

G R E A T E R

40 DAYS OF LIVING, LOVING,
& LEADING LIKE JESUS

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LEADING LIKE JESUS

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INTRODUCTION

You have entered into a season called GREATER. God wants to bring greater to your entire life and shift your perspective. I believe this is true for us personally, professionally, relationally, and as a church holistically. If we are willing and obedient, God promised that we would eat the good of the land. In other words, we will experience God's best, and we will experience not just eternal life, but abundant life. Don't you want joy everlasting on earth *and* in heaven? Don't you want peace in your home, and an insatiable zeal for the work you do on a day-to-day basis? That is the GREATER we are believing God for. In order to receive it, we must prepare for the growth spurt that is required of us in this current chapter of our lives. We must be willing to sync with God's vision and refuse to settle for the normal patterns and conditions of this world. We must be obedient in the areas of execution, elimination, and trust. We are walking on water. What took others years to accomplish, I believe God is going to give us the grace to get it done sooner, faster, and wiser. In order to experience greater, we

must embrace the new. We must rid ourselves of excuses and be willing to execute. Are you willing to go further, faster? Are you willing to give GREATER a try? Are you willing for God to introduce you to the you that you haven't seen yet? If you are, then this 40-day devotional will catapult you into your GREATER season by reframing your expectations, aligning your insight, and providing significant instruction so that you can live, love, and lead like JESUS.

The phrase "Just Do It" is the signature slogan and a core component of one of the most successful brands of the 20th century, Nike. The phrase, which was coined in an advertising agency meeting in 1988, has been recognized as one of the top two taglines of the 20th century. Although the message is not religious in origin, I believe it is relevant for us because it communicates and conveys an important message for those who are attempting to improve their lives. We can have motivation, information, and also intercession but we cannot experience GREATER without implementation. At some point, after all of the preparation and planning, we have to just do it. In other words, greater blessings belong to those who have mastered execution. Execution is the key that unlocks a person's potential. It is the magnet that draws in what one desires. It is the ultimate expression of faith. Faith executes. Faith follows through. Faith takes the first step. Many of the promises in the pages

of scripture are promises that are predicated on God's people engaging in the act of execution. Execution is expected from our Savior. Jesus says, "If you love me keep my commandments." Scripture commands execution. The Bible warns us not to just be hearers of the word but doers also. God doesn't just instruct us to execute; He also assists us in executing. At the end of the day we can talk about it, pray about it, and plan for it, but we will never be able to reach greater without execution. This is the purpose of our concentrated devotional journey. Over the next 40 days, we will make a commitment to be more intentional. Most will do this devotional during a season we call Lent. Others will do this in a small group class, or as a personal study tool during another season of their lives. But for those who are observing Lent, allow me to give a brief explanation of the season, the sacrifice and the significance of Lent for yearly observance.

The English word Lent is a shortened form of the Old English word *Lencten*, which means "spring." In early Christianity, the term was used to refer to the fortieth day before Easter. Many Christians celebrate Lent for different reasons. Traditionally, this religious observance covered a period of seven weeks before Easter Sunday, beginning on Ash Wednesday every year and continuing for 40 days until Easter Sunday. Much like the Sabbath day God instituted in Genesis, if you commit to this journey, you are committing

to scripture meditation, worship, and prayer every day of the week except Sunday. This will result in 40 days of concentrated devotional time with the Lord (Monday-Saturday), and six Sundays “off”—you’ll be in worship anyway...so it works out pretty good! It will be challenging—especially if this is your first time committing to something like this—but the reward will far outweigh the challenge.

What is the purpose of Lent? Lent prepares the believer to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ through prayer, repentance, atonement, and self-denial. As you read and reflect, our aim this year is to experience GREATER in every area of our lives. Thus, in the following pages, we have provided a practical guide to assist you in your devotional time. Each day includes a scriptural focus and a daily devotional. If you are so inclined, consider purchasing a writing journal to chronicle your daily thoughts or to personalize your prayers. Think about something you can give up during this time that will help you to remain focused on Christ. Some people give up television watching, social media surfing, food on certain days during certain times, guilty pleasures like shopping or junk food—whatever you deem appropriate, let it go for a season. Whatever poses as a real challenge to let go of, surrender it to God for a short period of time. It is our prayer that you will experience healing and wholeness in Jesus, and that this 40-day experience will

set you on a trajectory toward purpose. Most of all, we pray that you will be reminded of the sacrifice Christ made for us and be compelled to aim for GREATER.

GREATER GIVING

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 - Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

What comes to mind when you read this scripture? Is it giving of your finances? Is it giving your material possessions? Well, it can be either of those, or both. It can also be neither of them. Maybe you have not given thought to some other things that can be given like time, love, peace, and forgiveness just to name a few. But all these things are “givable” and if something is being given generously, it will always have a greater impact. There are quite a few stories in the Bible that would corroborate this claim...like when Jesus forgave Mary Magdalene for her sins. Jesus forgave her greatly and Mary, in return, showed her gratitude by giving continuous thanks and worship.

He gave her the confidence and strength to live a greater life once He gave her forgiveness generously. Here's the point: *lives change when we give generously.*

Another story is when the Apostle Philip was told by the angel of the Lord to go meet the eunuch in Gaza. Once Philip met him, he saw that the eunuch was reading the Book of Isaiah and asked if he understood what he was reading. He replied “no” and Philip explained the book to him. Philip gave him time and understanding generously (Acts 8:26-39).

The last story that comes to mind is about Timothy. His story tells us volumes about giving. His mother Eunice was raised fearing God by his grandmother Lois. They both gave the same faith to Timothy as a child. Later, he met Paul and Paul taught him how to pastor and activated the gifts God gave him by laying his hands upon him (2 Timothy 1:5-6, Acts 16:1-3). Each one of them was given something that they also gave, which created greater in someone else. In these examples, everyone gave generously and cheerfully. They did not give because they felt forced or because of personal gain. God is able to bless you abundantly in all things and at all times. Whatever you give (whether it is financial, relational, time, knowledge, or understanding) give it generously because it will be pleasing to God.

PRAYER: Father, thank you for the opportunity to give. The Bible lets us know that if we give sparingly, then we will reap sparingly; but if we give generously, we will receive generously. By giving with a cheerful heart, it will bring us joy. So, Father, I pray for a cheerful giving heart so that my giving will be greater. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER CONTENTMENT

Philippians 4:11-13 - I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through Him who gives me strength.

In life, most people have so many things available to them, and a lot of these things are easily accessible. Cars, homes, fashion, luxury locations, and so on. But for some, those things are not as easily accessible, but are still desired. The reality is, no matter where we are in terms of access and excess today, life has a way of switching up on us in a moment's time. This scripture speaks to both sides, letting us know that no matter what side you may be currently experiencing... there is a secret to being content. It is an open secret though, because it is written out plainly here for everyone to read.

The secret is that you can do all *this* through Him who gives you strength. Whatever the “this” is that you are up against, God is the source of your strength to do and to overcome. You must know who you are in Him, and you must know that He is with you in every situation. God confirms this and comforts us in His word. The psalmist praises God saying, “I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor their children begging for bread” (Psalm 37:25). As you take inventory of your own life today, you will be able to attest to that fact, because God is still providing. He says that we can do all this because He gives us strength. Contentment is such a wonderful place to be when you receive the strength from the one who will see you through any place you are in. Desiring more is doable, just remember the secret of contentment.

PRAYER: Father I pray that you will come into my situation of plenty or my situation of less. I pray for your strength which will enable me to be content and give you glory. May I remember the secret that will empower me, and may I dwell on it more than my situation. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER SAVINGS

1 Corinthians 16: 1-2 - Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, only 32% of the U.S. population has any personal savings. This is shocking because for the most part we all agree that savings are necessary economically and psychologically. Savings give us the sense of security and the freedom to make decisions that are in our best interest because we don't feel as dependent on our paycheck or so susceptible to going broke. Saving gives us an advantage in case we are unable to work for whatever reason or run into an emergency that requires us to spend more money than

we anticipated. Our savings is a safety blanket. It is also a tool to use to get a lot of what we want.

Even deeper than these natural reasons about the importance of saving up, the Apostle Paul helps us see why it is important to God. Here in 1 Corinthians 16, we find the Apostle talking to the church in Corinth about savings. He has just finished preaching to them about excelling in the Lord's work and now he is requesting that the people of Corinth apply this same principle for taking up a collection for the believers in need. He is not just telling the church to save but he explains how they should save and the reason why they should save. Saving should be intentional and should be focused on generosity. The Apostle encourages the Corinthians to save consistently and conscientiously so that when a need arises, they are not caught off guard. This will allow them to have the economic and psychological benefits, but it will also allow them to have "more than enough and some to spare" so that they can show God's love with their generosity to those in need. When we save consistently and conscientiously it blesses us and allows us to be a blessing also.

PRAYER: Father, we ask that you teach us to steward our income to save more, not just for rainy days, but for a surplus. Give us the wisdom to manage our finances and help us to learn to be consistent with saving and have a greater level of discipline to use it wisely. We pray for the financial freedom to make decisions that bless us and the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER GENEROSITY

Psalm 37:21 (ESV) - The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives.

Many of us have likely heard the old saying, “It is better to give than to receive.” The real question is whether we understand that it is a biblical principle that impacts our character. Our generosity should be based in what we believe about God’s richness and provision. God is our source, but God gives us the opportunity to be a resource to others. Hoarding and withholding the resources God has given us to steward can create a level of entitlement if we see the things we have as merely for personal gain and not also for the benefits of others. Exercising greater generosity reminds us that we may own our possessions, but they do not own us.

Just like with savings, greater generosity is not only righteous, but it is wise. When we give more,

we can develop a deeper appreciation for God. As Christians, we are called and commissioned to live, love, and lead like Jesus. Generosity does not always mean money, but so much more! Every time we're generous with our gifts and talents, we're emulating Jesus Christ Himself. Therefore, if we're displaying Jesus every time generosity is at work, shouldn't we want to be more generous? Time, talent, and treasure are valuable commodities that enable us to serve other people. We have a choice to be an answer to someone else's problem. Jesus often talks about the importance of generosity. It is a blessing when we give, especially to people who are less fortunate. Take this devotional today as your sign and opportunity to work on areas of generosity so you can become greater in every way imaginable.

PRAYER: Father, thank you for being the source. Thank you making us a resource. Guide us on how to be more generous. Help us to discern how we should be generous. Remind us that it is better to give than to receive and help us to do it with humility and not grudgingly. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER ORDER

1 Corinthians 14:40 - But all things should be done decently and in order.

Have you ever wondered what would happen if you started your day off eating dessert first? A bowl of butter pecan ice cream to start your morning? It is an interesting thought, isn't it? What would happen? How would we feel by lunch? I think it's safe to assume we would not be fond of the results we would get from having dessert for breakfast. The fact is, in order for our bodies and minds to operate as optimally as possible, our eating habits should have some structure to them. Otherwise, we run the risk of mental or physical fatigue, imbalance, and even sickness. Order matters, and order has been established throughout the whole of our life cycle. When you're born you are fed liquids from a bottle until your digestive system is ready and your teeth appear for you to eat solid food. At birth, you begin with being carried, then as you get stronger you begin sitting up, then as you get even stronger...

crawling. Then when you get your balance...walking and eventually running!

What would it look like if there wasn't order? Being born with teeth and walking? In this season of Greater, in order for our lives to go to the next level, greater order is going to be absolutely paramount. We serve a God of order so we should be a people of order. When we are advised to "seek first the kingdom of God," (Matthew 6:33), it is because order matters. God wants us to structure our lives around Him and not the other way around. God wants to be first, not only. When we put God first, we manage our time better. When we put God first, we manage our relationships better. When we put God first, we structure our day better. When we remember to put God first, we have taken the first step to bring order into every area of our lives.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you for this day and all things in it. We honor you and bless you name. Lord, we come to you today seeking you first. We want our steps to be ordered today and we know that all order begins with you. Father, remind us daily that order matters and that anything and everything we do we should be taken to you first. We ask for the presence of your Holy Spirit to help us put and keep You at the forefront. We thank you for answered prayers. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER PERSPECTIVE

Colossians 3:2 - Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

There is so much truth and power to the saying, “Anywhere you go, you go headfirst.” This short but profound statement articulates an indisputable truth: the way we think affects the way we move. The writer of the letter to the Colossians understood this truth and penned these words to remind us that when we keep our minds focused on God, his will, and his ways, we are exposed to new possibilities and released from the prison of limited thinking. Notice that Colossians 3:2 is not *asking politely* that we set our mind on things above. It is simply and directly telling us to do so; it is a command. In this year of Greater, it’s safe to say we all could benefit from greater perspective. Our outlook on our lives and the situations we face will ultimately affect how we wade through the storms and trials of life.

James 1:2 says, “Count it all joy, my brethren when you encounter various trials.” The fact that this command is recorded in scripture means that it is possible, God never calls us to do something that we cannot do. That means greater perspective is part of the inheritance of the saints. It is one of the things that we have been empowered for by God. God gives us the ability to shift our perspective, but we have a part to play in the process. We are the ones who have to decide and determine that setting our minds on the things above is both possible and necessary before we will begin the process. Once we say yes to a new perspective, God is the one who flips the switch in us and allows us to begin developing it. It is a team effort. We start with renewing our mind and re-thinking everything. Imagine if our thinking shifted from “why this trial?” to “thank you for it.” Let us seek Greater perspective in this season and start by shifting our thoughts away from culture’s way of thinking in order to embrace the King’s way of thinking.

PRAYER: Father, we give you glory for who you are. You are the sovereign God, and we love you. We come to you humbly and seeking your face. We ask that you broaden our perspective in this season. Send us your Holy Spirit to help us set our

minds on heavenly thinking. Lead us away from earthly and ultimately detrimental mindsets. Help us to shift from “why” to “thank you.” And remind us always that you are with us in every step we take. We thank you in advance for a mindset shift that leads to transformation and for our minds continuously being set on you. We ask and believe you for all things. We give you thanks, praise, glory, and honor. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

GREATER SEASONS

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 - For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

Anybody who has ever watched sports knows exactly what a coin toss is. A coin toss is a simple act of tossing a coin into the air as a way of making a difficult decision. It refers to the use of a circular, metal object to determine who wins or who loses, who

begins first or who waits their turn. In a coin toss, each party chooses either heads or tails. Someone tosses the coin into the air, and everyone agrees to abide by the results of the toss-up. Based on chance and probability, the coin toss is appealing because the odds are even for both sides. There is an even 50/50 chance that each party will get their way. Depending on the wind speed, the angle of the throw, and so many other factors that the participants can't control, they both agree to submit themselves to time and chance. The coin can create different outcomes, based on chance, outcomes that one may be prepared for, others they may not.

In Ecclesiastes 3, King Solomon shares a series of possible outcomes, described in seasons, ever-changing with the passage of time. In life, some of those seasons feel like they take forever to change. Winter in New England, for example, seems to last forever, causing a sense of complacency and comfort, as there is no urgency to prepare for the coming change. Some seasons shift quickly, like the season of hot weather in Chicago that seems to come and go overnight. Like the coin toss, seasons are precarious and fleeting, changing and unpredictable. We can never control the seasons, but we can stay conscious that they will change and be ready to roll with the toss and the shift. These devotionals are meant to help you grow into greater readiness and be prepared for greater seasons. Our spiritual disciplines and sensitivity to the promptings

of the Holy Spirit help us to be prepared for the swift transitions of life. Seasons change, but Jesus remains the same! Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” No matter what season you find yourself currently situated in, no matter what trial or adversity comes your way, as the late Rev. Timothy Wright said, “Trouble don’t last always.” You built your house on the Rock, the solid foundation of Jesus, and His promises are the same in every season. Greater is your portion!

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I adore you and honor you. I am so grateful for your wisdom, guidance, protection, and strength. As I walk through this current season, prepare my heart, mind, and spirit for GREATER, that I may leave nothing to chance, but walk in the fullness and authority that you’ve allocated for me. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

GREATER TIME MANAGEMENT

*Ephesians 5:16 - Making the best use of the time,
because the days are evil.*

There's an adage from Benjamin Franklin that states, "Time is money," speaking to the value of one's time. This saying is helpful because it helps us take consideration of how valuable time is, but it is also misleading in a subtle way. By saying that time is money, we might miss a very important characteristic of time – unlike money, once it is gone it is gone forever. We know that money can be recouped, repaid, and reinvested to earn more than what was lost. Unfortunately, we do not have the same opportunities with our time. Once those seconds, minutes, hours, and days leave our grasp, they are gone forever. Think about it: those hours that mysteriously seem to disappear when scrolling through social media or binge watching the latest series on television, resulting

in a loss of sleep, productivity, and family time, cannot be recovered.

While time cannot be recovered in the same manner as our financial portfolio, with the use of the right tools and strategies, such as greater time management, we can gain the most of the 1,440 minutes we've been given by God daily. Ephesians 5:16 challenges each of us to live with intentionality, with purpose, and with proper planning, because to live without those things we allow ourselves to waste precious time, succumbing to demands of culture and temptations that may shift our lives from thriving to merely surviving. Implementing time management skills helps us to boost productivity, create margin, and allow for rest. Recognizing that “no” is a complete sentence and an acceptable response to requests of our time is also important. Never forget the pace of Jesus. Jesus didn't live a hurried life. He lived a life filled with a God-designed “busy”, not a rushed, stressful hurry. I challenge you today not to create another “to-do list”, but to evaluate what already fills your calendar, asking yourself, “Is this good or is this God?” For those tasks, appointments, or roles that fill your day that you see as good things, but you are unclear if they are “God things”, seek the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit, seeking discernment and the peace needed to eliminate the “good thing” for the sake of the “God thing.”

PRAYER: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, thank you for being the model for living my life with intentionality and purpose, for showing me the pace necessary to live in communion with You, in community with other believers, and with commitment to the faith. As I continue to reflect in this season of Greater, help me to steward my time to accomplish more in less time for greater impact with greater influence. I surrender my calendar to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER PRAYER

Psalm 5:3 - In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.

Do you use any online shopping sites, like Amazon? If so, you are familiar with checking the arrival date of a package while waiting for it to come. Especially for those who have Amazon Prime, it's almost like a game, to see if the package is going to arrive within the two days promised. You don't even have to be an Amazon Prime person to get the bug, anybody who orders online or who has ever had someone order or send something for you as a gift knows that feeling of tracking the package and seeing when it's going to arrive. You place the order with the expected arrival date in mind but still check every time the purchase pops into your head. Some can even get really King James and say we "Fervently watch" for the arrival of packages.

In Psalm 5:3, David appeals to the Lord with his prayer. He does not delay about making his request, and then he waits excitedly for God's answer. This sounds a bit like how we watch our packages. In this year of Greater, God wants us to follow David's example and pray with true fervency as if we were watching and waiting for the things that we ordered. Imagine what Greater would look like in our prayer life if we applied the same excitement and sense of urgency every time we recalled a prayer request. We know God will deliver, we only have to wait for the arrival. Greater is possible! Greater prayers give us greater covering, greater faith, and greater hope. Try starting your day with a prayer and setting a reminder throughout the day to revisit that prayer with expectancy in your heart.

PRAYER: Lord, we thank you for the examples you have provided for us through your word. Inspire us. Set our hearts on fire to pray bigger, deeper, and greater. Lead us to search our hearts and speak aloud those things. Help us to fervently pray in your name. We honor you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER RESPECT

Romans 13:7 - Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

“R.E.S.P.E.C.T. Find out what it means to me.” Some of us read that line and immediately start to sing along. For others who may not recognize it, this line is from Aretha Franklin’s iconic song “Respect”. Many have sung this classic song feeling dignified in the message it conveys. The message summarized simply is, “Respect me because I respect you, that’s all I ask.” This is a powerful message for our interpersonal relationships. It is a fool who allows people to consistently disrespect them and doesn’t require any change and valuation. We are not to be lap dogs who take any and everything, make folks respect you on that job and in your circles. But though this message is a helpful one in how we deal with interpersonal relationships, we have to know that Kingdom is

sometimes counterintuitive to culture's way. As ambassadors of God's Kingdom, we have to set our hearts to honor and respect authorities and elders and our leaders even when it is not always immediately returned when given. Paul isn't telling us to do these things because others will do it also. He is commanding us to do this because this is how we respect God, through respecting those God has set over us. Greater respect isn't just about reverencing God, it will require us to honor those that share this earthly space also.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, teach me to show reverence for you in every relationship, even when I don't feel that my efforts are recognized or reciprocated. As a Kingdom citizen, help me to live by the laws of the Kingdom and not by my feelings and popular culture's ideals. Trust me with situations where I can develop Greater respect by submitting and serving even when it is difficult. Let the same mind be in me that was in Jesus when he submitted to death on a cross for those who hated and rejected him. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER PLANNING

Luke 14:28-30 - Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, "This person began to build and wasn't able to finish."

The U.S. economy is dealing with major supply chain delays right now because of the impact of the COVID-19 virus and one of the major results is a severe housing shortage right now. The costs of materials like lumber has skyrocketed and builders are finding that building houses is sometimes costing 30% and 40% more than expected and it is blowing budgets. Some folks are having to stop building their homes in the middle of the project, or having to replace contractors and suppliers who are insisting on going back on their agreement because they sense that they can get more money. Nobody could have seen this perfect storm brewing, so many are close to losing their businesses. The people who are surviving

and thriving are not prophets who saw this coming. They are people who have always been so meticulous and have planned and budgeted so well over the years that they had a nest egg and enough capital to take this beating and keep on leading. Even when you can't see what's coming, live a lifestyle where you are always planning and prepared for what you can't predict.

You may not be a contractor, but if you want to live a life of purpose, you must recognize the importance of planning. Benjamin Franklin said, "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail." We can never forget the truism, "You have to tell your time and money where to go, because if you don't, you won't know where it went." When we don't plan, ultimately we end up letting ourselves down and disappointing others. As Christians, when we let ourselves down and disappoint others, that doesn't represent Jesus well. Remember, God has a purpose for your life, but it will not be accomplished without planning. From this day forward, let us be deliberate about becoming greater at planning in every area of our lives.

PRAYER: Father God, you are amazing in all of your ways. Father, show us which areas of our lives we are not receiving in full your promises because we have not properly planned. May the Holy Spirit give us divine understanding on how to organize and plan in every area of our lives for your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

GREATER DILIGENCE

Proverbs 21:5 - The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.

Kobe Bryant was one of the greatest basketball players to ever play the sport. He played on the same team, the Los Angeles Lakers, for 20 years. On April 12, 2013, playing against the Golden State Warriors, with three minutes left in the fourth and final quarter, Kobe Bryant tore his Achilles tendon. Kobe's season was over in an instant. He now had a long and arduous rehabilitation process to get through. During a press conference his doctor said, "I want to get Kobe weight-bearing as soon as possible, but in a protected way. The tendon is tricky, you need to put weight on it, but without stretching the tendon." While waiting to heal, Kobe watched his team, which had experienced a promising season prior to his absence, lose in the first round of the playoffs. Kobe being the competitive player that he was, wanted to get back onto the court immediately. However, taking the advice

of his doctors seriously, during a press conference Kobe said, “With the tendon, there is only so much you can do. There’s a certain amount of time they deem necessary for the tendon to heal to where you don’t overstretch it, and now you never get that spring back. So, you just have to be patient, let the tendon heal.” Bryant had surgery immediately after his April 12 injury, but didn’t receive full medical clearance to resume all basketball activities until November 18. It took seven long, hard months. During which time Kobe’s leg was getting better and could bear weight, but he had to have the wisdom to wait diligently even when his own body wanted to convince him that he could shortcut the process. In the end, Kobe’s decision to be patient and diligent with his rehabilitation allowed him to play three more healthy years in the NBA before retiring on April 13, 2016. Years he might not have gotten if he had jumped back in too soon.

Like Kobe Bryant, there will be situations in life that can make us feel despondent and like valuable time is being wasted. When this happens, it is very easy to believe that you have to be hasty to make up for the time you feel was lost. This is a trick of the enemy, because hastiness is never good, and only the Lord can redeem lost time in your life. Usually what the Lord is trying to do in and through your life is connected to a process, which doesn’t require you to rush and be hasty, but rather to be diligent and obedient. This year let us eradicate rush and hastiness out of our lives, and focus on greater diligence instead.

PRAYER: Father God, you are awesome in all of your ways. You can do all things but fail. Help us to lean on you and to not live lives of rush and hastiness. Help us to hear from you, and to be consistent with the plans that you have given us, that we may accomplish them, for your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

GREATER DECISIONS

1 Corinthians 6:12 – You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is good for you. And even though “I am allowed to do anything,” I must not become a slave to anything.

Have you ever made a decision to do something, and after you did it, you wish you would've thought things out better because it didn't work out the way you hoped? Often, this stems from us making decisions quickly or with limited information, and we often do this when we feel rushed by something or someone. In this season of Greater, let's focus on making decisions the way that God does. Throughout Scripture, we can see the Lord operating in perfection, perfectly knowing every possible outcome of every decision and not subjecting decisions to people but remaining completely unmoved by time and people. We see it not just in God the Father but also in the life of Jesus. For instance, the Pharisees were

constantly trying to trap Jesus by trying to bait Him into conversations, hoping He would say something to incriminate himself. It never worked, because Jesus used wisdom to discern not only what they were trying to do, but how to respond to it. Jesus had no problem ignoring their questions or saying something that had nothing to do with the short-sighted question he was being asked. Sometimes he would use their inquiry to talk about a whole different topic. He was never rushed, pushed, or manipulated; He remained in charge of His decisions.

If we are going to be more like Jesus, we also need to use wisdom before we make decisions. This means we can't make decisions based on our emotions or how we feel or based on the stimuli around us. True wisdom comes from the Holy Spirit. When we hear from the Holy Spirit, we don't have to wonder if we're making the right decision, or if we're treating others in a way that is or is not satisfying to the Lord. Wisdom is the key to accomplishing your God-given purpose and being all God called you to be. From this day forward, let us not depend on our own thoughts to make decisions or bow to what others are saying or doing. Instead, let's pray to hear from the Holy Spirit, which will allow us to live with Greater wisdom and make Greater decisions.

PRAYER: Father God, you are awesome in all of your ways. We love you, and you are love. We want to be more like you Lord, and we can't do that without wisdom. Help us to apply the wisdom that only comes from You, in every area of our lives. In your name we pray. Amen.

GREATER WISDOM

Psalm 104:24 - O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

Have you ever taken a long nature walk? Sometimes it is so revelatory to take a long walk in the neighborhood or on a trail, breathing in the beauty of God as you walk. You can hear the birds singing and see the squirrels scurrying to find food. You can take in the warmth of the sun beating on your face and see the bright blue sky that is so clear. All of this is God's handiwork. God in His infinite wisdom spoke words and it all came into being. Those words are still reverberating today as we enjoy God's goodness. We see it in the changing of the seasons. God doesn't have to speak anything into existence again because His word continues.

Throughout this year, commit to praying for greater wisdom. The kind of wisdom that allows you to say things and do things in such a way that the

positive results last forever. God's wisdom is what will allow us to raise children in such a way that generations are blessed. Divine wisdom is what allows us to speak words that will bring life into others and will shift the world for the better. When we are lacking wisdom, the Bible tells us that we can simply ask God for wisdom, and He will give it to us without question. What an opportunity God affords us! We can ask boldly for wisdom to make the right decisions and choices in life and to advance God's will in all things. This wisdom is not only for me but for the Kingdom. I am God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, but I can only do this if I ask God for His wisdom to do it.

PRAYER: Father God, thank you for your love. Thank you that you are marvelous and there is no one like You. Lord God, you said in your word that if anyone lacks wisdom let them ask and you would give it. Father, I am asking for your wisdom to guide me through this life. I need wisdom to make the right decisions and to live a life that glorifies you. I thank you because you do all things well and I receive your gift of wisdom. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER HEALTH

1 Corinthians 9:27 - But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Imagine you are throwing the first party at your own house. Your parents, friends, and family will be there. Think of the effort you would put into that moment. The food must be perfect. The atmosphere must give off the perfect vibe. All of the time in the world would not be enough and all of the work could never be enough to pull together the perfect picture you have in your head. But still you will hustle and sweat to be the perfect host. For one day, we will stage our house to look like a perfect magazine portrait for guests. Even

though we can have a party without the extra bells and whistles, at the end of that day your guest's comfort and experience is your gauge for satisfaction.

Paul reminds us in his letter to the Corinthians how important this same hosting ability is. Just like the hard work needed for the guest invited to your house, much greater should the work be for the invitation of the Holy Spirit into your body. Instead of cleaning, organizing, and cooking like you would in a party, we are called to discipline and posture our bodies, hearts, and minds to welcome him in. Instead of mops, sponges, and brooms, we are equipped with prayer, scripture, and fasting. Thinking about the invitation you gave to the Spirit the day you gave your life to him.... is your house ready?

PRAYER: Worthy is the one who sends me life by his Spirit. Worthy is the Father who cares so much that he leaves us with help to endure. Father, I have not cleared for you the space that I have invited you to. I have not done the work needed for you to flow freely and comfortably. Praise to you the ultimate giver of forgiveness. Praise to the loving leader who allows me space to adjust without condemnation. Help me to be aware of the needed cleaning within me so you can move

freely. Help me to prioritize your occupancy in the temple you have given me to steward your presence. Let me remain in the awareness of your presence and comfort. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER CONSISTENCY

Daniel 6:10 - When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

What new trend has your time? It seems like everyday culture is imposing the newest thing to take up our time. Let it be the new filter or the newest word puzzle game, we are consistently getting pulled into fads that occupy our time, talents, and treasures. Without a fight we will gladly spend money on the newest tech and equipment because “they” say it’s a must. Our minds are always working to keep up with the score boards of an ever-changing world around us.

Daniel, in this passage, shows us his steadfast consistency in the face of the changing culture around him. Although King Darius mandated that worship

only be to him and him alone, Daniel remained firm in his ways. He knew that regardless of the changing environment outside his doors he needed to stay vigilant in his actions and keep his eyes on God. What has your eyes? What has been robbing you of your attention and time and preventing you from remaining consistent in your time with God. Is the noise of the latest craze distracting you from your consistency in your relationship with him? Growth only comes with consistency and time. Have you given Him both?

PRAYER: Father, you are worthy of all my time. You are the Creator, Sustainer, and answer. I have allowed outside things to pull me away from my time with you. I allowed my eyes to wander and time to get lost. Thank you for being the redeemer of time. No matter the distraction in front of me, I can run to you with no time lost. God help me to remain consistent in your presence. Help me to become greater in my relationship with you through continual fervor for you and you alone. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER FREEDOM

Galatians 5:1 – Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

They used to sing a song in church called “Glory, Glory...Hallelujah!” It was an up-beat devotional that could be sung for hours upon hours. All you had to do was change the first few words, and the song would take on an entirely different meaning. I will never forget the church mothers erupting into high praise out of nowhere because of this. Whether testimony service or prayer time, somebody would sing my favorite line: “every round goes, higher and higher...since I’ve laid my burdens down. Every round goes, higher and higher...since I’ve laid my burdens down.”

The point of this spiritual song was to emphasize the value of laying aside baggage in order to grow in Christ day by day. Its goal was to encourage the congregation to move from glory to glory, and from

faith to faith. Indeed, the song was right. At a certain point, every Christian will have to learn how to lay their burdens down. Every believer will one day move beyond the “Sinner’s prayer” and begin shaving off the pieces of our old existence that are not consistent with our new place in Him. Most times, this process of “laying down every burden” begins when you decide to stop living for the applause of man, and instead, you start yearning for the affirmation of God. It’s the freest moment you will ever know. When you lay your burdens down, you feel lighter. You feel better. You start thinking about how much time you’ve wasted trying to satisfy folks who will never be satisfied, and you decide to live the rest of your life, satisfying God.

But readers, be warned. Laying burdens down will always come with a few side effects. Your carnal desires will need to catch up with the revelation that your spirit is in full submission to Christ. In other words, some days you will still want to do evil, but your wants must be reminded of and conquered by God’s will.

When God lifts you, here’s another side effect: friends may drop you. They did it to Jesus and they will do it to you. But do not fear; it comes with the territory. People will think you’ve changed, but they don’t realize, it’s more than change. Your paradigm has shifted. You don’t live anymore to make money solely. You live to make an impact. You don’t go to school just to get an “A.” You go because you want

each class to mean something. When your paradigm has shifted, you'd rather walk alone in the park than to sit in a room full of phony people. When your paradigm has shifted, you experience more than "change;" it is, more exactly, a metamorphosis. When insects metamorphose, the butterfly has no memory of what it was like to be a caterpillar. In the same way, when you go higher in Him, you will have no memory of the person you used to be. Stand fast in that freedom today and watch God cause you to forget the categories that used to define you.

PRAYER: Father, Thank you for freedom. It feels good to lay aside unnecessary weight. Help me to trust you during moments of weakness and instability. You are my stabilizer and my Freedom Rider. I love you in Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER FAVOR

*Luke 2:52 -And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature,
and in favor with God and man.*

Many people want money, fame, or popularity, but what I want, more than these things, is wisdom. I hope you want the same. As Christians, wisdom can keep us from mistakes that education can't teach us. Wisdom can help us to make sound decisions. Wisdom is so important that God devoted an entire section of the Bible to it called wisdom literature. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs are all books that comprise this genre in Scripture. As such, they impart experience, knowledge, and practical principles into the hearts and minds of every reader who is willing to learn from human snapshots. One human who embodied wisdom fully, was Jesus. Luke 2:52 says that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. The sequence of events matters here. He first grew in wisdom and in stature. His inner man was developed in wisdom, which

provoked an outer manifestation of favor with God and man.

You have committed to this 40-day journey because you realize how important it is to focus on inner growth. Christianity is an inside job. The work of the Spirit begins within. Therefore, pray for wisdom before you pray for a promotion. What good would more money be if you don't have the wisdom to manage it? This week, pray for wisdom before you pray for a spouse, or more children. Relationships can't grow until you do the work within. When you do this, you too will grow in wisdom and stature, and favor with God and man.

Additionally, did you know that when you grow in wisdom, you automatically grow in favor as well? And what is favor? It's when God providentially orchestrates preferential treatment toward you that you can't earn. It's when someone has to be selected for an opportunity and out of all who could have been picked, you were selected. It's when the scholarship, the internship, the promotion, the invite, the access just so happens to land in your lap. Favor is the consequence of a life filled with wisdom. But here's the key: favor must be handled with hands controlled by a heart of wisdom.

A fool will fumble favor, but a wise man or woman will maintain it. I want to encourage you to pay attention to the wise leaders, mentors, teachers,

and counselors that God is placing in your life. All throughout Scripture, God sends wise leaders to prepare you for the favor that is about to come your way. This season is ripe with opportunity. Don't fumble your favor all because you missed the lessons on wisdom. Open your eyes. Pay attention.

PRAYER: God of wisdom, direct my path. Your word declares that the steps of a good man/woman are ordered by the Lord. I confess that I do not always know which way to go. I confess that I sometimes rely on my feelings too much. But I pray that your wisdom will guide me. Develop me from the inside-out so I can hear you clearly, know you certainly, and follow you closely. Speak Lord, your servant is listening. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER FOCUS

Luke 10:41 - But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things,

Have you ever experienced being at home relaxing and then the doorbell rings? To your surprise it is one of your favorite relatives popping in because they were in the area on a short business trip. You are so excited to see them, but at the same time you’re having anxiety as visions of the dirty home you kept putting off cleaning, run rampant through your mind. “Oh no! What should I do now”? You gesture them to come in and as they are walking in and take a seat, they tell you that they only had a short time before their flight departs going back home. You yell up the stairs to your family for them to come down to say hello. As they run downstairs in excitement and gather around the visitor you use this as your getaway and begin to tidy up the house.

You offer your guest a glass of water and as they are engaged in intimate conversations with the family, you run into the kitchen to begin preparing a few appetizers meanwhile getting frustrated with your family because none of them are offering to help. “Don’t they see this house is a mess!” “They see that I am trying to cook and clean at the same time, what are they thinking!?” When you finally sit down, your guest gets up because an hour has passed, and they need to catch their flight.

Just as Martha expressed to Jesus that she was upset with Mary for not assisting her in the kitchen while she ran around busy with menial tasks during His visit, Jesus’ response to her was to ‘chill’. Well not exactly in those words, but you get my point. In this example, you have missed the entire visit with the family and would later learn that this business trip was for a promotion for a position across the globe. “Man! We never got a chance to catch-up!” Now you have so many regrets because you now realize you may never see them again. If you had just taken the time to sit down with your guest and focused on their visit, you would not feel so bad. Jesus is telling Martha that what Mary did was of greater value because she recognized that greatness was in the room, and she was not going to miss this opportunity to be in His midst.

PRAYER: Lord I thank you in advance for greater unique opportunities and pleasant surprises. I ask that you change my mind and my heart so that I can hear from you more and learn how to sit down and breathe while we talk. I recognize that spending alone time with you is one of greater importance.

GREATER MEDITATION

Joshua 1:8 – Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

In this scripture, Moses has died, and the Lord spoke to Joshua and told him to get ready because it was time to fulfill the promise he had made to Moses. God had promised Moses that after he went to Pharaoh and Pharaoh released the Israelites out of bondage he would give them land. But only **AFTER** the Israelites became a nation. Moses' death comes after he along with his people wandered in the wilderness for 40 years! Can you imagine? Now, after 40 years Joshua tells his people in three days we are leaving, and we are going into the promised land. The Lord reminds Joshua to also keep this book of the law (The Pentateuch – the first 5 books of the Bible.) **ALWAYS** on his lips and meditate on it day and night. The same way we think back to childhood memories and remember some of

the advice our parents or parent-like figures have given to us; “Wash your hands before dinner.” “Remember to pray over your food.” “Always have on clean underwear in case of an emergency.” I never understood that one, but I always made sure I did. This is how after meditating on God’s word, we would incorporate the scriptures into our everyday lives.

Now that we have the scripture in our hearts, what effect will it have on us today? God said that if Joshua kept the book of the law always his lips, he will be prosperous and successful! Well, we are also the descendants of that nation, so that promise is also extended to us. Just as the law of the land, we are subjected to follow rules to keep us out of trouble. If we earn an income, we are required to pay taxes. So, what do we do? We pay the taxes. As we drive down any street or highway there are speed limit signs posted, and if we go above the speed limit, we are therefore in danger of being pulled over by a law official and given a ticket. The consequences of not paying the taxes and receiving a speeding ticket would be additional fines and fees, and in some extreme cases, we could face jail time. Knowing these laws exist allow us to do the right thing to avoid the additional burdens of now owing money we may or may not have that could be used to pay a bill or purchase that new iPhone that was just released. Doesn’t it just make our lives easier to just follow the law?

PRAYER: Lord, thank you for being a promise-keeper. I thank you for providing me with directions on how to be prosperous and successful in life. Not just in finances, but also in mental and physical health. I know that if I stumble you will always be there to pick me up. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

GREATER DISCIPLINE

Matthew 5:37 (ESV) – Let what you say be simply YES or NO; anything more than this comes from evil.

Words have power. I remember as a child I would do something that I knew I didn't have any business doing. My parents would come to me to confront me by asking me if I did the alleged act. I would look at them (tears filling my eyes) and I would come up with a story to try to explain exactly what happened. They were looking for me to answer them with a 'yes' or a 'no' but instead I gave them a big story. The punishment that I received was worse because I didn't just say yes or no, but I wanted to create a storyline for them.

In the scripture Matthew tells us that all we need to say is either yes or no. Anything more than this is unnecessary. In other words, let your yes be your yes and your no be your no. There is not an in between. Once we begin to tell stories and create narratives

about whatever the topic is, we dig deeper holes for ourselves unnecessarily. Be encouraged that we have a savior who has set a guideline for us. Keep your word, not just to others, but to our Lord and Savior.

PRAYER: Father God, most merciful Father, we lift your name today. We repent for the times when we have broken our promises to you and not kept our word. We thank you that even though we may say yes or no—we know for sure that you have the final say. We thank you God that you still say yes to us even when we may have said no to your will and your way. Today going forward, we recommit our lives to you. We solidify our connection with you by renewing our covenant and by giving you our yes. Amen.

GREATER SERVICE

Matthew 6:24 - No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Beginning from childhood, most of us (if we are honest) can say that we set goals to be rich, have the best cars, the latest and greatest fashions, and the most extravagant homes. This is how we feel that we have arrived and have achieved something in our lives. We begin to allow those materialistic things to control us and what we do. We begin to base our decisions and our relationships around it but what we fail to take into consideration is that although having all those things is a nice luxury, we also can have all those things and still feel unhappy and be unfulfilled.

In this passage of scripture, Matthew is speaking and gives us words of wisdom. To sum it up, he tells us we cannot serve God and serve the things of this world. When we do, we begin to lean more into one

side than the other. When we choose our worldly possessions over our relationship with God it becomes a cycle, we continue to do more to get and maintain those worldly possession to the point where we forget and no longer have time for building and maintaining our relationship with God (which makes it easier to fall back into sin). As the Bible states in Matthew 19:24- *it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God.* No matter how much wealth we acquire let us never forget to seek God first in everything that we do and know that God is our Master.

PRAYER: Father God, on today we come to say thank you for every resource that you have provided. We confess Lord that sometimes we can be careless with our focus on obtaining wealth and allowing it to control us once we do obtain it. Forgive us for making the resource our source. Teach us how to seek you first and serve you in everything that we do, In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER INVESTMENTS

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

If your house was on fire and you had 10 minutes to grab things out of the house, what would you grab first? What matters to you? What do you treasure? Why? Thanks to modern technology and U.S. banking systems, most of us reading this wouldn't have to run to the mattress to grab our cash, but I wonder—if banks didn't exist, how differently would you protect your house? I wonder if you would run to get the money out from underneath the mattress or the safe, or would you grab the wedding album on your coffee table? Would you run toward the piggy bank, or would you grab your loved one if he or she was in the burning house? Most of us can speculate now about what we would or wouldn't do, but we really wouldn't know until it happened. Often, what we treasure isn't revealed until life brings us a fire.

In the Kingdom of God, money is a resource, not our source. Money is a gauge, not a god. And money is a tool, not a treasure. Money should be a tool used wisely, not a treasure to be hoarded. And the same way our earthly relationships help us develop a better relationship with God, money is a tool that prepares us for eternity. As such, Jesus teaches that we are to use the tool wisely because anything that is used outside of its intended purpose can lead to its abuse. As disciples, we can value the tool of money without worshipping it as a treasure. Money helps us worship and serve God. It helps us make connections with people and aid the least of these. We should use it as a tool to honor God, care for our family, and serve those in need. When we do, we position ourselves for an even greater investment in heaven.

How much do you love money? Do you control it, or does it control you? Are you chasing after it, or does it somehow chase after you? Do you work to earn as much as possible, or are you working because you enjoy what you do? Jesus says in Matthew 6:21, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” This doesn’t mean we should not value money. In fact, I believe God wants us to have as much money as our character can handle—as long as money is not loved more than him. At the same time, God cautions us not to honor anything more than we honor him. He warns us not to be more devoted to getting it more

than we are committed to getting to him. This is seen all throughout Scripture, but most vividly in Malachi, when God says to Israel, “A son honors His father, and a slave His master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the LORD Almighty” (Malachi 1:6). At the end of the day, it’s about honor. Your heart will respect what it honors. You won’t mistreat what you honor. And if status, acclaim, fame, and popularity is all you want out of life, you may fall by the very people who voted for you. But when you are established by the King’s way, you will be free to make money without money making you.

PRAYER: Giver of Life, thank you for the opportunity to share in the gift of giving. Help me to pay attention to opportunities to give to those in need. If I do not have funds, stir my faith. Help me to think outside of the box. Help me to remember that You loved the world so much that you gave. Help me to remember that godly love gives. I declare that I will give more than I take during this season of my life. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

GREATER PRIORITIES

Matthew 6:33 – But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

What are your priorities? Some of us would say food, shelter, clothes, and income. But Christ would see it differently. He had no place to lay his head. He relied on the Father to lead him to places where He would be replenished on a daily basis. His priorities were different than many of ours. Mark 1:35 reveals that prayer was such a priority to Christ that He removed himself from the noise of life in order to do it with intention. I'm sure many of us pray while driving or pray while getting the kids ready for school, but how often do you retreat intentionally in order to focus on God and God alone? Is prayer a priority to you? Whatever we make a priority in our lives, we make time for in our lives.

Jesus withdrew Himself frequently to be refreshed in the presence of God. In like manner, the discipline of prayer helps you to be refreshed and to refresh things

around you. Let me give you an example. If you use the Internet to read the news, you know how important it is to refresh the page because the page you visited three hours ago will have new information made available throughout the day. But if you never click on that small circular icon, otherwise known as the refresh button, you won't see any new and urgent information. In the same way, God wants to refresh you through prayer, so that when you enter into his presence, you will receive heavenly updates to help you with earthly problems.

The beauty of prayer is the refreshing it brings. Prayer gives us a current update on the outlook of life's cares. If we do not enter into God's presence with intentional focus and concentration, we may be living with expired data. In prayer, God whispers the hidden jewels of revelation into your ear. That's where business ideas come from. That's where you get the hunch to drive to one store instead of the other. That's when you are transformed in such a way that others know you've been with God just by your countenance and interaction with them.

PRAYER: Father, you said in your Word to seek first the kingdom of God and your righteousness and all things will be added. But I confess that sometimes, I get the order of this scripture wrong. I seek the things first, and then I go to you. Help

me to reroute my priorities. Help me to trust that you are truly the provider of every need. Help me to make time to refresh myself in your Presence. You are the constant. Everything else is a variable. Forgive me for having my priorities out of order. I confess that I am coming into alignment today, and I am ready to hear from you clearly. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER LIFE

John 10:10 – The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

My brothers and sisters, I present to you what I believe to be an open and shut case. The thief comes ‘only’ to steal and kill and destroy. Please don’t over think it, only means only. It denotes that the thief, (Satan), has no other purpose than what has been written. While our heavenly Father, on the other hand, came that we may have life and have it abundantly. Don’t get me wrong, I know life will sometimes throw us a curve ball. However, this is plain to see. First, Satan on one hand is offering us death while Jesus on the other hand offers us life, and abundant life at that. Next, Satan offers to steal, while Jesus offers to give. Lastly, Satan offers a life of destruction, while Jesus offers to rescue, repair, and restore us back to the Father. I rest my case. The choice seems pretty clear.

An abundant life is a life filled with the Greatness of God. And God wants to bestow that greatness on us. Pastor Daniels preached about it in his sermon titled “It’s About to Get Greater”. In Genesis 12:2 it reads, “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.” God clearly wants us to thrive and live a greater life. One that is filled with passion, principles, power, and purpose. No matter what stage your life is in, if you believe the word of God then you know that greater is in store for you because, 1 John 4:4 says, “He who is in you is greater than He who is in the world.” And God has already overcome the world. So, I hold to Job 8:7 (ESV) as it reads, “And though your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great.” In other words, ‘It Gets Greater Later.’

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you, thank you, and thank you for protecting me from the thief that comes in the night, day, or anytime in between. Please give me the discernment to recognize the plots and schemes and give me the wisdom to stay away from the pitfalls because I want to experience the Greater that you have in store for me. To Your Glory. In Jesus’ name. Amen!!!

GREATER RESPONSES

James 4:13-15 (ESV) - Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”

It is such a blessing to know that God is ultimately in control of our lives. The God who controls the universe is also in charge of every season and circumstance of our lives. Just as natural seasons change from Spring, Summer, Winter, and Fall, our lives will often cycle through divinely orchestrated seasons called Holy interruptions. The Bible states, “what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” Beloved, each day, we will be presented with an entirely new set of circumstances and choices. We may have days that feel like we have

lost control. We all have days when everything appears to be unraveling and whirling round about us like a tornado. We must refocus, trust God, and reframe the picture with our spiritual eyes.

Remember, we serve a God who is sovereign. Be still and know that he is God (Psalm 46:10). At that very moment, we must close our eyes and whisper the name of Jesus. Our words have the ability to command peace. Ask the Holy Spirit for divine direction and insight. He is our teacher and guide. Also, the Word of God is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Psalm 119:105). Everything is not always as it appears. Remember, we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). God's ways are not our ways, and HIS thoughts are so much higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 58:8-9). Our Abba, Father, is the only perfect and unchanging thing in our lives (Hebrews 13:8). God's love is unfailing and unconditional (Psalm 36). The Bible assures us that he will never leave us or forsake us (Matthew 28:20). As we look back over our lives, we can see how God's love has kept us and guided us. God has endless provisions in place for us, even before we were formed in our mother's womb (Deuteronomy 28; Jeremiah 1:5, and Matthew 6:28-34). Our Abba, Father, has already gone into our future and declared us victorious (Deuteronomy 1:8; Chronicles 20:15)!

PRAYER: Abba, Father, help me lay my plans before you as I start my day. I desire to move from the constant mode of planning and perfection into your perfect peace. Holy Spirit, please comfort me and teach me to be ok during life seasons when things do not look ok. God, I will look to you for wisdom concerning my family, finances, relationships, health, ministry, and every area of my life (my life pie). Thank you for the doors you have opened and the ones you have closed. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

GREATER RELAXATION

Matthew 6:34 (ESV) - Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Did you know that God desires that we get stronger? Here is a biblical truth emphasized by Pastor Daniels, “When we get stronger and better, everything gets stronger and better. Therefore, an investment in your spiritual development is one of the most important uses of your time that you can make.” You may be asking yourself, what does spiritual development have to do with greater relaxation? I am glad you asked. Not every problem can be fixed by investing in spiritual development, but your spiritual life is catalytic! It is the root or primary area that, when properly addressed, leads to a secondary area improving. When you become better spiritually you become better at parenting, your patience improves, you self-correct better, you become less prideful, more selfless, your discernment gets better, and your

spiritual sensibilities increase. There are some spiritual blessings and promises (Joy and Peace) that cannot be experienced without spiritual growth (Galatians 4:1; Romans 8:5-6). The enemy will fight you in this area because he knows if you do not grow, you cannot go to the next level. Spiritual growth has to be a priority. The Bible gives the way in which we can grow... “exercise yourself into godliness.” Here are three spiritual disciplines we can exercise which will move us from being governed by a carnal mindset to being governed by a spiritual mindset.

Prayer - Prayer cultivates increased intimacy with God, it expresses our dependency on God, and is an invitation for divine involvement (Matthew 6:6, Luke 11:8, and Hebrews 10:24-25).

Worship - Expressing worth sincerely and scripturally. God responds to the worshipper with his presence. During worship God heals, comforts, refreshes, and liberates, (John 4:23-24; Psalm 47:1).

Study of Scripture - ***Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth***. The Bible is the operations manual for the human species. It reveals who we are, where we come from, where we are going, and God’s plans and promises to his people. Just like natural food is important for the body, spiritual food is important for the spiritual body.

PRAYER: Father, your word promises no weapon formed against us shall prosper, you have not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and a sound mind. You instruct us to seek you while you can be found and call upon you while you are near. We declare it shall come to pass, that before we call, you will answer; and while we are yet speaking, you will hear. We hear you, Father, calling us into a greater relaxation through the spiritual disciplines of prayer, worship, and the study of scripture. We trust you and will obey by faith in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen!

GREATER LEADERSHIP

Exodus 18:13-18 - The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?" Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and instructions." Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone".

The quality of your life is going to be based on the condition of your heart and soul. Likewise, the quality of your ministry is also going to be based on the condition of your heart and soul. Moses no doubt was God's chosen leader. He sat in God's presence

and received instructions for how to lead Israel out of Egypt and into the land God had promised. The conversation between Moses and his father-in-law is not just about being an emotionally healthy person. It is about being an emotionally healthy leader. As a Christian, you too will experience spaces and maybe seasons where there is an emotional and/or spiritual deficit. But you should not operate in a continuous state of emotional and spiritual deficit.

Peter Scazzero says, “An *unhealthy* leader is someone who operates in a continuous state of emotional and spiritual deficit. The operative word is “continuous”, that is constantly lacking maturity and a “being with God” sufficient to sustain your “doing for God”. Deficits are manifested primarily by a pervasive lack of awareness. “To know is not to be wise, wisdom, is the right use of knowledge” (Charles Spurgeon). The Benevolent chose Moses’ father-in-law (a priest) to provide wise earthly council. “Just because no one else can heal or do your inner work for you does not mean you can, should, or need to do it alone” (Lisa Olivera). For us, Jesus is our rubric to discuss emotional health within the context and framework of great Christian leadership. Jesus is the ultimate example of a great leader for many reasons, one of which is he understood that at the core his assignment was preeminently his example. What he did certainly mattered, but who he was while doing it mattered more (John 5:19-20).

PRAYER: Father, I pray that you keep us in a place where we understand that in fulfilling our purpose we become an answer to a problem, and that our purpose does not only require our best work, but it also requires us to be our best self. “For the son of man did not come to be served but to serve.” It was his full intention that your kingdom come, and your will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Jesus, for your great example, and all that you have accomplished for us, we will forever praise your name. Amen!

GREATER WORSHIP

John 4:13-14 - Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

In John 4, we encounter a woman in Samaria who thinks she knows worship better than the God who created it. Jesus meets her at Jacob’s well, and they embark on a conversation about the true nature of worship. As this woman speaks with Jesus, she tells him where the Jews worship and where people like her worship. But Jesus explains that worship is not a place; it’s a posture. He reorients her understanding about worship because he knows the location of your body is not more important than the posture of your heart. Jesus knows what many of us are still learning—namely, that it doesn’t matter where you are; if your heart is not postured toward God, then you have missed the essence of worship.

This week, focus on matters of the heart. Is there unforgiveness in your heart? Is there bitterness in your heart? Whatever is in your heart needs to be flushed out in worship. How do we do that? We posture ourselves in prayer, and we commit to remaining in his presence until the water of his Word cleanses us from every distracting toxin. Increase your worship time this week. Listen to a few worship songs and close your eyes and let God do surgery on your heart. If you do, you'll see life differently almost instantly.

Worship is not an option. For the Christian, it is an imperative, especially if we are aiming to be like Christ. It's the only thing Christ says the Father is seeking in John 4. When we worship the Lord, we engage him with intention and reverence. That means we remove every distraction so he is the foremost thought and idea in our minds. We worship with reverence because we recognize that we are not on God's level. He is smarter than us, and he is sovereign. He is above all powers. He is above all creatures. We are his creation. He is the Creator. A reverential posture reminds us who we are in light of his awesome wonder.

When we worship the Lord, we concentrate our lives on the Supreme Being. In an age ripe with idolatry and a compulsive need to place people on the altar of our hearts, where only Christ belongs, worship must be a daily part of our lives. In prayer, you can be you. In worship, you can forget about you.

PRAYER: Father, let the waters of worship flood my soul. Let the sound of your song heal my heart. I need more of you. As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs for you. You are the true and living God. You are shelter in the midst of a storm. You are safety and security. Overwhelm me with your presence, for your presence is water. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER CREATIVITY

Genesis 1:1 - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 8:20-21 - And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

It matters what you do first. It matters who you speak to when you wake up. First purchases, first acknowledgements, and first tasks tell a lot about a person. It tells us if they are God-fearing, people pleasing, self-absorbed, or money hungry. If every morning, you woke up and checked your bank account before you said your prayers, we know the god you

worship—money. If the first thing you do when you open your eyes is check your Facebook page, it could be an indication that your public life is more important than your private time with God. But if you do what Noah did after the flood, we know for sure that you are a creative and a worshiper.

Check out what Genesis 8:20 reveals about Noah's heart. The Bible says that after the rain descended and the flood finally ceased, the first thing Noah did when he stepped onto dry ground was build an altar. He didn't throw a party. He didn't wash his clothes. I'm pretty sure after forty days in an arc with animals, you would've wanted to take a walk and inhale fresh air. But Noah does none of that. The first thing he does is build an altar.

The first question I want you to think about today is “What will you build after God blesses you?” After God gives you the job, what will you build first? After you receive the thing you've been praying for, what will you build? Will you build a wall full of degrees that boast your intellect? Will you build a five-bedroom home for others to admire? What you build first matters in the end.

Not only did Noah build an altar, but he also gives the Lord an offering. The offering is so precious that a beautiful fragrance ascends to the Lord, and moments later, God says, “I'll never do that again.” What a marvelous offering that must have been—the kind

that sends such a potent aroma into the nostrils of God that it causes him to place a period where there once sat a comma.

I want to submit to you that worship is the earthly fragrance God longs to smell in the heavens. When done with clean hands and a pure heart, it can cause God to say, “I’ll never do that again.” Your worship can cause God to place a period where there once sat a comma. This is why your new senses must match the new season in your life. The smell of beautiful worship is intoxicating to God. And your utmost goal, in all of your learning, working, and churching, is to be the fragrance that God wants to smell. How do you do that? By dipping yourself in the cleansing waters of the Word. By soaking in the presence of God through prayer, and by flushing out all contaminants of fleshly desires and unrepentant sin. In this season, ask God for greater creativity, humility, and obedience.

PRAYER: Lord, just as Noah creatively obeyed and built an arc before it rained, help me to know the state and season of the times. Use me to co-create with you, so that ultimately your kingdom will come and your will can be done—on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

GREATER TRUST

Judges 7:4-8 - But the Lord said to Gideon, “There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will thin them out for you there. If I say, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go; but if I say, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.” So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him, “Separate those who lap the water with their tongues as a dog laps from those who kneel down to drink.” Three hundred of them drank from cupped hands, lapping like dogs. All the rest got down on their knees to drink. The Lord said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home.” So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites home but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.

“Do you trust me?”

“What?”

“Do you trust me? Then take my hand.”

This is the exchange between Aladdin and Princess Jasmine in the classic movie, *Aladdin* right as they are found by their enemies. If you are familiar with the story, you know that Aladdin had gotten Jasmine out of a pickle a few scenes before. Now, in the face of danger, Jasmine is given a choice – “Do I follow this man I just met, or risk being taken captive?” Both Aladdin and Princess Jasmine, in different situations, have been presented with the choice of falling into the enemies’ hands or making a swift exit. This time, for Princess Jasmine that exit requires her to trust Aladdin’s exit plan.

Trust is not something that comes easy, but it helps if you know the track record of the person you have to put your trust in. Although the aforementioned scenario is from a fictional story, it paints a beautiful picture of our life with God. Greater trust in God comes from looking at his track record. In the scripture above, Gideon was faced with danger in the midst of his enemies. He too had a choice to follow his own instinct to run and hide or to follow the instructions of God, who had a pretty amazing track record. Gideon, like many, tried God at every point of his journey. He tested the very Word of God over and over and God proved himself over and over. When Gideon thought he needed to be big and bold with a massive army, God showed him that when you trust God, he can do big things with just 300. In seasons when it’s hard to

move forward and the odds are stacked against you, trust the track record of God. He will do more than you can even imagine. Because his ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts, we can be greater when we trust in the one who is greater.

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, we humbly come to you. We have many decisions to make in the presence of our enemies. But as you said in Psalm 23, you will prepare a table before us in the presence of our enemies. So, Lord we ask that you give us the strength and courage to trust you in our decision-making processes. We ask that you embolden us to trust your track record of how you have showed up for us and so many others in times past. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

GREATER PREPARATION

*Exodus 15:2 - The Lord is my strength and song,
and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and
I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God,
and I will exalt him.*

In the verse of this song sung by Moses and the children of Israel, they celebrate and acknowledge the greatness of God and what he has meant to them. They have come to realize the strength of God, and how that strength played in their salvation. God has just brought them through the Red Sea, out of the clutches of Pharaoh, providing them with an extraordinarily great victory. Their eyes are seeing who God really is, and in this realization they long to express a form of gratitude. They sing to acknowledge what God has done and they let this prepare their hearts to see God do it again. As they sing, they are being shaped. They are being renovated to become the perfect house for God to dwell in. As we worship, it expands our capacity for God's presence and shapes and shifts us so that we

are his proper habitation. A heart in awe of God is the home God desires to dwell in.

This song makes me think of another popular worship song written by Chris Tomlin. The first verse says, “Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord, we will wait upon the Lord. We will wait upon the Lord. Our God, you reign forever. Our hope, our strong deliverer. You are the everlasting God. The everlasting God. You do not faint. You won’t grow weary.”

This song is an example of the best way to get prepared...by waiting upon the Lord and remembering that God *is* the strong deliverer, and that God *is not* going to faint or grow weary. When we sing of the Lord’s greatness and recount God’s mighty acts, it prepares us to humble ourselves and move ourselves out of the way so that God can do what he does best. We are saying that in the midst of what I am going through, no matter what the circumstances, I will prepare a place in me for the Lord to work. In other words, I will prepare a sanctuary for God. Preparing means we aspire to reach a level of God-consciousness where we are in constant and consistent relationship with God. Like Israel, if we want Greater, we must come to a place in our lives where we prepare for God’s dwelling to be amongst us. Such preparation should allot him room in our hearts; not just any room, but at the throne (or center) of our hearts.

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, we need your grace and your mercy every day and in every way. You have given your children great things to do for the kingdom. I pray that as we move forward, we prepare our hearts, minds, and souls in a way that is pleasing to you. I pray that as we prepare, we also praise you in advance for what you are doing in our lives. In the matchless name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

GREATER SERVITUDE

Matthew 20:28 - Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Jesus is the perfect example of unconditional service. He gave his life for us, in spite of our sin and what we would or would not do. He gave himself and served, even when it looked like there was nothing to give. With five loaves and two fish he fed 5,000 people (Matthew 14:13-21). This was a perfect image of serving even though it was not convenient or easy. How many times do we serve only when it's convenient or easy? Greater servitude may require us to get a little uncomfortable. We may struggle with anxiety or with believing that we are enough, and we may use this to keep us from serving. We may think we don't have enough time, money, or energy to serve. But Jesus continuously shows us in scripture that when we position our hearts and minds to serve in excellence

and greatness, he fills in the gaps and provides us with what we need.

Greater servitude calls us to simply be willing to serve when needed and even when we are not immediately recognized as being needed. Serving at all times and in all circumstances, even when you're not asked or when people don't fully see the value, is what Greater requires. Serving only when asked or needed is average. Average is not our aim; Jesus' life is our example. Laying down one's life is not average, it's Greater. Feeding 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish is Greater, not average. This is our season to no longer sit back and wait to be served, but to serve like Jesus. We have been given all we need to serve with greatness, so how will you serve from this day forward?

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you for giving Your life for me. Thank you Jesus for being the perfect example of servitude. Help me not to be afraid of what I lack or what people may say. Help me not to compare myself to anyone. May I be more like you. Wherever you are calling me to Greater servitude, show me Father. Open my eyes and make it plain. My heart is open and ready. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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GREATER COLLABORATION

Nehemiah 4:6 – So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.

Nehemiah 6:15 – So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days.

Here at Change Church, we are often reminded, “We don’t go as far as our dream, we go as far as our team.” From the beginning of time (Genesis 2:18) we see how God did not want man to be alone. We were called to be in community and collaborate with one another. There are many ways we can work with one another. One of the ways that stands out to me is in our homes. If you have children or have lived in a house with other people, surely you have experienced how quickly things become a mess if the

family doesn't work together. Some households need tons of chore charts and family meetings just to get everyone on the same page. It only takes one person not doing their part on the cleaning schedule for things to begin falling apart. But when the house acts as a team working together, each person doing their part, it is so much easier for the house to stay clean, efficient, and chaos-free.

While this is a simple example of the importance of collaboration, this same simple principle works in much bigger areas. We see an example of Greater collaboration when Nehemiah assigns the people of Jerusalem to rebuild the wall. They worked quickly and with their whole heart, and as a result they built a stronger wall that fortified their city. What would happen today if you decided to collaborate in your home, workplace, or church? What could you rebuild and make greater than before? Unfortunately, many times we live in a "should of" state of mind and it's often a result of us trying to do things in our own strength. When we acknowledge that together we will do Greater things and execute on a plan, our lives will change. Investing our whole heart in working together with those God has put in our lives will allow us to walk in our purpose. Who are the people or places God is calling you to build and grow with? Make that call today, schedule that meeting, recommit to the people you are called to work with. Greatness requires it.

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, show me the areas where you are calling me to Greater collaboration. Sometimes I forget I can't do it all in my own strength. Forgive me, Father. Help me to remember, I don't have to do it alone. There are people and places I am called to help and who are called to help me. Thank you for this next level, for choosing me. Help me to be ready. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER WORKS

1 Thessalonians 4:11 – And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.

Busybodies! We have all encountered people like this in our lifetime. Whether they are the meddling co-worker, the peeping neighbor, the gossiping classmate, or the nosy relative, busybodies are professional meddlers. They specialize in the business of minding other people's business. The internet and social media have normalized the business of minding other people's business. Social media platforms have complicated algorithms that actually find and suggest people whose business you should mind. We are a society of busybodies.

In our scripture, Paul is writing to the church in Thessalonica urging them to aspire to mind their own business. He is urging Thessalonian believers to aspire not only to be quiet and to stay out of the affairs of others, but also to attend to their own

business or vocation. But the Thessalonians were actually exemplary Christians. They in fact were the example of a great church. They were busybodies for the Kingdom, showing brotherly love by meeting the many needs of churches in their area. Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians is a reminder that we are all still on a "journey" of becoming, no matter how far we have progressed thus far. He is essentially calling us to a continual life of pursuing Greater works since our work for God flows from our current level of connection and commitment. We have never arrived. We should always be heading for Greater.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank you for empowering me to love. I ask that you help me to love even more like you so that Greater works flow from me and I may be a good witness for Your kingdom. Amen.

GREATER PATIENCE

Psalm 27:14 – Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word, “patience?” Is it trying to get into a popular restaurant on a Friday night? Rush hour traffic? Perhaps waiting on important test results? Too often when we think of being patient, we automatically think of passivity. Patience is practically synonymous with doing nothing besides sitting there fidgeting with our phones or staring at the ceiling or clock. Webster defines patience as “the ability to wait for a long time without becoming annoyed or upset.” It is accepting the fact that a process will take a little longer than you might have thought. However, Greater patience from a biblical perspective is demonstrated by *active* dependence upon and obedience to God. It is taking comfort in God’s Word, meditating with his Word on our minds, and when we lie in bed at night, allowing thoughts of God’s Word to fill our heads

and hearts with peace that surpasses all understanding. Waiting upon God is a spiritual discipline that we should seek to practice in every area of our lives.

We can biblically practice Greater patience by:

1. **ACKNOWLEDGING GOD'S SOVEREIGN CONTROL OF ALL THINGS.** It's natural to want freedom and independence to do whatever we want to do, but the truth is we are all dependent upon God for even our next heartbeat. We must acknowledge and accept that God is sovereign and nothing we are presently experiencing is outside of his eternal decree and direct oversight. The reality is that our complete dependence on him is connected to his sovereignty. He is our divine Rescuer, Savior, and Deliverer. Therefore, while waiting upon God, we should patiently expect God to act on our behalf because of his eternal love for us.
2. **SEEKING SPIRITUAL STRENGTH FROM GOD AND REFRAINING FROM NEEDLESS FEAR AND WORRY.** Our helplessness becomes especially obvious during times of calamity. In God alone we find the strength to tread life's troubled waters. In the Bible, we find there is a relationship between waiting on God and finding strength in God. Fear can be a helpful response to dangerous situations. But it can also be something

that overwhelms us and takes our eyes off God. No matter our situation, scripture shows us that a part of waiting upon God involves avoiding being controlled by fear and worry.

3. **BEING PATIENT AND QUIET.** One thing this current pandemic has caused all of us to do is slow down. Whether we liked it or not, we've been forced to hit pause on at least some of our normal, pre-COVID lives. There was less street traffic, less air traffic, and less noise all around. Times Square in the city that never sleeps was almost a ghost town. Despite the harsh reason for this particular slowdown, it is good for us to stop, sit still for a moment, and be quiet at times. This is a part of God-glorifying waiting. When we are still and silent, we can best listen for God to speak to us through His Word. This is when we learn Greater patience.

PRAYER: Lord, when the rest of the world is panicking, help us seek Greater patience through constant prayer and immersing ourselves in your Word. You God are sovereign over all things, and we depend on You for our very next breath. Let us express our dependence by waiting patiently, avoiding worry, and living obediently while expecting you to act on our behalf. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER OBEDIENCE

1 Samuel 15:22 – But Samuel replied, “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed it better than the fat of rams.”

Genesis 7:5 – And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him.

In these two scriptures we meet two men. One is a man that the people would see as unqualified to lead, a man named Saul who God appoints as king over Israel. He now has the favor of God and of men. God instructs him to attack the Israelite enemy, the Amalekites, and to leave nothing behind living. However, King Saul does not follow God’s orders and keeps some of the livestock and leaves the Amalekite king alive. Once questioned about his actions, King Saul lies and tries to cover up his disobedience. He says that he saved the livestock to sacrifice to God and

also blames the men in his army as the reason for it. In light of these actions, God becomes disappointed that he appointed Saul as king and replaces him. His lack of faith and trust in God's plan causes him to allow fear to make him lose it all.

The second man we meet is Noah. Noah is also given an instruction from God in Genesis. God trusts Noah with the knowledge that he would bring heavy rains to flood and destroy life on the Earth. He trusts Noah with this information and sees that Noah is righteous in his sight. God instructs Noah to build an ark to protect some of the animals of the Earth. Noah follows God's instructions on how to build the ark and his direction on putting the animals in the ark. As a result, God allows Noah and his family to go in as well. When the earth is flooded, destroying everything outside of the ark, Noah, his family, and the animals in the ark are spared.

These two stories are filled with choices. Do you trust God and allow His truth to lead your life, or do you choose disobedience and allow your fear to lead you astray? Choose Greater obedience today.

PRAYER: Father help us to trust in you and not be fearful. Help us to remember that your direction is for our protection. Help us to be obedient to your instructions. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER PRODUCTIVITY

Genesis 1:24-27 - And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Have you ever noticed how the enemy seems to work overtime to decrease your productivity? Do an experiment this week. Set aside a couple of hours this week and block off that time in your schedule and

dedicate it to pursuing something you are passionate about or something that you have been meaning to get done for a long time. Set the time apart in your schedule, label it as “Me time” on your calendar. Treat it like a meeting with the CEO of your company. Refuse to accept any other appointments for that time. Then when that block of time comes, sit down and start writing or designing or cleaning or whatever the thing is that you have been needing to get done. I promise you, if you are the person who never gets phone calls you will get two or three in that space of time. If you never get interrupted at that time of day usually, somebody will knock at your door, or the lights will start flickering from a telephone pole being knocked down around the corner. If you are usually a disciplined and dedicated person, all of a sudden you will think about a random lyric from a song that you just have to remember, or your eyelids will get so heavy that you can barely keep them open. The enemy of your progress will introduce any and everything possible to keep you from being productive and advancing!

Every living thing God made was good and bore within it the ability to produce more goodness, after its own kind. It is part of how we as human beings reflect the image and likeness of God. We are supposed to be constantly multiplying ourselves but also multiplying our efforts and producing greatness. When we prioritize that part of our God-given mission, we

head to the top of the enemy's hit list. This proves how much the devil hates productivity. He hates to see you finish a project or complete an assignment. He knows that each finished assignment brings you closer to your full potential for God, and that terrifies the enemy. Set that appointment with yourself today and fight through the distractions that come. Make the devil mad with Greater productivity in this season.

PRAYER: Father, help me to release distractions and produce for your glory. You commanded us to be fruitful and multiply. Help me to produce within before I try to multiply without. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER HELP

Acts 3:6-7 -Then Peter said,“Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong.

There’s nothing like the holidays. Especially Christmas and Thanksgiving where we get to give to and cook for others. These are perfect opportunities to teach your children and others in your sphere about generosity and model giving. When we allow the young people in our lives to experience others’ needs by letting them volunteer for a toy drive at a homeless shelter or help serve people at a soup kitchen, they learn to empathize with others and to care about something bigger than their own wants. It also becomes a great teaching tool to help them understand how the world works and that so many people have deep needs that no one person can meet. Except God.

The man in Acts 3 had such a need. He was begging for money daily at the gate called Beautiful. He was

lame from birth, so he depended on others to carry him to where he needed to go. Each day he was placed at the entrance of the gate to beg those entering the temple for money. But on one particular day he encountered two of Jesus' disciples, Peter and John. This encounter was like no other because it literally changed his life. Peter, seeing Jesus perform miracles of healing throughout his ministry, did the same for this man. The man was seeking money, but Peter saw the Greater need; he needed to walk. Peter saw he needed a helping hand to stand on his own feet. Peter did not have money but gave of what he had. He had the presence and power of Jesus. God gave him the power of healing for this man. Scripture says money answers all things (Ecclesiastes 10:19), but in this case money could not help him walk. He needed something Greater. He needed a touch from God. I am so thankful that God looks beyond our surface needs and addresses where we are hurting most. We can look to him for help, especially in areas that immobilize us. All we have to do is ask.

PRAYER: Father, I am so thankful that I can come to you with whatever concerns me. I'm so thankful that I can be open and honest with you. Give me the strength to continue to seek your help no matter the circumstance. I need your help to push past those things that are immobilizing

and preventing me from pursuing your best for my life. Look beyond what's on the surface and address my deeper need. I want to do your will. Help me accomplish your purpose for my life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

GREATER CHRIST- CENTEREDNESS

Matthew 4:1-11 - Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.' Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow

down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Have you ever been in an environment where it was evident that someone did not like you? What can make things worse is when you have never spoken a single word to that person, nor given them cause to dislike you. Sometimes you are just on someone’s hit list, justified or not. It is always good to love on them and treat them with kindness, and it is possible that things will turn. However, it is also advisable to be very careful around people like that; they are often biding their time and looking for the opportunity to strike.

In Matthew 4, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted, but the devil came only after Jesus was in a place of apparent vulnerability. He was hungry. It’s important to note here that the enemy often comes to strike us at our place of hunger. Therefore, understanding where our hunger lies is paramount to our ability to overcome temptations. Matthew the writer of this scripture is pointing out that Jesus was hungry and possibly feeling weak. But even though Jesus was hungry, his response to the enemy was not that of a hungry or weak man. Even though Jesus was

hungry he understood the importance of remaining focused on what feeds him spiritually, the Word of God. Jesus used the word to overcome every temptation of the devil. I believe Jesus was able to overcome every temptation because his focus was centered on what the Father said more than how he felt in the moment. Jesus also overcame temptation because he was led by the Holy Spirit. Remaining focused and Christ-centered takes the help of God's Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads, helps, and empowers us to overcome trials. Engaging in spiritual disciplines is an excellent way to increase our sensitivity to God's Spirit, making it easy to hear and obey his promptings. As with Jesus, he will keep us centered in every situation. All we have to do is ask for that Greater!

PRAYER: Father, we thank you for sending your Spirit to be with us. Thank you for the example Jesus gave and help us to stay centered on Christ's example. We are victorious because Jesus already won the battle. Strengthen us as we fight the fight of faith. Give us Greater Christ-centeredness in this season. We praise you for this in advance in Jesus' name. Amen.