

## **“That I May Know Him Better”**

21 Day of Fasting & Prayer

March 1-22, 2020

Ephesians 1:17-18 says, “*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of **wisdom** and **revelation**, so **that you may know him better**. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be **enlightened** in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you ...*”

I welcome you, my dear church family to a special time in the life of our church and the beginning of my ministry as your pastor. The theme for our time in this period of prayer and fasting is “*That I May Know Him Better.*” Paul records an amazing prayer of his for the precious people that made up the church in Ephesus – the Ephesians.

He speaks of their reputation as having “*faith in the Lord Jesus*” and as having “*love for all the saints*” (Ephesians 1:15). Coming from the apostle Paul, these are words of high praise indeed. In other words, their faith was one that was all in. They were completely surrendered to the Lordship of Christ in their lives. And their love for one another was so impressive in its genuineness that he could not help but mention it. He took note of their unique reputation in a world of such pluralism, materialism and an acceptance of multiple gods. So, Paul used this opportunity to encourage them. And, I believe he would not have spoken this way had they had a half-hearted faith and a lackluster love.

This is the way I feel as your Pastor. I am so honored and pleased that God has called me to make this part of our life journey together. I see your faith and know of your love to be so genuine and impressive. In fact, Paul’s next words in this text are again, a demonstration of how I feel. He said, “*I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers*” – *Ephesians 1:16.*

As we take this journey together, I have put together this 21-day prayer journal as a way to assist you in praying during this time. I will share many scriptures each day with you. I will also give you journaling opportunities to record your thoughts as you seek God in a way to know him better.

If you have questions about how to fast, what to fast or the different options of fasting, please contact me at your convenience. I believe that these 21 days will prove to be revolutionary for you in your faith journey with the Lord Jesus. This will, at times seem like a 1,000-mile journey on foot. You will want to quit. You will question your sanity and mine! When those times come, learn how to lean hard into Jesus. He is the intimate lover of your soul. He will meet with you, comfort you, speak with you and to you. He will love you and you will love Him back in ways that you may have never dreamed possible. In other words, make the commitment to be all in and to stay all in. Be willing today to pay the price in order “*That I may Know Him Better.*”

As you prepare to turn this page to enter a special and private time daily with God, please know that I am praying for you. As your Pastor, I am joining you each step and every day. I look forward, with great anticipation and excitement to knowing my Lord better. And, I can't wait to hear from you! I am counting on God to reveal great things to each of us.

Our church will not be the same. Our community will not be the same. Our worship, our love, and our faith will not be the same. Please consider the following words as we begin ...

*Prayer & Fasting is an Act of Worship*

*Prayer & Fasting is not for the strong. It is for the weak.  
It is for the ordinary people in life who realize that they  
desperately need God in their life; that is who praying and  
fasting is for. Join me now as we lean into God like never before,  
stepping up to say, "God, I want more of you than I've ever had.  
I'm coming after you in prayer and fasting so that I may know you better."*

DAY 1

Introduction: Our theme for these 21 days is, “To Know Him Better.” It’s that simple. I also believe it’s that powerful. Again, just so you know, Ephesians 1:15-18 (see page 1) has marked me as I have put this tool together for you. I am trusting God for wisdom, revelation and enlightenment. And, ultimately, I am trusting that God will lead us all to know Him better. So, here we go!

**Key Scriptures for today:**

James 4:10 says,       *“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”*

1 Peter 5:5-6 says,   *“... All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”*

Humbling ourselves is the only place we can begin. There are so many areas of our lives demanding our focus and attention. Oftentimes that means we focus on the urgent. Unfortunately, the urgent is seldom the most necessary. What if we became more intentional? What if we could gain a greater focus; not on the urgent but the important? Consider, if you will the different areas of life that take our attention. See the following list:

**Circle the areas that you focus on heavily. Draw a line under the ones that need a much greater focus.**

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|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Work                 | Extended Family        | Personal Fitness  |
| Church               | Small Group/Friends    | Social Media      |
| Family               | Bible Reading/Study    | Entertainment/Fun |
| Marriage             | Prayer/Meditation      | Health            |
| Inner circle/Friends | News/Politics          | Rest/Sabbath      |
| Financial Pursuits   | Volunteering/Community | Serving           |

Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Thoughts & Observations:

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It takes humility to recognize areas that are receiving a greater focus than they should. It requires humility to allow God to shift our focus to the areas that should gain more focus. Here is a 2<sup>nd</sup> question for you on day one: How is your thought life? If we are to change our daily focus, our thought life needs to be addressed. The apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 10:5 that we are to *“to take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*

One of the great problems people have is that they play around with and toy around with their thoughts. The result of that can be disastrous. That’s where we begin to say things like, “what if” and create scenarios in our minds to fit the thought that should never be considered. This is why Paul says to take **EVERY** thought captive. Corral it, grab it, arrest it, snag it – whatever is required! Once you have, subject that thought to the scripture and to a perspective of being obedient to Christ! So, consider another exercise with me:

**Circle the thoughts that need a greater focus in your life. Draw a line under the thoughts that need to be taken to Christ in prayer and dealt with to gain victory in your thought life.**

Work	Worry/Future	God’s Word/Bible
Gratitude	Defeating Thoughts	Finances
God’s Promises	Children/Family	Comparison (it’s a trap!)
Enemies	Worship	Doubt
Guilt	Fear/Anxieties	Adulterous thoughts

Others not mentioned: \_\_\_\_\_

**What needs to change ... today?**

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We live in defeat way too much (Mike’s opinion). The reason is that our focuses and thoughts are often misdirected (not taken captive). Humility is required to identify them and to place them before God to declare our desperate need in His help to redirect them.

The best way to reverse these things is to replace them with greater affections. This is why I had you circle and underline the ones affecting you most. And, if there is one that I did not list, I trust that you have been able to identify it on your own. Begin praying now, in your fasting, to shift your focuses by surrendering yourself to the Lord in these areas that compete for your attention. As you do, take the space below and begin to journal what you will do according to what you have learned about yourself.

Philippians 4:8 says, *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.”*

**Next Steps:** What will I do with what I have learned today?

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**Final Thoughts:**

As you fast and pray today, look over all your responses. Ask the Lord to help you shift your focus to one of desiring to know him better. Read the following passages as a part of your prayer times during the day. Pray these scriptures back to God as you seek him today.

Ephesians 1

Philippians 4

Psalms 119:29-40

**My Prayer for you:**

God, open my eyes to you today; to your wonder. Help me be in awe of You today, alone! Give me your wisdom. I am in desperate need of it. Lord, give me your revelation. I don't have any need for the world's revelation. Enlighten me Lord by connecting my heart with yours. I know that many things distract me from you. I go in so many directions. Give me your thoughts, desires, directions and perspective. My focus needs to be on you today.

More to Pray for:

- Pray for Mike, Luis and Jamie's leadership
- Pray for vision to come to our pastoral team for our church's future
- Pray for the protection of our pastoral team and their families from the enemy
- Pray for wisdom, knowledge, discernment and understanding as God speaks
- Pray for miraculous works of God in the lives of the church family/my family
- Pray for Eufaula and the surrounding area to see God at work and to yield to His call
- Pray for fellow churches to be used mightily by God in their ministries
- Pray for the glory of God to be made known through my own life

End of day reflections:

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## DAY 2

Introduction: God's ways are not our ways. Now, I know that is not a revolutionary idea for you. In fact, you have probably read that in the scripture as much as I have. So again, His thoughts and ways are very different than ours. Which means if we want to know what God's will is or what He thinks about any situation, we have to know Him personally. This can only happen through being born again by the Spirit of God, being familiar with His Word (the Bible), prayer – speaking with and listening to God speak to us individually, corporate worship and fellowship with like minded believers. And, if we make these a priority, God will grow us up into maturity to where He will reveal to us His ways & thoughts that are otherwise too high to be attained on our own.

### Key Scriptures for today:

*“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord.  
“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8-9*

*“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”  
Romans 12:1-2*

*“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.” Ephesians 4:14-15*

### Questions:

1. Would you rather try to work things out your way? Would you rather do things yourself? Or, would you rather get God in on things and discover how He would do things?
2. Would you rather use your own brain power to try to figure God's will out? Or, would you rather be able to consistently understand, and know God's thoughts on the matter?
3. Are you ok with being tossed all over the place when you hear contradictory teachings, wisdoms, and opinions of those who use crafty words? Or, would you rather “grow up” in Christ with a firm knowledge of His truth and desired direction for your life?

I know the above questions seem a little silly and rhetorical. But victory/defeat is at stake with our answers. Unfortunately, our answers are usually found in our actions and not our words. So, go through the following exercise prayerfully and honestly with God.

**Personal Evaluation:**

- “Seeking” God encompasses everything from reading and studying God’s Word to prayer, private worship, gratitude, church attendance and focus (etc.). Rate yourself on a scale from 1-10 for the following statement:

“I seek God during the course of each week.” Rate yourself from #1 being not at all to #10 being endlessly each day. Circle your answer.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- What would it take to move that score closer to a 10?

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- Now, list the top three things that are keeping you from moving your score closer to a 10.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

If we are completely honest, it is far too easy to leave Jesus at the church doors waiting for us to return next week. In fact, we have probably done that far too many times to count. As we do this, we enter our week trying to work things out and figure things out our way. We use our own brain power to discern the “tea leaves” and to figure out all the why’s and how’s” of life. And, the result is often a feeling like we’ve been tossed about for an entire week on the high seas of life. Then, we return to church wondering why this whole “church thing” isn’t working out any better! Many people give up on God altogether. The rest of us settle in with a substandard belief about the Christian life – that it’s meant to be this way. But it’s not! How could this experience be what it’s supposed to be when we are promised so much more by God in His Word?

This is why we are fasting and praying. As we lean into Jesus at this time, may we commit to knowing the thoughts and ways of God. May we allow him to weigh in on our lives. May we give our brains a rest and simply make ourselves a living sacrifice – fully available to God; and to hear from God on the matters of what is on his heart. Maybe then, the waves of each week will not seem like some crazy tempest/storm! Maybe then, as we grow up in him, we will discover more of the fullness of being in relationship with the God of all creation.

### **Final Thoughts:**

As you fast and pray today, look over all your responses. Ask the Lord to help you shift your focus to one of desiring to know him better. Read the following passages as a part of your prayer times during the day. Pray these scriptures back to God as you seek him today.

Isaiah 55

Psalm 19:7-10

Romans 12:1-2

Ephesians 4:14-16

**Next Steps:** What will I do with what I have learned today?

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### **My Prayer for You:**

Lord, you have done so much for us! Would you remind us afresh that your thoughts and ways are so much higher than ours and that there is no illustration capable of describing the difference. Your purposes for us are so far better than anything we could ever imagine or dream up in a request. You are the greatest need we have – period! May we be reminded that on our best days, we are in desperate need of you. As we pray and fast in this season, open our eyes to your thoughts, your ways, your will, your solutions, your answers and your directions. We earnestly seek you for the direction of Parkview Baptist Church with our whole heart.

More to pray for:

- Pray for Pastor Mike to know your vision for our church
- Pray for our whole pastoral team to be unified in leadership
- Pray for committee heads to sense and know God's leading in areas of ministry
- Pray for your SS teachers to know the power of God in their planning and preparations
- Pray for our students and children to be impacted by the role models of parents
- Pray for a brokenness over Eufaula, AL and a God-sized dream & heart for reaching our city

End of day reflections:

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## DAY 3

**Introduction:** After a couple of days of fasting, you begin to rethink the things you laughed at before beginning, don't you? Some thoughts seemed entertaining on the other side before the effects began to be felt. Also, you will (if you haven't already) begin to consider what a little "cheat" day may look like and how that will affect your ability to stick with the commitment that you made. Whether you are feeling the need to "feed" a headache, or a desire to check your Facebook, or whatever; you could use some encouragement early on. So, let's consider the power of God for today's prayer time.

### **Key Scriptures for today:**

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

*Acts 1:8*

*"And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."*

*Romans 8:11*

Before you throw in the towel and give up on your 21-day journey, I want you to consider something. Have you ever given up on a dream? Did you ever feel like you quit something too soon and were never able to go back and do it over again? Perhaps it was at a time that you were not following God. Or, maybe you were a Christ follower and never fully understood the power of God that was at work in you through His Holy Spirit.

Let's look forward now since there is nothing we can do about the past. What do you want to see God do in your life? Your family? Your job? Your church? Your community (Eufaula)? Please know the following ...

- You are not limited to your past experiences
- You are not limited to your current circumstances

You have heard me say for 2 years, that *"who you are, where you are, and why you are there has all been ordained by God on purpose; and for His purposes."* Do you believe that today?

So, why not try to pray some of the following:

- Lord, show your power today as in the days of old.
- God, demonstrate your power in me today, around me, and through me. I want to be used by you.
- Lord, by your power, I want to finish my 21-day journey and know more of you in my life.
- God, create in me an excitement and a joy for what I can expect from you working in and through our church.

As we consider the power of God at work all around us, let me ask you the following personal questions. Your answers should represent your heart as a response to our mighty and all-powerful God.

1. What would you attempt for God if you were guaranteed you would not fail?
2. If you had unlimited resources (\$), where would you give it and why? (It is ok to list more than one thing)
3. When you look at the world, starting from Eufaula and moving outward, what breaks your heart when you see it? Why?

*There is no higher calling on your life than where you are right now. Therefore, who you are, where you are, and why you are there is all ordained by God on purpose, and for His purposes.*

IF the above statement is true, consider the ramifications – especially when the power of God is at work in you, for you, around you and through you.

Pray for the following today:

- God, give us supernatural power to do kingdom level work
- Lord, give us resurrection power to bring life to dead things: marriages, relationships, situations, dreams, churches, the lost
- Lord help me to know your power is already available, all-sufficient and capable to accomplish more than I can ever ask
- Lord, empower Mike, as our pastor to lead fearlessly with a vision of kingdom expansion
- Lord, give Jamie a strength and endurance necessary to lead out in the reaching of the next generation.
- Lord, fill Luis with a power and wisdom to lead us to know you better in worship

Pray these scriptures back to God:

- 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
- Ephesians 3:14-21
- Isaiah 40:25-31

**Next Steps:** What will I do with what I have learned today?

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**My Prayer for you:**

Lord will you open our hearts to the reality of your power? I believe we give up on so much way to soon. Help my church family to stay strong in their commitments to you at this time. We will never know of your power if we give up and give in too soon. Give us staying power! Give us resurrection power! We already have your Holy Spirit! Help us know him, recognize him, listen

to him and obey him. Help us rest in your power and know that your power is fully sufficient for all things. We declare our need in you today – and every day! But especially now as we deny ourselves of the physical at this time. We want to align ourselves with you. We are in desperate need of you today God. We ask for and rely upon your power. Thank you, God for not leaving nor forsaking us at this time. Your love is amazing God!

End of day reflections:

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## DAY 4

**Introduction:** On our first day, we spoke of what has our focus and what seems to dominate our thoughts. Today, I would like for you to think about the word “vision.” After all, a vision for our future is what this is all about. And, at this point, making sure we keep our eyes on the future is paramount since we are now in the “grind” of denying our flesh of the things we love. Why? So that we can hear from God on the things that matter most! The things that should have our focus and thoughts as opposed to what is being felt in our bodies at this moment!

### **Key Scriptures for today:**

*“Where there is no vision, the people perish ...”  
Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)*

*“Then the Lord replied: Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.”  
Habakkuk 2:2-3*

*“While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, Simon, three men are looking for you. So, get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.”  
Acts 10:19-20*

*“During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, Come over to Macedonia and help us. After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”  
Acts 16:9-10*

*“One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city. So, Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.”  
Acts 18:9-11*

Right now, I hope that your desperation for God is beginning to replace your desperation for whatever you have given up. My prayer is that a vision for the future is indeed more important. My prayer is that it grows with greater intensity each day. My desire for you is to discover such a passion for the things in life that need God’s attention that a clear vision is realized. So much hangs in the balance!

**What areas are you burdened for the most?**

A Family Member	The Unchurched	The Unconcerned
Corporate Worship	The Glory of God	Men' Ministry
Youth Ministry	College Ministry	Young Adults/Parents
Elderly	Hunger/Poverty	Women's Ministry
Social Justice	World Evangelization	Eufaula's Lostness

Others: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for vision for what God is laying on your heart. And, if God is placing something new on your heart, humbly accept it. Thank God for revealing it to you. Ask Him to make it as important to your heart as it is to His! Add to your prayer list everything God is revealing to you. Thank Him continually, for entrusting a vision to you. Commit to Him a whole hearted approach to chasing the visions He gives. Record everything as Habakkuk said. Return to these burdens constantly throughout today as well as the days ahead!

*“Write down your revelations, make it plain upon the tablets ...”*

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**Final Thoughts:**

Thank you so much for your prayer for vision today! In preparing this for us, I have also been reminded of the prayer meeting in Acts 1:14 where we read, *“They all joined together constantly in prayer.”* Right now, I am humbled and excited that we are all constantly praying. Both individually and when we gather corporately. I cannot yet imagine what this time will yield. Only God knows and time will reveal that. Thank you for doing the hard work of prayer. Prayer is not preparation for the work – it is the work! Thank you for loving me, this church, our community, your families and all the burdens you carry to work this hard to see a move from God. Read the following scriptures today as an encouragement in your prayer.

Acts 1-2

Acts 11

Revelation 2:1-7

End of day reflections:

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## DAY 5

Introduction: It may be a good day to talk about being thankful! You agree? At this point, you may be wondering (Again!), “why did I do this?” Your energy level may be down. You may be drawn to return to what you have laid aside for these 21 days. You may be asking if this is really worth it? “Why is this necessary?”

If so, let me strongly encourage you that great victories await us on the other side of the sacrifices you have temporarily made. One way to be encouraged is to begin every day with a thankful spirit – an “attitude of gratitude” as some say.

### **Key Scriptures for today:**

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”*

*Philippians 4:6*

*“I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone ...”*

*1 Timothy 2:1*

*“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.”*

*Psalms 100:4*

Attitude makes all the difference in the world. A thankful approach is synonymous to a faithful approach. Knowing that the battle has already been won makes me grateful! It makes the enduring of tough battles worth it. It keeps me energized even when I am weak in my own flesh. Why? I know that God is fighting the battle for me! I know good days are coming! I know victory is coming! Jesus tells us in John 16:33, *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

Look at that verse again:      In Jesus, we have \_\_\_\_\_

In this world we have \_\_\_\_\_

And, which one (Jesus or the world) overcomes the other?

We should live with the most grateful hearts; filled with great confidence in the fact that no matter how much trouble the world can bring our way, we are overcomers in Christ! So be grateful today – no matter the lies, manipulations and trouble that the enemy plagues you with today.

**Personal Evaluation:** Rate yourself – not how you want to be. But where you actually are

My attitude is a ... (1 means I am a negative person and 10 means I see every situation as an amazing and awesome opportunity)

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

Why Is your score what you say it is? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you satisfied with where you scored yourself? \_\_\_\_\_

What can you do to change that? \_\_\_\_\_

Do I live with an attitude of thankfulness toward God? Others? My life situation?

List the top 10 things you are grateful for:

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____  |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____  |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____  |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____  |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

I believe that grateful people are those who experience breakthroughs! Here’s why: negative and unhappy people are too focused on their problems and life issues. I believe their choice is representative of the level of faith they live by. Therefore, they cannot see the breakthrough or the opportunities that God has set before them. Living in a grateful way is more than a way of life, it is the right choice. Again, Jesus said about himself – “I have overcome the world.” And, if in Jesus we have peace as opposed to the trouble that the world brings, why wouldn’t we approach all of life with hearts of praise and thanks towards our loving Savior?

**Next Steps:**

Start with the list of ten things you are grateful for and let your prayer time today be laced with thankfulness. Watch your list grow as you pray. Add them to your list. You may even put this time of prayer and fasting on your list because of all God is showing you!

Prayerfully read the following scriptures:

1 Chronicles 16:8-36

Psalms 107

**My Prayer for You:**

Lord you are amazing! You are good. You are gracious. You are kind. You are merciful. You are loving. You are longsuffering. You have met every need. You bless me so abundantly! Your promises never fail. Your attributes cannot be fully described. You are more than enough. On my best day, I desperately need you. On my worst day, you are always near. I am so thankful for your presence in my life. May this be enough for me – always! Then, I will be even more thankful.

More to pray for:

- Continue to pray for vision for the future of Parkview
- Continue to pray humbly, for a laser focus on the things God wants to reveal
- Pray for God’s ways to be made known at this time
- Pray for God’s power to be released through His church
- Pray for an ever-increasing thankful heart (daily)
- Pray for Holy Spirit Revival to sweep our church
- Pray for a spiritual awakening (for lost souls to be won to Jesus) in Eufaula, AL

End of day reflections:

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## DAY 6

Introduction: I love the image of “pressing in” to Jesus. A “pressing in” seems to happen when things have gotten desperate. So, let me ask you, do you have any desperate situations around you at this time. I do! I desperately need to hear from God on how to effectively lead Parkview Baptist Church into the future of 2020 and beyond. I desperately need to press in to Jesus for my answers. The world, and even conventional church wisdom has a lot to offer me today. But I have seen the results of much of that already in my life. It has left me wanting. It has left me empty and frustrated. I want more. In fact, I desperately need more. Therefore, I **MUST** press in to Jesus. Come with me!

### **Key Scripture for today:**

*“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”*

*Philippians 3:12-14*

*“... A large crowd followed and pressed around him (Jesus). And a woman was there who had been bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal ... instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus ... she thought, If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed. Immediately ... she was freed from her suffering”*

*Mark 5:24-29*

What do you need to press in to Jesus for today? I am quite sure there are problems that surround you today; issues, difficulties and seemingly hopeless situations. As you fast and pray today, I want you to learn more about pressing in to Jesus for your needed answers.

### **The full story:**

Mark 5:21-42

This passage is literally about 2 desperate stories and those who pressed in to Jesus. The contrasts are obvious: one official, one nobody; one young daughter, one older woman. However, both helpless and desperate; both believing that Jesus could change everything. But for today, let's focus on the woman who literally pressed in to Jesus, through the crowd in order to find hope and healing.

For many Christians today, their faith is a passive experience. Believing in Jesus is a mental exercise and an “academic” pursuit. But this woman is an extraordinary example of an active faith. A faith that expressed its belief in an active pursuit of needing Jesus personally involved in her life – as opposed to Jesus being somebody she simply “studied” about. Knowing Jesus meant more to her. She was desperate, and she decided to do something about it!

**Personal Evaluation:** Go through the following statements that describe this amazing woman and evaluate yourself in your faith journey. Ask yourself, “Do I press in to Jesus in hard times?” Or, “Do I give up and give in when things aren’t happening?”

- This woman was out of options and facing insurmountable opposition. Yet she did not back down or back off. Do I pursue God by pressing in to him in the midst of opposition? Or, do I quit too easily?
- Her faith would not wait. She fought for what she desperately hoped for. Her faith honored God. Is my faith easily deterred? What have I given up on that I need to press in to Jesus for?
- Her faith was supernatural. She had no strength left. This was not a religious faith, but faith in a person! How would you describe your faith today?
- Her faith would not be denied! Her faith knew no barriers! She wasn’t concerned with what was impossible anymore! How quickly do I “tap out” when oppositions are tough?
- Do I surrender my circumstances to Jesus in faith? Or, do I just surrender in defeat?
- She pressed through sickness! If anyone had an excuse to stay home, she did.
- She pressed through disappointment. No “expert” gave her hope.
- She pressed through hopelessness. Her financial situation left her destitute.
- She pressed through shame – an outcast. Don’t you know the devil shamed her all the way to Jesus, telling her she was doing wrong by touching all these people.
- She pressed through the crowd. Many tried to deter her and stop her.
- She pressed in. Not just physically, but spiritually.

**Next Steps:** What must I do in light of this information/knowledge

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Faith demands action. This woman pressed in and pressed on. Before moving forward in your day today. Take the above action step seriously. Spend time in prayer asking God to reveal to you the level of your faith. Where have you given up? Why haven’t you pressed in to Jesus more? What obstacles, oppositions and circumstances do I need to turn over to God in faith?

### **Final Thoughts:**

1. This woman was not looking for Jesus to touch her. She believed that “IF I” could touch him, I will be healed. Instead of praying for a miracle today, pray for a breakthrough! Press in to Jesus with faith.
2. Jesus knows when we break through. Jesus felt her despair, her hopelessness, her fear and her pain. But he also felt her faith! It was a supernatural faith! And God stopped in his tracks. What have I been treating so lightly in my life that needs such a miracle? There is power in desperation! Press in to Jesus for your answers!

### **My Prayer for You:**

Lord, make us desperate for you – like never before. Help us to get over ourselves, our fears and our inhibitions to come to you in a desperate manner as this woman did. Give us an active faith like hers. One that sees hope in you so much that the crowd around us is never in focus.

More to pray for:

- Press in to Jesus for vision for Parkview
- Press in to Jesus for the lost to come to Christ
- Press in to Jesus on behalf of your spouse
- Press in to Jesus on behalf of your children
- Press in to Jesus on behalf of your neighbors, friends & co-workers
- Press in to Jesus on behalf of our government leaders
- Press in to Jesus on behalf of our fellow churches & pastors in Eufaula
- Press in to Jesus and enjoy the intimate love relationship He has always intended for you

End of day reflections:

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## DAY 7

Introduction: Here we are, one full week into our time of prayer & fasting. I trust that you are indeed growing in an intimate and deep relationship with God. Remember our theme from the introduction – “That I May Know Him Better” (Ephesians 1:17-18).

Today, we are going to deal with something that you may have already experienced this week. And that is, coming face to face with sin. This is completely expected in a prolonged time of prayer and fasting – realizing afresh our sinfulness in the presence of a holy God. Let’s spend some time today getting “real” before God in this area of confession and repentance. Remember, the closer you get to God, the more it reveals who we are.

### **Key Scriptures for today:**

*“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm 139:23-24*

*“I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.” Isaiah 44:22*

*“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10*

*“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” Psalm 51:17*

Sin is not always some big, overt “thing.” For some it’s very private; hidden inside. Whether hidden in your home or just in your heart. For some, sin is simply unforgiveness & bitterness. In other words, nursing old wounds and stewing over old hurts that have never been released. What do your eyes need to be opened to today? What toxin do you need to let go of today? Sometimes, you may even need help – ask God to show you!

Questions to wrestle with:

1. Just you and God – in what areas do you struggle with sin? Remember, it may feel small and insignificant to you. To God, it’s a barrier of intimacy.
2. What one or two sins seem to “have your number?” Things you can’t seem to shake.
3. To what extent are you willing to allow God to deal with you on these?
4. What blind spots do you have that seem to be easy snares for Satan to trap you with?
5. Again, how far are you willing to go to have God expose your blind areas to bring about greater victory over sin?

The above questions can be tough to deal with. I encourage you to not gloss over them. Spend time here knowing that victory over sin is crucial in developing the kind of intimacy with God that always seem so far away from reality. Finally, remind yourself that ALL sin required the death penalty of Jesus on the cross. That includes what seems insignificant to us as we are typically harder on others sins than on our own. Spend time with the following questions. List what needs to be brought out of the darkness and into the light.

- **What do I give an inordinate (excessive) amount of affection to in my life?** Examples would be money, materialism (more stuff), entertainment, leisure.

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- **What am I refusing to “kill” in my life that has a stronghold on me?** When doctors prescribe antibiotics, they always tell us to take them for the full amount of days prescribed. But, if you are like me, you stop when you have some relief. The problem is lingering bacteria that can come back and even grow stronger. What must be eliminated in your life? What have you been sorry about but haven’t killed? Make a list below of what God would have you fully rid yourself of; not just be sorry over.

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*“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9*

**Final Thoughts:**

In your prayer/fasting today, look over your responses above. Give them all serious attention as you consider the very nature of your heart – *“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)*. Pray through the following scriptures as well:

Psalm 51

Romans 6:1-14

Romans 8:1-11

1 John 1:5-10

End of day reflections:

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## DAY 8

**Introduction:** As we begin week 2, you may be thinking, “I’m done ... this isn’t working ... I don’t feel well ... I am not enjoying this ... At least I gave it an effort.” Let me encourage you, don’t give up and don’t give in. You won’t be more holy if you keep going. God won’t love you more or less depending on your perseverance. God is not demanding you continue. But I do believe this – God is pulling for you to keep pressing in! He desires for you to know Him more and to grow in your intimacy with Him. This is a strategic moment in the life of our church as we lean into God corporately. Be encouraged! Something is happening! God is enjoying you and your time with Him! Jesus hasn’t gone anywhere! Don’t look back now. Press on and press in! He awaits your presence today. He longs for it; more than you do! He is a loving Father who welcomes the presence of His children. Lean in now – Be encouraged!

### **Key Scripture for you today:**

*“But Jesus immediately said to them: Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid. Lord, if it’s you, Peter replied, tell me to come to you on the water. Come, he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, Lord, save me! Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. You of little faith, he said, why did you doubt? And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.” Matthew 14:27-32*

### **Just in case you are discouraged today:**

One of the best things to do when you find yourself discouraged is to purposely fill somebody else up! If you are weary in the fast, purposely invest in another today.

- Encourage somebody – anybody!
- Come alongside somebody else and pray for them.
- Lift someone up with joy!
- Be the fruit of the spirit for others to partake of.
- Call one another, check in, be prepared to listen, give hope to each other!

If you are experiencing struggle today in your pursuit of “making it” 21 days, take this scripture and pray it back to God as you seek His help.

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5-6*

God is never far. Sometimes he may seem silent, but he is always near. He will never leave nor forsake you! Even if it feels like you are in a season of silence, lean in yet again. Remember the promises of Jesus in the sermon on the mount; He will reward what is done in secret!

Prayerfully read the following scriptures:

Proverbs 3:5-6

Matthew 14:22-33

Psalms 46

2 Corinthians 4

My Prayer for you today:

Lord, give us strength to lean into you. To trust you. To find refuge in you. Lord you are good! You are preparing so much more for us than we can even fathom. Thank you! Prepare each one of us now to receive all you have planned for our church and our homes. May we praise you in all times for all things. You are worthy to be praised! Bring revival to us; regardless of what that means for me today. May I subject myself to you and to your ways without hesitation. I am yours. Use me according to your perfect will.

Other things to pray for:

- Vision for Parkview
- For the lost to come to Jesus
- For my witness to be God exalting, Christ focused and loving to the sinner
- For Pastor Mike to be spirit led
- For Jamie to have favor with students & children
- For Luis to walk in the spirit as he leads us in worship
- For wholehearted committed deacons
- For Sunday School teachers to teach with power
- For the encouragement of the saints!!!

End of day reflections:

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