



21

DAYS OF
PRAYER

JANUARY 10 – 30, 2022

WELCOME TO NEWPOINTE COMMUNITY CHURCH'S 21 DAYS OF PRAYER

My friend John Maxwell says, "I want to make a difference with people who want to make a difference, doing something that makes a difference." I know of nothing that can make a greater difference in the world than praying to our heavenly Father, who is all-powerful, and then following up by acting on what He has called us to do.

Mother Teresa said, "I used to pray that God would feed the hungry, or do this or that, but now I pray that He will guide me to do whatever I'm supposed to do. I used to pray for answers, but now I'm praying for strength. I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us and we change things."

Changing the world happens one life at a time.

Looking at our world, it is pretty easy to see that things could change for the better. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have better schools? Better neighborhoods? More positive workplaces? Would you like to have a more connected family? Communities where people get along and work together for everyone's good? Wouldn't the world be better if people were more respectful, unified, and positive?

Did you know that positive changes are possible?

If change is possible, why aren't we doing more to change our world? The reality is that most of us are waiting for somebody else to do something about the problems we see. We want change, but we hope that *someone somewhere* will do *something* to bring it about.

If we want the world to be a better place and we hope for conditions of need in the world to improve, then we need to change. We need to take action.

I want to invite you to pray and let the God who so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life, know that you are available to be used by Him to bring hope and healing to a world that desperately needs it.

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Dwight Mason
Lead Pastor

PRAYER

PRAYER IS EXPLAINED MULTIPLE TIMES IN THE BIBLE AS THE WAY HUMANITY COMMUNICATES WITH GOD, AND IT CLEARLY SPELLS OUT THAT HE LISTENS WHEN WE PRAY.

In 2 Chronicles 7:14, God is speaking directly about what He does when His people pray: *Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.*

In Mark 9:29, Jesus explains the importance of prayer to His own disciples after they could not perform a miracle by casting out an evil spirit: *So He, [Jesus,] said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."*

Jesus teaches His disciples (and us) how to pray in Matthew 6 in a way that touches on so many areas of life and relationship with God. Ultimately, it is important that we know just how much God wants communication and communion with us, how He listens and cares about our prayers, and how He has allowed our prayers to be powerful by nature. If we stand on these things and make prayer a faithful discipline and practice, imagine all that could change. God can do more than we imagine, and He invites us to participate with our prayers!

Practically, prayer can happen any time, any place. You can pray on your commute, before that meeting, as you fall asleep at night, or prior to eating. The Bible encourages us to pray constantly.

However, we also know that there is something special about setting aside specific time dedicated to prayer. Just like many other disciplines, removing distractions helps us focus better on the task at hand. Adding it to our daily habits reminds us to trust God, to bring our needs to Him, and to set Him as a priority in our busyness. It also encourages us to slow down, listen, and allow God's voice to speak to us. Regular, dedicated times of prayer strengthen our relationship with God, renew our hearts and minds, and bring powerful change to people and places that need it.

FASTING

SO WE FASTED AND PETITIONED OUR GOD ABOUT THIS, AND HE ANSWERED OUR PRAYER. EZRA 8:23

You may choose to fast during 21 Days of Prayer. The purpose of fasting is to redirect our hunger toward God. It is choosing to abstain from food, drink, or something else for the sake of some special spiritual purpose. It is a way to humble oneself before God and make time for intensified prayer and focus.

SOME SPIRITUAL REASONS AND BENEFITS OF FASTING (WITH SCRIPTURE REFERENCES):

- **To truly humble ourselves before God** (Ezra 8:21; James 4:8-10; 2 Chronicles, 7:14)
- **To learn how to depend on God for strength** (Matthew 17:21; Isaiah 40:31)
- **To ask for supernatural intervention from God** (2 Samuel 12:16; Acts 14:23)
- **To help us hear and respond better to the Spirit of God** (Luke 4:1; Ephesians 6:18-19)
- **To obtain supernatural protection and provision** (Ezra 8:21-23)
- **To prepare for a special task or assignment** (Exodus 24:12-18; Luke 4:1, 14)
- **To make more time for prayer in order to get closer to God** (Matthew 6:16; Mark 2:20)

SO I TURNED MY ATTENTION TO THE LORD GOD TO SEEK HIM BY PRAYER AND PETITIONS, WITH FASTING... DANIEL 9:3

Fasting helps us yield to the Holy Spirit collectively and individually. It allows God to renew our personal strength and faith, and it transforms prayer into a more personal and powerful experience. On a practical, physical level, fasting can help you focus, detoxify, and re-prioritize. This is helpful to both your body and your spirit.

Examples of other things you could fast from are sugar, coffee, media, alcohol, one meal a day, or a certain time of your day usually dedicated to something else.

***Always seek the advice of a physician or other qualified healthcare provider with any questions prior to beginning fasting.**

WEEK 1

INTRODUCTION

What does it take to reach family, friends, and others for Jesus and change our world?

It takes compassion.

It takes persistence.

But most of all, it takes prayer.

Paul said, *"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God."* Philippians 1:9-11 NIV

From these verses, we can learn to pray for the people in our lives in four ways:

Pray that they will grow in love. *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.*

Pray that they will make wise choices. *...so that you may be able to discern what is best...*

Pray that they will live with integrity. *...and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ...*

Pray that they will become like Jesus. *...filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*

Pray these for yourself and anyone else in your life and watch how God turns around the relationship that seemed hopeless or needed to be revived.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dwight Mason". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dwight Mason
Lead Pastor



Change Your World – Day 1

Stephen

Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom... They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit... Acts 6:3, 5 NIV

Stephen was one of the first heroes of the early church. His reputation and work were so significant that he became the first martyr in Christendom. Yet what gets my attention about Stephen is not only the amazing signs he performed (Acts 6:8) but how he began his public ministry. The very first ministry he was chosen for was not to preach, baptize, or heal—but to wait tables.

Stephen's first ministry was as a waiter! He served the early Christian Gentile widows to make sure their basic needs were taken care of. As Stephen proved himself faithful caring for widows, his influence and ministry rapidly expanded as God used him to change the world. It was in his death that the gospel of Jesus began to spread from Jerusalem to the four corners of the earth. He proved faithful in serving God in both the menial and the magnificent.

How does God want to use you? Many of us would like to be used in spectacular ways, but for most of us God is more concerned that we're available to serve the "widow." Who are the "widows" in your life?

- What action step can you take to change your world like Stephen?
- What are some things that might be stopping you from taking this step?

Daily Prayer: Father, may I serve those around me in a way that honors You and makes You known.

Supportive Reading: Acts 6-7

Notes: _____

Change Your World – Day 2

Jael

But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died. Judges 4:20-21 NIV

The short story of Jael in the Old Testament is an example of how God uses a very courageous woman who was ready to act when the time came. The beginning of Judges 4 sets the scene: The Israelites are under the control of King Jabin of Canaan. The commander of Jabin's armies was a man named Sisera. At the same time, in Israel a lady named Deborah is the prophetess and judge. Deborah calls on a man named Barak to lead the Israelite army to victory and gives him specific orders to kill their leader, Sisera. Barak initially is reluctant to act, but with urging from Deborah he agrees to move forward. But because Barak hesitates to act, Deborah informs him in verse 9, "You will receive no honor on the road you are about to take because the Lord will sell Sisera into a woman's hands."

As God leads the Israelite army to victory over their enemy, Sisera flees on foot. Ultimately, he enters the tent of a woman named Jael. She makes Sisera feel comfortable, covering him with a blanket, telling him not to be afraid, and giving him a glass of milk as he falls asleep in her care. The story then takes a dark turn. As Sisera is sleeping, Jael takes a stake from the tent and hammers the stake into Jael's temple, killing him immediately. When Barak arrives looking for Sisera, Jael reveals what she has done, and Barak realizes Sisera will no longer be a concern. But unfortunately, Barak missed out on being a part of Sisera's demise. Because he hesitated when Deborah called on him, Barak missed an incredible opportunity to be used by God. Instead, God chose to use Jael, a lady who was more than ready when the time came.

Years ago, I went on my first and only wild boar hunt in Florida. I went with some friends from church who were all hunters. A farmer allowed us to hunt his private land, and even though I was a novice, I was jacked! The seasoned hunters decided they would put together a game plan. Their goal was for me to get the chance to shoot the first wild hog we saw. Two of the guys were going to head up a small hill through the woods, hoping to drive out a group of boars. I took the first position, and my friend Doug was set up in a second position 100 yards downhill. I waited in my blind for several minutes, growing impatient and becoming skeptical that my friends would really drive out the hogs this easily. After an hour or so, I got distracted and moved out of my position, wandering the woods on my own. Suddenly, to my amazement I looked up to see a large team of wild boars running downhill just past where I had been set up. I tried quickly to fire off a shot with my Mossberg, but it was too late and they were too far away. I had missed my chance! Doug heard my shot, stayed in position, and shot a 500-pound boar. He was ready. I was not, and I had missed the opportunity of a lifetime.

- When He speaks, are you quick to obey and trust or do you hesitate like Barak, allowing God to use someone else?
- What are some potential opportunities in your life where you need to act now and use the resources God has given you?

Daily Prayer: Lord, give me an urgency to act when You present an opportunity for obedience.

Supportive Reading: Judges 4

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Change Your World – Day 3 **Zacchaeus**

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. Luke 19:10 NIV

The final story in the long account of Jesus on His journey to Jerusalem is meant to be a climax in His ministry. We must note that this is Jesus' last personal encounter before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and the events leading to His death. Significantly, the final line in the Zacchaeus story contains the summary line of the purpose of Jesus' ministry: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (v. 10). Saving the lost is what Jesus is all about.

The story of Zacchaeus illustrates the reception of the good news of the gospel by the outcasts, and its conclusion functions as a summary of Jesus' ministry in the travel narrative. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. The scene with Zacchaeus provides Luke's gospel with its ultimate statement about Jesus. Jesus' purpose was to bring salvation to lost people. Jesus dedicated the three years of His earthly ministry to finding people who knew they were lost and showing them God's way of salvation—the way of repentance and faith.

No one would ever have guessed on that spring day that Zacchaeus would want to see Jesus. But as Luke says, "He wanted to see who Jesus was." It is very likely that Zacchaeus had found his wealth and lifestyle unsatisfying. A sense of unease made every pleasure unfulfilling. Nothing lasted.

In the fall of 2013, I was just finishing up a year of working as a travel guide around North America. It had been a successful summer of work and I was having a great time, but that year had brought a nagging question to mind that I could not ignore. Questions we all ask at some point: "What is the point of all this" and "What do I truly believe about life?" These questions brought me back to my hometown and ultimately back to the church my family attended when I was a child. Having left my small town for "greener pastures" nobody (including me) would have guessed that I was wanting to see Jesus that day. But like Zacchaeus, I had found a discontent with life as I knew it. Like Zacchaeus, I was looking for something more when Jesus intersected with my life, and at that moment I had a choice to make that changed the direction of my life. Salvation is free, but becoming a disciple is costly.

I am so thankful that Jesus did not come to fulfill legalistic religious demands or to cater to religious experts. Instead, He delivered the greatest news ever... that Jesus Christ is the King whom God sent to seek and save the lost.

- What action step can you take to change your world like Zacchaeus?
- What are some things that might stop you from taking this step?

Daily Prayer: God, thank You for coming to save that which was lost.

Supportive Reading: Luke 19:1-10

Notes: _____

Change Your World – Day 4

Bleeding Woman

Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace." Luke 8:47-48 NIV

The lady referred to in this passage is only known by her issue that she has had for twelve years. Everyone in the packed crowd that day had an issue, a problem, or a struggle they were dealing with like all of us. So what made Jesus stop in His tracks and notice the lady? Touching Jesus is what separated her from the rest of the crowd. It was her faith.

How many people in the crowd left that day still hanging on to their issues, problems, and struggles? It is incredible to see what power there is when we place our full trust in Christ and take full advantage of the opportunity in front of us.

My wife Sarah and I love to go to Disney World. There is something about warm weather, incredible rides, other people's kids complaining, and quality time to disconnect from our normal routines that we love. That is until the fireworks end at Magic Kingdom. When roughly 95% of the park attendance is trying to walk down main street at the same time; a crowd that is wild, loud, and makes it hard to keep track of where everyone is.

This is what I picture in my mind when I think about the crowd referred to in Luke 8. If Jesus came to town, would I get caught up in the chaos of the crowd, or would I stand firm in my faith like the lady with the bleeding issue, doing all I can to get close to Him no matter the barriers in front of me. The good news is that today I get to choose how I will live out my faith with the opportunities in front of me. When I look back on my life, how many times will I be able to say, I took a risk and fully trusted God?

If we could go back and ask the bleeding lady if the risk was worth it, I bet she would say she would do it again 100 percent of the time. Let's remember what Jesus said in verse 48: "Beloved daughter/son, your faith in me has released your healing. You may go with my peace." And just like the bleeding woman, your world will never be the same.

- What action step can you take to change your worldview like the bleeding woman?
- What are some things that might be stopping you from taking this step?

Daily Prayer: God help me see where I lack trust, and give me opportunities to grow in my faith today.

Supportive Reading: Luke 8:40-48

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Change Your World – Day 5
Gadarean Demoniac

When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. Mark 5:2-3 NIV

At first glance the story is about a man who was thrown out of society, labeled as a threat, and lived his days in a cemetery. He was so “crazy” that he would cut himself and make noises that most certainly would send shivers down the backs of anyone who thought to go near him. And no one did go near him; all attempts had failed, and this man was forgotten by society altogether. He was at a perfect place to be left alone. But that all changed one day when this man saw Jesus. Something inside of him knew that after seeing Jesus nothing would ever be the same again, and it wasn’t.

This story turns and becomes about so much more in an instant. It is amazing to me that Jesus saw something different in this man then everyone else was seeing. He immediately recognized that this was a spiritual, demonic influence that needed to leave this man. And the demons immediately realized that while their stronghold was so tight that no one could break it, they had no chance against the power of Jesus. In fact, their power became so weak that they couldn’t even exist unless they found something else to enter.

What is something around you that seems like it will never change but bothers you so much you would rather look away? Our natural reaction is to push it aside and call it just a normal part of life, but Jesus wants to do something so much bigger and unlock the supernatural power that can literally change what exists and do the impossible.

- What is something in your life or the world that you have stopped believing could change?
- What freedom could you or someone around you experience if that area experienced healing through the power of Jesus?

Daily Prayer: God, help me see the world as You do. I pray today for those in society who have been forgotten about and given up on. Let me live in a way that reminds people no matter what stronghold is in their life, it is not as strong as You, Jesus. In Your powerful name! Amen.

Supportive Reading: Mark 5:1-20

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Change Your World – Day 6 Mary of Bethany

A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. Luke 7:37-38 NIV

There is powerful story told in the gospels of an unnamed woman who most scholars believe was Mary of Bethany because it takes place in Bethany; others say it could be Mary Magdalene because the passage speaks of a woman greatly forgiven. This woman, Mary, brings an expensive alabaster jar of fragrance and pours it on the feet of Jesus. Anointing Jesus' feet with this oil, she uses her hair and continues washing His feet. In verse 39 of Luke 7, Simon declares that he is not at all impressed with Jesus since He must not realize such a sinner is touching His feet.

Jesus responds with a parable. He tells of a creditor who is owed a small amount of money by one man and a much larger sum of money by another, but the creditor forgives both debts. Jesus asks Simon to tell him which of the debtors is shown the most love. Simon is forced to acknowledge that it is the man forgiven of the larger debt.

Jesus then wraps up His lesson, not by implying Mary is the greater sinner, but that she was simply more aware of her sin and more grateful for her forgiveness. When we, as Simon did, see ourselves as worthy of God's love, the gospel message can become unimpressive. When we, as Mary did, see ourselves as people who sin every day and are desperately in need of God's grace, our response will always be humility, thankfulness, and worship.

Before moving to Ohio, my family lived in western Kentucky for five years. A man in our church allowed us to rent his beautiful home for one-fourth of what he could have charged, and we ended up living in that house for the entire five years we were there. This act was one of the nicest gestures of generosity I have ever experienced. Every now and then my boys would complain (as all kids do) about something in the house or the yard that they didn't like. I would immediately stop any complaints and explain how expensive the house and neighborhood were and what an incredible blessing and privilege it was for us to live there. I wanted to make sure everyone in my family always understood what we had been given. I knew what the home was worth, and I never took it for granted.

How about you? Are you always aware of the kindness of others toward you?

- Mary used an alabaster box and her hair to thank Jesus. What can you do today to show your gratitude for the love and forgiveness He has shown to you?
- What blessings in your life do you tend to take for granted?

Daily Prayer: God, help me not to have the heart of a Pharisee. May I never feel worthy of Your love and belittle my need for grace. Keep me close to the feet of Jesus, grateful each day for the forgiveness of my sins and the new life given to me because of the cross.

Supportive Reading: Luke 7:36-50

Notes: _____

21

DAYS OF
PRAYER
JANUARY 16

Change Your World – Day 7 Onesiphorus

May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.
2 Timothy 1:16 NIV

Who? Onesiphorus. I can hardly pronounce his name (ON-uh-SIF-uh-rhus, by the way), let alone recognize who he is. This unknown biblical character is only mentioned twice throughout all of Scripture. But as I was looking, one word stood out to me when Paul mentions him in 2 Timothy: He was unashamed” of Paul’s chains. Everyone likes the glitz and glamour of being around people in the spotlight, but what happens when the spotlight turns into an embarrassment? People usually scatter. Distance themselves.

The love of Christ should always compel us to be a voice for the voiceless, a shoulder to cry on, to put other’s needs above our own. The opposite of “unashamed” is “shame.” Shame is something Christ bore for us. He took our sins; gave us a new nature. Shame is internal. It is a powerful emotion created by pride. It’s something we feel when we subtract the grace of God from our lives. The power of the gospel is that “It’s no longer I who live, but it’s Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). This means the feeling of shame or embarrassment is the enemy’s attempt to keep me from living the life of love I’m called to live. Paul takes time in his letter to distinguish Onesiphorus’s confidence in Christ by saying he was “unashamed” of Paul’s chains (circumstances).

Do you stand with your friends, pastors, or leaders only when it benefits your reputation? Where are you when they fall into misfortune? Is it inconvenient or embarrassing? Ask yourself, how does my pride influence my compassion?

In 2009, my marriage began unraveling. I was a pastor, but I wasn’t giving any time to my wife Gina. I thought I was focused on the right things, but I was immersed in work. Turns out, I was winning the wrong game. When my marriage began falling apart, I decided to resign. People scattered like leaves in the wind. My wife (who should’ve been the first to run) read the verse, “Two are better than one... if either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). She decided that she would be the one to stand by my side. She should’ve left, but the love of Christ compelled her to be unashamed of my shortcomings. It is the reason we are happily married with four beautiful children today. The power of being “unashamed” is a force that can change the world.

- What action step can you take to change your world like Onesiphorus?
- What are some things that might be stopping you from taking this step?

Daily Prayer: God, take ALL my shame. Being filled with shame is not humility. It’s not piety. It’s prideful. I take on Your grace and love, so I can focus on what You want to do in and through my life. Show me where I can be a support and encouragement to someone in the midst of their pain.

Supportive Reading: 2 Timothy

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Submitted by Jonathan Wood, Wooster Campus Pastor

WEEK 2

INTRODUCTION

Gandhi said, "For things to change, first I must change." Changing your world requires a similar shift in thinking.

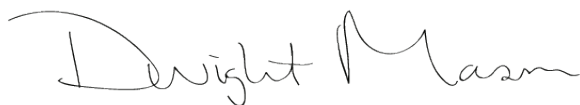
You need to challenge your assumptions that you *can't* or *shouldn't* try to change your world to someone who *can* and *should*. You need to believe you can do something about the problems and the hurts you see. You need to believe you can make a difference no matter who you are, where you are, and with whatever you have. You need to have hope.

You cannot overestimate the importance of real, active hope for changing the world.

There is a big difference between optimism and hope. Optimism is the belief that things will be better. Hope is the faith that together we can make things better. Optimism is a passive virtue; hope, an active one. It takes no courage to be an optimist, but it takes a great deal of courage to have hope.

I invite you to become a person of hope. I want to help you become someone who possesses a healthy amount of positive discontent, believes the world can change, and knows you can be an important part of that change.

Here is my prayer for you: *"Now may God, the fountain of hope, fill you to overflowing with uncontainable joy and perfect peace as you trust in him. And may the power of the Holy Spirit continually surround your life with his super-abundance until you radiate with hope!"* Romans 15:13 TPT

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Dwight Mason". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dwight" and last name "Mason" clearly distinguishable.

Dwight Mason
Lead Pastor

Change Your World – Day 8

Priscila and Aquila

He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. Acts 18:26 NIV

Luke tells us that Apollos is an eloquent man and a persuasive speaker. As we dive into that story, a good analogy to Apollos today is a nominal, cultural Christian raised in the liberal theological tradition of the West. Such a person may display the same fervor and the same knowledge about the earthly Jesus' life and teachings. Whether in the "social gospel" or current call to work for peace, justice, human rights, and a safe, clean environment. These concerns rightly answer the question, "What would Jesus do?" But since they focus only on human effort, they trap us in, at best, a life of humanly induced goodness and, at worst, the emptiness of dull religious practice. Salvation by the grace of Jesus and the blessing of the Holy Spirit is completely missed.

Priscilla and Aquila, having heard Apollos's preaching, took him aside and invited him to their home to explain to him the way of God more adequately. This couple's grace in considerably instructing Apollos, in private, and his grace in receiving their words meant that another person had entered the kingdom of God. Apollos needed and received what most religious people desperately need: to see the power of the sacrifice of Jesus as the only basis of righteousness with the Lord, and the Holy Spirit as the only source of power to live life as free as God intends us to be.

During my internship in college, my mentor gave me an assignment to have a conversation and learn as much as possible from a friend of his. I had a vision of this great leader with tons of business and church leadership experience and this impressive resume that marked all the boxes of what success looked like in my mind. If I am being honest, the first impression was not what I expected, and I was further surprised to find out that he had not worked at a church, nor did he have the grand leadership experience I was expecting. However, despite my deflated expectations we met on a regular basis, and I found this man to have some of the most profound insights and advice I have ever received. I learned a valuable lesson that year, that the eloquent speaker and top leader may not be the best person from which I can learn. I also learned (exactly like the instance with Priscila and Aquila) that you do not have to work at the church to do the work of God.

Here at NewPointe we have many people who do not work for the church but are making an impact for the kingdom of God every day. It is a powerful idea to know that Christians working together can present an effective and long-lasting ministry as long as they focus on the redeeming power of Jesus Christ and His Word.

- What action step can you take to change your world like Priscila and Aquila?
- What are some things that might be stopping you from taking this step?

Daily Prayer: God, please use me to help others fully understand Your grace and mercy. Thank You for allowing every Christian the ability to make an impact in our local towns and cities, and that we can do it right where we work and live.

Supportive Reading: Acts 18:23-28

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Change Your World – Day 9
Woman at the Well

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." John 4:13-15

The story of the woman at the well starts off as a unique situation. The woman, who was a Samaritan, and Jesus, who was a Jew, were not supposed to interact according to their culture. This taboo sets the stage for how far Jesus is willing to go to be in relationship with us. In this story, the lady at the well is doing all that she can to avoid any interaction with anyone else in her community. This is obvious because she was going to draw water in the hottest part of the day. She thought that she was simply going to get water that would satisfy her thirst, but Jesus offered her living water and told her she would be forever satisfied. Through this conversation, Jesus addresses her sin and lets her know that He is the anointed One, the One she is looking for. According to Scripture, this lady who has a complicated past in the village is transformed by Jesus and becomes a missionary of the gospel that brings her village to Christ.

In middle school I always enjoyed English class and distinctly remember learning about the different aspects of a good story. Do you remember the "5WH"? Who, what, when, where, why, and how? Isn't it incredible that God had His hands in every key aspect of the story of the woman at the well? He knew who she was, what she would be doing, when she would be there, where she would be, and how she needed a Savior. Each time I read this story it reminds me that God knows the who, what, when, where, and how of our stories too. And just like the woman at the well, He offers us a gift that is like none other, to forgive our sins and to have eternal life with Him. Like the woman at the well, when we encounter Jesus, we should run into the village that we were once afraid of because of our shame, guilt, rumors, and mistakes, and share the good news of what Christ has done in our life to the people we do life with every day.

This life change is a personal decision, and it starts with you. But Jesus doesn't say walk slowly home and keep this a secret. No, He says go to your village, your family, your workplace, your neighborhood, your city. Run and tell everyone about the gospel you have experienced.

- What action step can you take to change your sphere of influence?
- What are some things that might be stopping you from taking this step?

Daily Prayer: God, help me to know who I am in Christ, and to live as if those around me are far from You.

Supportive Reading: John 4:4-30

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Change Your World – Day 10
Hannah

"Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord." And he worshiped the Lord there. 1 Samuel 1:26-28

Hannah was someone who understood what heartbreak was. How isolated she must have felt to know that her husband could have children with someone else, but not her. And her sorrow went so much deeper than what wasn't happening in her life; it was that no one understood her. Her husband Elkanah felt that her sorrow communicated he wasn't enough for her. Even the pastor in her life, Eli the priest, mistook her desperate prayers as crazy drunkenness. But in the middle of Hannah's isolation she continued to come to God and bring her deepest hurts to Him. She was even so honest with God she agreed that if God let her have a baby she would give that child back to God to serve God and the church in some way. That prayer became the pivotal moment in her journey that would ultimately lead to a son, Samuel. That prayer would also become a pivotal moment in her country as Samuel would become a leader they so badly needed.

What we learn about pain and hurt from Hannah is so much greater than an answered prayer. Hannah understood that pain and hurt does not exclude God from using it for something good. She knew that God can even use the darkest experiences that set us spiraling out of control to bring about something that will change not only us but those around us. If you are experiencing pain and trauma, know that God hears you, and your pain that also hurts Him, He can bring about good through!

- What painful experience immediately brings strong emotions when you think of it?
- What would it look like for me to allow God to use that pain to make a difference in the life of someone around me who may be going through something similar?

Daily Prayer: God, thank You that You understand me. Thank You that I can come to You with what may not make sense to anyone else. Help me to trust You through this pain. I pray for those today who are experiencing trauma, that my story may bring hope to them. I pray for those who may be experiencing the pain of not having a child they want so badly. Bring hope and healing to them, and may our church be a safe community for them.

Supportive Reading: 1 Samuel 1

Notes:

21

DAYS OF
PRAYER
JANUARY 20

Change Your World – Day 11 Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah

Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego. Daniel 1:6-7 NIV

Many of us know the story of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and the fiery furnace. If not, check it out in chapter 3. What many people don't know, however, is that those aren't their real names. Their names were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. You might say, "Why is that important? It's just a name." Not to them. A name was a mark of identity. It not only showed people where you came from but who you are. When Babylon took them into captivity, their plan was to erase and change their identity completely.

That is why they gave them new names. Babylonian names. The reason this is important is because these boys were so connected to their culture and identity that no matter what anyone else said or did, they resolved to influence their new culture with their true identity. It was that same identity that gave them strength to stand against the king's orders to worship a giant bronze statue. It's that same boldness that got them thrown into the furnace and caused an entire nation to witness a miracle of God and reveal that their God was the one true God.

My kids are used to me starting each of their mornings with the phrase, "You're the head, not the tail; above and not beneath. You are the daughter(s) of the great King. So believe it and live it." I began saying this when they were young and starting school. My oldest is now graduating high school, and I still say it. But it goes further. We also have a family mission statement. "We never say 'I can't.' We never give up. We always get back up again. We love God and love people."

You can say all these things, but they're meaningless if not lived out in the culture of the family. You see, I know that every day each of my four daughters leave my house, turn on the TV, or look at their phones. There is a battle to influence their identity. I want to make sure they understand who they are. My wife and I came up with these statements from our own awareness of who we are and where we come from. It's that identity that gives us strength when the pressure is on. There is a battle for your identity. The enemy would love nothing more than to get you to live differently than who Christ is in you. The question you need to ask yourself is, "Do I want to be influenced or do I want to be the influencer?" You never know when the next situation will come that will test your beliefs.

- What action step can you take to change your world like the three Hebrew boys?
- What are some things that might be stopping you from taking this step?

Daily Prayer: Jesus, show me what it means to be salt and light in today's society? Show me areas where I'm not living what I'm saying. I want to live the life You have freed me to live. Reveal any area where I'm believing less.

Supportive Reading: Daniel 3:1-30

Notes: _____

Change Your World – Day 12 Deborah

On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song: “When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves—praise the Lord! Judges 5:1-2 NIV

In Judges 5, Deborah and Barak sing a song of praise to the Lord for the victory He gave the Israelites over their enemies. If you remember, last week we saw how God used Jael to defeat Sisera (Judges 4) and gave victory to the Israelites. In chapter 5, as Deborah is praising God for protecting Israel, she humbly declares in verse 7 that she is just a mother who heard from God and answered the call to lead. She didn't see herself as a great leader or warrior. Yet God mightily used Deborah to be one of the best judges in Israel. Remember from chapter 4 that Barak was a great military strategist, yet he needed Deborah by his side to give him the courage to lead. Barak had courage because Deborah was willing to be used by God and completely trust Him when He promised deliverance over the king of Canaan.

I have known many women in the church whom God used to be great leaders, simply because they were willing to respond when God spoke. One lady who comes to mind attends our Millersburg campus. She came to me a few years ago and said that the Lord was calling her to start a young mom's small group at the church on Thursday mornings. She had already raised her kids and felt the burden to teach young moms what God had taught her through those crucial years. Usually when someone comes to me and asks to start a small group, I gather the information regarding the people they have ready to meet in the group, since hosting a small group requires people. In her case, though, she did not have that core group yet but felt a strong urge from the Lord to move forward and start a group; she would just trust Him and see who would attend. Once she started the group, it immediately grew and flourished. Over the past three years, I have watched this group grow and challenge so many young moms. Every Thursday morning our parking lot is full of SUVs and vans, and our playland is full of children as their mothers are taught deep truths from the Scriptures. This is all a result of one lady's willingness to act when God led her. Judges 5: 2 says, “When leaders lead in Israel, when the people willingly offer themselves, bless the Lord!”

- Where is God calling you to step up and lead?
- Have you told the Lord you are willing to offer yourself to Him no matter what He asks of you?

Daily Prayer: God, give me a heart like Deborah. Let me be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading. May I have a strong sense of calling in my life. Give me the courage and determination to follow Your call no matter how far out of my comfort zone it is. Thank You, Jesus, for choosing to use me. I am ready! Amen.

Supportive Reading: Judges 4-5

Notes: _____

Change Your World - Day 13

Hezekiah

"The word of the Lord you have spoken is good," Hezekiah replied. For he thought, "Will there not be peace and security in my lifetime?" 2 Kings 20:19 NIV

If you haven't read the story of Hezekiah, please take some time to read the "Supporting Reading." Hezekiah took over as King of Judah when he was 25. Scripture says there was not a king like him, before or after. It is said that he trusted the Lord with everything. He pleased the Lord and led the nation of Israel in a godly and wise way. When you read about him, you get an incredible picture of what God intends His leaders and followers to be. Hezekiah had a heart of integrity with a boldness to lead. He really was an incredible king for Israel. Yet, in the later years of his life, he lets his guard down just a bit. He gives a "behind the scenes" tour of his kingdom to an up-and-coming, small nation named Babylon. It's a fairly innocent move. After all, Babylon is small and insignificant. But it does feel like Hezekiah is bragging a little bit. He shows them everything, including all of their treasure. It comes full circle when the prophet Isaiah tells Hezekiah that this same nation will take Hezekiah's children's children into captivity. His response is revealing: "He thought, 'Will there not be peace and security in my lifetime?'"

There are things we do that impact people and environments. There are other things we do that not only echo through eternity, but impact the lives of generations.

I grew up hearing the story of my great grandma. My grandfather was only 11 years old when she had a cerebral hemorrhage. It was a miracle that she was even conscious. She had asked for one thing, to see her kids and pray for them. As she prayed, she began to extend her prayers to her children's children, and their children as well. She asked God that they would serve Him in His church and dedicate their lives to serving Jesus. After saying, "Amen," she closed her eyes and went home to be with her Creator. She had only been a follower of Christ for a short period of time, but it was long enough to know that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He doesn't invest in what is only seen in "our time." My great grandmother wasn't just seeing the impact a single generation could have. If you look at her lineage, 80% of her great grandkids are in some type of full-time ministry. So, is it important to lead your generation in a godly and holy way? Yes. But don't forget the next generation. Your reach can be much greater in that compounded space.

- What action step can you take to change your world like Hezekiah?
- What are some things that might be stopping you from taking this step?

Daily Prayer: Jesus, show me what it means to be salt and light in today's society. Show me areas where I'm not living what I'm saying. I want to live the life You have freed me to live. Reveal any area where I'm believing less.

Supportive Reading: 2 Kings 18-21

Notes: _____

Change your World – Day 14
Barnabas

Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”). Acts 4:36 NIV

Names carry a different weight in other cultures and in antiquity than they do in our current culture. Throughout the Bible, names were a description of a person’s character and calling.

For Joseph, the only reason the apostles would have changed his name to Barnabas is because he was known for encouraging others. Barnabas made those around him better! Look no further than the most important figure from the early church, the apostle Paul.

The most encouraging person I know is my friend Rick. Every time I see Rick, I always walk away better, and it doesn’t matter if it is a quick hug or an extended conversation. Every interaction he has with another is for the sole purpose of encouraging and building others up. He is a modern-day Barnabas.

How about you? Do you make the people around you better?

Adding value to others begins with prayer and staying in a posture of prayer through each encounter we have with another. It is prayer that helps us think less of ourselves and more about others. After all, encouragement is not a talent, it is a choice.

- What action step can you take to change your world like Barnabas?
- What are some things that might be stopping you from taking this step?

Daily Prayer: Father, who can I encourage and honor today? May I add value to others like You value me.

Supportive Reading: Romans 12:10, Romans 15:5, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 10:24

Notes: _____

WEEK 3

INTRODUCTION

If you genuinely care about people, you have the potential to change your world. Remember, small actions done consistently lead to big results. You can't change everything, but you can change something.

Jesus: "Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage."

"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven."
Matthew 5:13-16 MSG

You will never be what you ought to be until you are doing what you ought to be doing.

Would you pray this dangerous prayer? "Use me, God." If you do and mean it, your world will never be the same nor the one you live in.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Dwight Mason". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dwight" and last name "Mason" clearly distinguishable.

Dwight Mason
Lead Pastor

Change Your World – Day 15
10 Lepers

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him... Luke 17:15-16 NIV

Jesus' healing of the 10 lepers is one of the more poignant encounters we read about in Jesus' ministry. The reason for that is due to how vital gratitude is to our faith and life.

I can't shake how significant Jesus' words were to the one leper who returned: "Your faith has made you well." Wasn't the leper made well before he returned to thank Jesus? All 10 were healed physically, but perhaps it was just the one who was completely "made well."

Gratitude has the power to heal!

Here's the other thing this one leper teaches us: Gratitude is not complete until it is expressed! Complete gratefulness does not remain in our head, but rather it is expressed through words that are either written or verbalized.

One practical way to put this into practice is to start and/or end your day writing down three things you are grateful for.

- What action step can you take to change your world like the leper?
- What are some things that might be stopping you from taking this step?

Daily Prayer: Thank you for...

Supportive Reading: Luke 17:11-19

Notes: _____

Change Your World – Day 16

Philip and the Eunuch

So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). Acts 8:27 NIV

In a quick reading of Acts, most of us would not have guessed at the start of Philip’s ministry in chapter 6 that he would ascend to such spiritual heights in chapter 8. Philip’s ministry began as a lay deacon humbly passing out the widow’s portions in the Jerusalem church. But it soared to unimagined heights when persecution hit. Though he was not a professional, God’s power worked through him to the despised Samaritans, and large numbers of them heard and believed the Good News and were saved. In the last half of Acts 8, Philip’s ministry is still rising to its height. However, instead of vast multitudes of Samaritans (or preaching at a large church), the mission of God now comes through Philip to one man in a desert place far from the large city. God valued that individual as much as the multitudes, and he used Philip to touch his life.

We are often fascinated by great tales of “chance” encounters. Somewhere along a lonely road in the middle of nowhere, a man suddenly appears and asks a Christian traveler, “Can you tell me who Jesus is?” Luke’s account of Philip’s divine intersection with the Ethiopian sounds amazing to us, but it would have been just as fascinating to first-century Romans or Greeks, for in their view Ethiopians lived literally at the southern edge of the earth.

I remember a particular day back in my small hometown when I was in high school. I was preparing for hunting season and went to the shooting range near a wildlife reserve area. I specifically chose this range because it was always empty, except on this day. On this day a man named Paul, one of the new pastors in our town was there. I made a valiant attempt to avoid eye contact, but Paul was having none of that, and he started a conversation that included the gospel of Jesus and an additional part just for me. Paul said, “I feel like I need to tell you that you are going into the ministry and God is going to do some great things through you.” I almost laughed at this because I was at best a nominal Christian with a cultural attitude. I held my thoughts in, but I knew there was no way I was going into vocational ministry, and I was not likely to even show up to service that weekend.

That conversation stuck with me for years, until I found myself at a crossroads and making the choice to go into vocational ministry. Paul knew back then what I had yet to discover: In God’s value system, it matters not whether you preach to hundreds in a city or one in the wilderness. Your faithfulness to the call of God is the only measure of success. God takes full responsibility for the life fully devoted to Him, and I am thankful that Paul took a risk to have a conversation with a stubborn high school kid in a small town.

- What action step can you take to change your world like Philip?
- What are some things that might be stopping you from taking this step?

Daily Prayer: God, thank You that my success is not measured in the same way the world measures it, and You are faithful to me and take full responsibility for the consequences when I submit to You and Your authority.

Supportive Reading: Acts 8

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Change Your World – Day 17 The Blind Man

He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Mark 8:23-25 NIV

This is an interesting story in general. Some people bring Jesus a blind man and they beg Jesus to heal him. Jesus spits on him (seems a little rude, or strange at the minimum), puts his hands on him and asks, "Do you see anything?" The man says, "I see people, but they look like trees walking around." I know I could just say he wasn't seeing correctly, but maybe we can learn something from this.

One of the things we see a lot in our culture is seeing people as a "means" to get something. As followers of Christ, our perception of people is based on our proximity to Jesus. Notice when this man comes to Jesus he can't see anything. He gets a touch from Jesus, and he sees people but they look like trees. Trees are living "things." They can be used for building materials, furniture, even shelter. But they don't have souls. They weren't created in God's image. They weren't purchased by the blood and sacrifice of Christ. This wasn't enough for Jesus. The blind man had to see CLEARLY. He had to see the way God intended him to see. So Jesus touches his eyes a second time. Mark records that his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

When I was 13, there was a crazy fad of pictures (usually sold at mall kiosks) that looked like strange patterns, but if you stared long enough you could see some sort of image. I remember the first time I tried to see it. I must've stared at this picture for 30 minutes. Everyone was talking about this image, but no matter how hard I tried, I could only see a big picture of nothing. Someone finally told me, "Look past the picture." Still not sure what that meant, but somehow I did it. Suddenly I saw what everyone else was talking about. It wasn't the best-looking picture, but I understood the intention.

Our hope to understand and see this life "clearly," the way we were intended to see it, depends on our ability to look past the situation and position ourselves to receive a touch from Jesus. If we don't, we run the risk of seeing people as "things" instead of redeemed treasures. If we want to be Salt and Light to our world, we MUST see as He sees.

- What are some warning signs that you might be seeing people as trees?
- What are some things that might be stopping you from seeing people the way Jesus does?

Daily Prayer: Jesus, touch my eyes; my vision. I want to see the world the way You see it. Give me a heart and a passion for those who have yet to experience Your love and life. Restore and protect the vision I was intended to have. Thank You for Your reminder today.

Supportive Reading: Mark 8:22-26

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Change Your World – Day 18

Woman Caught in Adultery

Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." John 8:10-11 NIV

The woman in this story is caught in the act of adultery and is brought into the middle of a crowd that is listening to Jesus teach. With the intent of tricking Jesus, the religious leaders say, "Jesus, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. Should we keep the law of Moses and stone her?" This appears to be a lose, lose situation for Jesus because he can either tell them to break Moses' law, or he would have the blood of this woman on his hands. Instead of answering the question posed by the Pharisees and religious scholars, Jesus bends down and writes in the dust of the ground and instructs the crowd that the person who is without sin can cast the first stone. Can you imagine the lady's face and her thought process as the crowd slowly puts their stones down and walks away? Jesus is by her side in the worst moment of her life, and He is there as the dust settles. Jesus says, "Go, and from now on be free from a life of sin." Jesus is setting the example that He has come not just to keep the law but to be in relationship with us.

To say that I love sports is an understatement. I love Cleveland everything, but in my lifetime we have been on the wrong side of historic sports' moments. Does anyone else remember that one time when Trevor Bauer from the Cleveland Indians was playing with his drone and cut his finger wide open just days before he had to pitch in game three of the World Series? Or the time when J. R. Smith from the Cleveland Cavs forgot the score of the game and held the ball instead of shooting it when we were losing to Golden State in the finals? It's times like these that I can too easily magnify others' mistakes and hang-ups.

While these are lighthearted examples, it reminds me that we all tend to judge others more harshly than we judge ourselves. Aren't you glad this isn't how Jesus responds to us? In the story we read today, Jesus didn't act the way everyone thought He would. Instead of falling for the Pharisee's trap, He reminded every single person in the crowd that they all have a story; a story that if they were honest is wildly similar to the lady caught in her sin. Jesus showed the lady caught in sin that while she was still a sinner, He loved her. Let us remember that today as we interact with others.

- What action step can you take to respond to people the way Jesus would?
- What are some things that might be stopping you from taking this step?

Daily Prayer: God open my eyes so I will be slow to cast judgment and I will have eyes to see those around me with Your perspective.

Supportive Reading: John 8: 2-11

Notes: _____

Change Your World – Day 19 Rahab

Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. “Go, look over the land,” he said, “especially Jericho.” So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there. Joshua 2:1 NIV

Of all the characters in the Bible listed as heroes, this would certainly be one who wouldn't exactly fit the mold of being qualified as "heroic." Rahab had a reputation, and people who visited her only came for one thing. On this night, however, men visited her for a different reason. God had a plan to give a group of people land. He had promised to make them a great nation, and they were to be an example to the world of what a holy and healthy society looked like. Larger than that, God would raise up through the Jewish people someone named Jesus who would come to save the whole world and restore humanity's relationship with God. None of this would have been possible had it not been for a woman named Rahab. Rahab not only hid the spies so they could take over the land, but she was spared and became part of the Israeli/Jewish community, and her direct descendants would include Jesus Himself.

Wow, what a reminder that God can use anyone! So many times we count ourselves out by a past experience, failure, or just saying we aren't gifted enough, but after reading about Rahab we see that God doesn't see us the same way we see ourselves. The thing we have to be willing to do is act in the same way Rahab did. We have to open the door to something we've never experienced, be vulnerable, and trust.

Fear can keep us from doing that, but the only way for us to see God do something in our lives is for us to be willing to do something that we have never done before.

- What action step can you take to change your world like Rahab?
- What are some things that might be stopping you from taking this step?

Daily Prayer: God, help me to see myself as You do and not count myself out of what You want to do in me. Give me courage as I take this next step.

Supportive Reading: Joshua 2

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Change Your World – Day 20 Sampson

Then Samson prayed to the Lord, "Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more..." Judges 16:28 NIV

There is so much to learn from Sampson's life. Yet as we ask God this week to give us eyes to see as He desires, there is one lesson that stands out above the others.

For Sampson, it was when he lost his sight that he gained his vision!

No one desires to lose something we love, yet it is often in the loss that we see God, ourselves, others, and the world with new eyes. Psalm 34:18 says, *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."*

Although Samson's pride got the best of Him, he was eventually able to humble himself to seek God in his brokenness. And as he drew near to God, God drew near in return. When he finally put himself fully into God's hands to be used, God did more through Samson in one moment at the end of his life than He had been able to do in his lifetime.

Our lives are very different from Samson's, but I believe one thing remains true: When we lose things in this life, we gain a new vision of God as we sincerely seek Him.

If you are in a season of loss, may you sense that God is close! As you draw near to Him, may He also give you new vision.

- What action step can you take to change your world like Samson?
- What are some things that might be stopping you from taking this step?

Daily Prayer: God, help me to know Your presence and peace when I'm hurting, and give me eyes to see You and Your plans. Although I don't understand, my trust is in You!"

Supportive Reading: Judges 13-16

Notes: _____

Change Your World – Day 21

Mary and Martha

“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” Luke 10:41-42 NIV

Luke’s gospel records a short sequence of events where two sisters, Mary and Martha, are entertaining Jesus in their home. Martha complains to Jesus that she alone is doing all the work that is involved with hosting a guest. She is cleaning the house, cooking the food, setting the table... You would expect that it would be common courtesy for her sister Mary to be chipping in and at least asking Martha what she could do to help. Nope. Verse 39 of our passage says, “Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus and just listening to Him.” Martha, rather annoyed, points out the unfairness of the situation to Jesus. If Mary wasn’t going to help, Martha was going to be sure to voice her displeasure and make sure Jesus at least noticed who was actually serving Him: “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to serve alone?” The response of Jesus is the message of the entire story. He lets Martha in on a life-changing truth for any believer. Jesus tells Martha that her sister has made the right choice. “One thing was necessary,” and, apparently, Mary figured out what that was. Mary was worshipping Jesus; Martha was worried about herself.

Years ago, I was serving God as a pastor of a church in western Ohio. Part of my job as the pastor was to attend our monthly deacon meetings. In one particular meeting, the agenda was full; we had a lot to discuss in a short period of time. The deacons and I had important and tough decisions to make that night. It was customary for me to begin every meeting with prayer. I would take prayer requests, and then we would take a few minutes to pray about the needs of our congregation. But on this night, our deacon chairman began the meeting and told everyone that we had a lot to discuss, that we were short on time, and that we were just going to jump right into the meeting without taking time to pray. One of our older deacons, a soft-spoken Korean War veteran, immediately spoke up and said, “Men, if we are too busy to pray, then we are too busy.” I took that cue and led us in prayer as we began the meeting.

Looking at this example and the story of Mary and Martha, what is your focus today? Are you making the right choice like Mary did? When you serve God, whether in the kids’ ministry at church, in the café, or on the worship team, is your concern more about what you are doing and who is getting credit, or are you focused on hearing from God? Serving Jesus should always prioritize God’s presence, not my performance.

- What action step can you take to make the right decision like Mary did?
- What are some distractions and worries in your life that make it hard to worship Jesus?

Daily Prayer: God, help me to have a heart like Mary and prioritize hearing from You. Remove the distractions and concerns of this world. Keep my ears tuned in to what You are saying. Let my worship always glorify You and pull me closer into Your presence.

Supportive Reading: Luke 10:38-42

Notes: _____

