being selfish and step out of our comfort zones, and being available to serve others. Less of me, and more of Him! This brings joy to others and especially God.

Today's Prayer: Lord, thank you for the grace and forgiveness You freely give us, even when we insist on doing things our own way rather than following and obeying what You tell us in your Word. Help us to trust and obey. Strengthen us to live for You and to always remember that our obedience to You shows You how much we love You because You first loved us.

Debbie Spreadbury

Trust and OBEY

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.

You may notice there are operating instructions imprinted on the lids of some washing machines. There are many selections to make: water level, wash temperature, rinse options, and speed of spin cycle to name a few. And then each of these selections must be adjusted depending on the size of the load, the type of fabric, and the stain or soil. For the most part, however, the process itself is generally wash – rinse – and spin. The garments get washed with soap, rinsed with clean water, and then undergo a spin cycle to pull out any excess water.

God also gives us a set of operating instructions – The Bible. In His Word, He gives us everything we need to effectively live out this life. When our hearts have been marked with residue from hurts we've experienced or inflicted, the putrid habits that drag us in the mud, and even our unseen hang-ups that sometimes discolor what appears to be the most pristine of fabrics, the Word of God can help us with all our dirty laundry.


Though the contents of our laundry baskets may look different from time to time, the process is generally the same:

Wash – What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Rinse – I can experience His cleansing and healing rain as I let Him reign in me!

Spin – He turns my mourning into dancing!

Today's Prayer: Lord, thank you for leaving me instructions for living out this life. May I continually look to You and Your Word – even when I'm a hot mess! Teach me what is true; and when I am wrong, show me what to do to make things right. I want my life to honor you. In Jesus' name, amen.

 Tessa Valle

Acts 4:31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

E. M. Bounds was an author, lawyer, and minister in the 1800's and early 1900's. He wrote a total of 11 books, nine of which were about prayer. By far, the best book about prayer that I have ever read was Bounds' book *The Power of Prayer*. One quote from him has burned its way into my brain. And one day, I pray that it will burn its way into my heart and my daily practice. I am not there yet. But I hope one day I will be.

“What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use – men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men – men of prayer.”
- E. M. Bounds

In a world where we sometimes make more of methods, organizations, and machinery, we need to carefully reflect on and consider what are we putting our faith in. Are we trusting more in fancy programs, sound equipment, fog machines, and relevant sermons than on the power of the Holy Spirit and a simple proclamation of God's word?

We need the kind of praying we see in Acts 4: The kind of praying that shakes things up, the kind of praying that fills all of us with the Holy Spirit so that we all speak the word of God with boldness.

Today's Prayer: Father, forgive us for all the times that we have made much of machinery, methods, and programs, while making too little of You and the empowering presence of your Spirit. Fill us with your Spirit and empower us to proclaim Your Word with boldness.

 Gary Rounsavall

journal the journey



Solano Valley

CHURCH

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