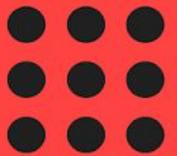


JANUARY 10 - JANUARY 30

# 21 DAYS OF PRAYER & FASTING

Spiritual Transformation

WEEK ONE DEVOTIONALS



## Monday, January 11 - Pastor Jeff

### Grow in Grace

*2 Peter 3:18 (KJV) "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen."*

Have you ever planted a garden? Gardening takes time. Gardening is a process. In fact, the seed you start with is not the plant you end up with. They look nothing alike. Plants grow in small increments. So much so that you barely even notice the changes until several days, if not weeks, go by. Spiritual growth is a lot like natural growth. It takes time. It's a process and how you look, act, feel, and think will change over time. We grow from being self-centered to God-centered. We grow from being a receiver to being a giver. We grow from loving ourselves to loving God and others.

One of the areas that the Bible speaks about this journey of growth is in grace! 2 Peter 3:18 "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen." Grace is simply defined as God giving us the good things we don't deserve. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) We can't measure up to God's standard because of sin! But G.R.A.C.E is God's Riches At Christ's Expense. Grace is not earned; it is a free gift given by God. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

At first, grace for a new believer is being overwhelmed by realizing all that God has done to make us a part of His family and giving us access to all that He has! But the real end of grace is to guide us to grow in spiritual maturity to become more like Christ. We grow in grace, not to obtain more grace from God. God's grace is infinite and was given to us the moment we accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior. But we grow in grace to gain a deeper understanding of all that Jesus has done in us and for us! It is allowing His grace to work out in our lives, transforming us into the image of Christ. It's extending His grace to others so they can know Him more deeply too!

As 2 Peter 3:18 tells us, we "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Grace grows in our lives as we enjoy time with Jesus reading His Word and applying it to our everyday life. The more we know Jesus, the more we can be like Jesus, and the more we can live in His grace and extend it to others! When we shine the character of Christ 2 Peter 3:18 concludes by saying it brings, "Glory (to Jesus) both now and forever." Another way to say glory is honor or praise. The more we display the character of Christ by applying God's Word to our lives, the more we will grow in grace and bring honor and praise to Him.

This is a process. It takes time, and the changes will not occur overnight. But as we stay faithful to keep on walking with the Lord, we will grow in grace and ever increasingly

become more and more like Him!

**Prayer:** *Father God, thank you for your grace given to me freely through your son Jesus Christ. Help me to apply your Word at each stage in my walk with you. I choose to grow in grace and continually be transformed into the image of Christ. I pray that my life will bring glory and honor to you. In Jesus' name, Amen!*

## Tuesday, January 12 - Pastor Ken

### No More Dry Seasons

*Psalm 1:1-3 (NIV) "Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither - whatever they do prospers."*

Have you ever experienced a dry season – a time when everything seemed hard, and no matter how much effort you made, nothing seemed to go your way? It's the time when you lacked vitality, and you felt like you were just going through the motions of life. Dry seasons can feel so unproductive and even passionless. It's like you're just trying to survive and get through, hoping things will get better. Excitement and joy can seem like a distant memory.

The psalmist gives us insight into what causes dry seasons. Dry seasons come from the sources where we gain information, direction, and instruction. Like a tree that relies on the rain to produce, it's external sources that we depend upon to be productive. We feel if others would just... if work would just... if circumstances were... then we'd be good. When we rely on external sources, we can find ourselves disappointed and discouraged because they can let us down. Yet, the psalmist points out a tremendous promise from God. God promises to those who allow His word to be their source; they can experience continual success and vitality no matter what is happening around them. A tree planted by the river has the ability to develop a root system that draws from the river no matter what the weather conditions are. That means that it can experience no more dry seasons.

Let's look at the stipulations associated with this promise and how we can benefit from them personally. First, God's Word must become a delight to us. In other words, spending time in God's Word is not something we feel we have to do but instead something we enjoy doing. Secondly, it's seeing God's Word not as good advice but

actually the final authority in our life – we see God's Word as the law of the Lord in that it provides the loving instruction of our Father guiding us to know what is right and true. Lastly, it requires we devote ourselves to developing the habit of reflecting on scripture. It cannot be a once in a while situation but instead an everyday reality. Meditation is thinking about and pondering what scripture means to gain understanding and see how we can apply the wisdom it provides to our daily lives. When we meditate on God's Word, we are listening to hear the voice of the One who wrote it as He speaks it to our hearts. Our faith grows as it becomes a personal word from our Father and gives us the confidence to trust what it instructs us to do. That is where we find success.

Let the inspiration and the promise made in this Psalm become a personal revelation to you this coming year. Let's develop the habit of meditating on God's Word, as it becomes our source of information, direction, and instruction for life. Let's determine to have no more dry seasons but instead let everything we do prosper.

**Prayer:** *Dear Father, thank you for your Word. May it truly become the light to my path and lamp to my feet as it directs me in the way I should go. May your Spirit speak through your Word and cause it to become alive in me as I take the time to contemplate it and develop the habit of meditation. Thank you for helping me experience no more dry seasons. In Jesus' name, Amen!*

## **Wednesday, January 13 - Pastor Randal**

### Big Promises

*Matthew 10:8 (TPT) "You must continually bring healing to lepers and to those who are sick, and make it your habit to break off the demonic presence from people, and raise the dead back to life. Freely you have received the power of the kingdom, so freely release it to others."*

The tumor was consuming, birthed in her pelvis; it had slowly wrapped itself around her side and clung to the spine. The dusty dirt floors and humid Honduran air seemed to emphasize the urgency of her condition as she lay there on a thin mattress, trapped under the weight of this unwanted nightmare. It had been three long months since she was able to navigate her way to the family outhouse, a mere 30 steps from her bed. Her weathered hands cradled the tumor roughly the size of a small child as our interpreter echoed her desperation and fear.

Maybe if it had been a headache, a sore neck or, even a deaf ear, I would have easily believed for her to be healed. As my eyes and my hand rested upon her, my brain argued that this was bigger than what I could believe for. Then I shook my focus from the problem and redirected it towards the solution, Jesus and our victory in Him. Our team of 10 will never forget what happened over the next hour as we witnessed the tumor disappear. The presence of God overwhelmed us and the sickness in her body. With renewed strength, she gathered the stretched out fabric from the waist of her dress that once accommodated a tumor. Her small, 70-year-old frame rose from the bed, walked across the room while holding my hand, and then back again without any assistance. The next morning she woke up her family with the smell and crackle of the fire that she was preparing breakfast over and quietly hummed hymns through her well-worn smile.

To bear witness to the miraculous, to be present while God is erasing death, transforms us. It reshapes our perceived reality, our expectations and points us to the truth of the Gospel. Yet so many of us who believe never experience healing, deliverance, and the operation of the Holy Spirit. Isn't this, though, what we are told to walk in? Why do we expect so little when God's promises are so big? We reach first for the aspirin or the phone when pain and sickness find their way onto our and others' lives. Maybe it is time to transform our minds to Heavenly truths rather than earthly experience and embrace the fullness of this life that Jesus has won for us. Imagine a body of people who took the Word and promises of the Father as normal and expected to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. Are you hungry to experience more of God? We need to cry out for more from the secret place of prayer and practice hearing and obeying God in the public places.

**Prayer:** *Father, as I read your Word, I see the miraculous; I see a hunger and discipline that I long to see in my own life. How I long to walk in the love that transforms people's lives. Oh, that I would be useful in the victory over sickness and death, over the evil one and his schemes. Transform my thinking to line up with Your promises. Make Heavenly realities a normal expectation in my life. Stir within me a new passion for seeing Heaven come to earth. Holy Spirit, I ask You for more. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## **Thursday, January 14 - Pastor Frank**

### Saul to Paul (Part One: Humility)

*Acts 9:1-6 (NLT) Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any*

*followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains. As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?" "Who are you, lord?" Saul asked. And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."*

Our theme this year for our 21 days of prayer and fasting is "Spiritual Transformation," and in my three devotions, we will be looking at the Apostle Paul, formerly, known as Saul. One of the greatest examples of a life that has been transformed by Jesus is Saul of Tarsus. Saul was a young man trained by the great Rabbi Gamaliel to be a Pharisee. Pharisees were a religious sect in Israel that sought to show their love and devotion to God by strictly living by all the Old Testament Law of Moses' rules and regulations. Keeping the rules was the only way Saul believed you could be made right with God. Saul began to hear about this new group, which ironically was called the "Way." That was the name that people called the first followers of Jesus. To Saul's ears, this was heresy! This group needed to be wiped out, put in prison, even killed and that is exactly what Saul set out to do. So as Saul sets out on what he believed was a holy mission, this great light knocks him off his "high" horse; he hears a voice say, "Why are you persecuting me?" and when Saul asks, "Who are you, Lord?" The voice reveals to him, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting." It was not until Saul was humbled that he realized that the God he thought he was serving; he was actually attacking! That the way to God was not something you do but rather what someone has done for you. That someone is Jesus, God the Son; He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It was the precious blood of Jesus that brought freedom from sin; not trying to keep religious do's and don'ts, but it was Jesus' sacrifice that brought the ability to have relationship with God. Humility is the true first step to spiritual transformation. To be humble is to realize you can't do life on your own but rather know that we need God. It's the prideful person that God resists but to the humble, He gives grace. We all need to be knocked off our "high" horse from time to time. Just like when Saul was, he then was able to hear the voice of the God he longed to serve guiding him. Let us practice humility, remembering our daily need of His presence, and we too will hear the voice of our Savior guiding us as well.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, as I humble myself, I realize I need You more than the air I breathe. I know there was nothing I could do to remove my sin. It is only by the precious blood of Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross and resurrection from the dead that I have been made new and become one of Your children. As I start this New Year, I will be purposeful about humbly looking to You for my daily strength. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Friday, January 15 - Pastor David

### *It Starts At The Heart*

*Ezekiel 36:26 (NIV) "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."*

Have you ever left a marker out too long and it dried up? The marker gets hard, and you can no longer write with it. In fact, you can still try to make the marker go through the motions of writing, but it will produce nothing. The only solution is to get a new marker. That is a really simple way of explaining the verse we just read in Ezekiel.

Our hearts without Christ are stone, lifeless, dried up, and wicked. God, in His love and grace, promises us new hearts and spirits! God promises us spiritual transformation! He wants to be out with the old and in with the new, allowing us the ability to be new, not just in name, but in heart and spirit!

The good news is that God made good on His promise, and in Christ, we have that new heart and a new spirit! In Christ, we are transformed and made alive. If your spiritual life feels like that dull marker, pray today for God to transform your heart and cause you to be alive!

**Prayer:** *Father, give us new hearts today! Make new spirits within us, and cause us to be sensitive to Your prompting, leading, and guiding. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Saturday, January 16 - Pastor Ken

### *Growing Means Knowing*

*Colossians 3:9-10 (NLT) Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.*

When you were a kid, did you ever play dress-up – putting on your parent's clothes and pretending to be all grown up? Young girls want to wear makeup and pretty dresses while young boys want to shave and tie a tie. I remember as a young boy watching my

father shave and wanting to lather up and shave for myself so bad that one day after coming from school with no one else home, I went in the bathroom and shaved off the only hair on my face, which was my eyebrows. That didn't make me a man, nor does pretending make us grown-up. Growing up means growing into the person we seek to become through the decisions and responsibilities that come with it.

All the dressing up and pretending we do as kids represents an innate desire and aspiration to become like our parents. As kids, they seem larger than life and set a model for what adult life is supposed to be like. The problem is, the more we grow, the more we become aware of the imperfections and flaws resident in our parents. Living with them, we come to know them, learning their ways and tendencies. Too often, like it or not, we grow up to become more like our parents than we realize.

Yet, the Bible tells us God created us, and His intention for our life is to become like Him. Originally mankind was made in God's image and likeness, yet sin distorted that image and corrupted that likeness. That's why the mission of Jesus was to remove the barrier sin created and restore the opportunity for us to become like our Heavenly Father. In Christ, we become God's children. We are invited into a new relationship with God as our Father, and provided a new nature to grow into. As we grow in that relationship, we come to know Him and learn His ways and tendencies. To be renewed in the above Scripture means to learn new ways and develop new habits. Growing up spiritually causes us to be changed. We take on a new lifestyle as we become more and more like our Heavenly Father.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, help me to know you more and more. I desire to become like you. I believe I was born again and made new in Christ. I believe I have your DNA in me spiritually. Help me to grow so that my life represents you in all I say and do. In Jesus' name, Amen.*