

LINKED UP NORTH
CHURCH

TRAIN YOUR TALK.

Mark 11:22-24

WORDS  MATTER

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WORDS MATTER

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Dear Friend,

We are so glad you've decided to join us for Connect 21, a powerful season of prayer and fasting that will set the tone for everything God desires to do in and through your life this year.

From the beginning, prayer has been the heartbeat of Linked UP Church. Our guiding principle, "Pray First," reminds us that before we move, decide, or act—we seek God first. In this season, we are combining prayer with the power of our words, believing that what we speak in faith will shape what we see in reality.

"So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."

— Mark 11:22-24 (NKJV)

This year's Connect 21 theme, Words Matter, is a call to align our confession with God's promises. Your words carry creative power—they can build faith, move mountains, and call forth God's vision for your life and our church. As we fast and pray together, we're not only silencing distractions and realigning our hearts; we're learning to speak what Heaven says about our circumstances, our families, and our future.

Beginning Monday, January 5, 2026, our Linked UP family and friends will dedicate 21 days to seek God intentionally believing that what we declare in faith today will shape the next season of our lives and ministry.

These days will help you:

- *Strengthen your faith and confidence in God's Word.*
- *Speak life over every area of your life.*
- *Partner with God's vision for our church and community.*

Through fasting, we quiet the noise of the world so that God's Word becomes louder in our spirits. As we replace meals with moments of prayer and meditation, our focus sharpens, and our words begin to agree with God's will—producing faith that brings results.

This Connect 21 Devotional has been designed to guide your daily journey. Inside, you'll find Scriptures, declarations, and reflections that will help you fix your mind on things above, grow in spiritual authority, and deepen your communication with God.

As you delight in the Lord through prayer, fasting, and faith-filled confession, expect God to move mountains in your life.

In Christ,

Pastors George & Carol Houston

Pastors George & Carol Houston

Making Your Commitments

As you begin Connect 21, set your spiritual intentions:

- Attend every Sunday Service (in person or online)**
Sundays at 10 am

- Join us each Saturday for corporate prayer (in person or online)**
From 9:00-10:00 AM | Linked UP North Church

- Enroll in Prayer School (Wednesday at 7 pm | In Person)**
Mark your calendars to attend each session on
 - January 7
 - January 14
 - January 21

- Commit to daily prayer time with God**
We've provided prayer models and strategies in this devotional to help you grow your prayer life.

- Read the daily devotional**
We hope this daily resource makes your prayer life more natural, effective, and enjoyable.

Growth Steps

- Complete Next Step Classes to become a member**

- Get Water Baptized**

- Join a Connect Group**

- Join a Dream Team (Membership Required)**
If you're a member of Linked UP North and feel called to make a difference, join a Dream Team and unleash your unique gifts and passions.

Record your commitments and prayer targets as you begin this journey. As you progress, document how God answers, because what you track, you can testify about!

Prayer Guide

Step 1 — Prepare Your Heart: *Why We Pray*

Prayer is not a ritual, it's a relationship. It's the first language of faith and the foundation for every miracle. Since our church began, we've built everything on the principle: **Pray First.**

Before we make decisions, face challenges, or take steps of faith, we go to God in prayer. Prayer aligns our hearts with His will and positions us to hear His voice clearly.

During these 21 days, commit to make prayer your **first response, not your last resort.**

“In the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.”
— Mark 1:35

How to Prepare Your Heart

- ▶ **Set a Certain Time**
Choose a consistent time each day to meet with God.
- ▶ **Find a Specific Place**
A quiet space where you can focus on Him without distractions.
- ▶ **Follow a Set Plan**
Use this devotional, the ACTS Prayer Model, or the Paul's Prayer Model as your guide.

Worship Playlist

Scan the QR code to access songs that help you center your heart before God.



Step 2 — Position Your Spirit: *Why We Fast*

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that sets the stage for your faith, allows you to sow to the Spirit, and deepens your intimacy with the Holy Spirit. It removes distractions, helping you hear God's voice more clearly and walk in His power. When you fast, you're saying, "God, I desire You more than anything else."

Jesus said, "When you fast..." (Matthew 6:16) — not if.

Purpose of Fasting

- To humble yourself before God (Psalm 35:13)
- To grow in sensitivity to the Holy Spirit
- To strengthen your prayer life
- To receive divine direction and breakthrough

Suggested Fasting Periods

- 6:00 AM – 12:00 PM
- 12:00 PM – 6:00 PM
- 6:00 PM – 12:00 AM
- 12:00 AM – 6:00 AM (for night-shift workers)

*Types of Fasts***

- **Partial Fast**
Abstain from certain foods or meals.
- **Complete Fast**
Liquids only (water or light juices).
- **Connect 21 Fast**
Blend both approaches; abstain from food for at least six hours daily, focusing on prayer and Scripture.

**Consult your doctor before fasting if you have medical conditions or are on prescribed medication.

Step 4 — Practice His Presence: Prayer Models

Prayer is most powerful when it becomes personal. These prayer models will help you grow deeper in conversation with God and cultivate a lifestyle of worship and intercession.

The ACTS Model

- Adoration — Praise God for who He is.
- Confession — Confess the Word & receive forgiveness.
- Thanksgiving — Express gratitude for His blessings.
- Supplication — Present your needs and intercede for others.

Adoration ▲ *Confession* ▲ *Thanksgiving* ▲ *Supplication*

Paul's Prayer Model (Ephesians 1:17-19)

Pray for:

- Wisdom and Revelation — to know God more deeply.
- Enlightened Eyes — to see His purpose for your life.
- Spiritual Strength — to walk in His power daily.

Use these models as frameworks, then let the Holy Spirit lead you into spontaneous, heartfelt prayer.

Step 5 — Pursue the Promise: *Vision & Expectation*

As you complete Connect 21, expect transformation in your heart, your home, and your world. God is calling our church to expand our reach and deepen our impact in connecting people to God, Family, Purpose, and Community.

Pray with us for:

- » Expansion of ministry facilities and reach.
- » Growth of Connect Groups and new leaders.
- » Favor with city and county officials.

- ▶ Creative strategies for outreach.
- ▶ Resources for Vision 4Ward and the future Connect 40 campaigns.

Write the vision and make it plain...
For the vision is yet for an appointed time.”
— Habakkuk 2:2-3

This year, let your words align with God's vision. Speak boldly, believe deeply, and expect to see His promises fulfilled.

Linked UP North Church Prayer Points

As we unite in prayer, we are believing God for His supernatural hand in connecting people to God, Family, Purpose, and Community. Let's stand together in faith for:

▶ **Expansion and Impact**

That God would provide all the resources to buy a permanent space.

People and Purpose

- ▶ That every member discovers their divine calling and uses their gifts to build the Kingdom, through Dream Teams, Connect Groups, and community impact.

Creative Outreach and Influence

- ▶ That God would release innovative ideas and fresh strategies to reach our city and beyond, drawing people to Christ through excellence, relevance, and love.

Favor and Partnership

- ▶ That God grants us continued favor with city, county, and regional leaders, aligning relationships that help us serve our community with excellence.

Spiritual Renewal and Multiplication

- ▶ That Connect 21 will spark revival in hearts, strengthen families, and multiply leaders who carry the vision forward.

We believe this a time when words rooted in faith will open new doors of opportunity, healing, and breakthrough.

Thank you for standing with us in faith. Your prayers and participation strengthen the body of Christ and help carry the vision forward.

Now, as we enter 21 Days of Devotionals, open your heart to hear from God in a fresh way. Let each day draw you deeper into His presence, renew your focus, and build the spiritual momentum that will carry you through this year and beyond. Together, we will move in faith, speak life, and believe boldly.

WEEK ONE

Faith

Faith That Moves Mountains

Mark 11:22-24 NKJV

“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”

Have you ever been in a situation that seemed so utterly impossible that it took your breath away? Maybe you left a doctor’s office with a challenging diagnosis, you were drowning in debt because you were overworked and underpaid, you had an estranged relationship with your family, or you experienced personal failure that left you feeling overwhelmed, helpless, and even hopeless. But Jesus clearly calls us to have a deeply courageous, mountain-moving faith, a trust that is completely based on God’s unlimited power and unchanging love.

Consider Jesus’ metaphor. Mountains symbolize life’s most challenging and intimidating obstacles. Faith may seem hard to find or even crazy at times. However, when we confront difficult situations with a faith that is firmly grounded in God’s character and promises, Jesus assures us that that these obstacles are neither permanent nor unbeatable.

According to Jesus, true faith is based solely “in God.” It isn’t dependent on external factors like human ability, experience, emotion, or logic. People often end up doubting, frustrated, or despondent after these types of foundations let them down. To have faith that can move mountains requires courage and a complete reliance on God’s infinite goodness, omnipotence, and omniscience, which do not change.

As believers, we often wonder, How do I put my faith into practice?

One of the most important ways is by setting aside time each day to read the Bible. Within its pages are countless stories of God's power breaking into impossible situations—healing diseases that physicians could not, raining down manna from heaven, parting the Red Sea, and so much more.

Next, think back on all the times that God was faithful to you in the past, when He helped, comforted, guided, or healed you. Purposely recalling situations like these will boost your confidence and faith for the problems you're dealing with now.

Lastly, speak God's truths consistently, even during life's uncertainties. This can build your faith within and your courage outside. Our thoughts, emotions, and actions are changed by the way we think. We must intentionally choose words that courageously affirm God's promises when we're in the middle of chaos or trying times.

Faith that moves mountains doesn't just change circumstances; it changes how we see them. The problems that used to make us feel hopeless become opportunities to see God's power, love, and faithfulness in clearer ways. Daunting situations don't break our faith anymore; they make it stronger. However, this strength is only available as we base our faith on God's infinite power and steadfast love. We can face every mountain with faith when we speak and trust in His promises.

Reflection

What mountain do you feel like you can't climb right now? How can intentionally immersing yourself deeply in God's power and recalling His past faithfulness help you be braver and more faithful in dealing with this situation in practical ways?

Prayer

Father, give me the strength to believe with intentionality today. I trust in Your unlimited power and unchanging love. As the Holy Spirit brings me into remembrance of how faithful You have been in the past, to me and to Your other children, I have strength to go through any struggle and face any mountain. I trust Your character and speak Your promises with confidence. In Jesus' name, amen.

Faith Speaks Boldly

2 Corinthians 4:13 NKJV

“Since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, “I believed and therefore I spoke,” we also believe and therefore speak.

What you believe always shows up in things you say, whether you’re talking about your money, health, or relationships. Our words often reveal that our worries are stronger than our faith. Paul reveals this truth in today’s passage: What we say shows how much we really believe. Even when life doesn’t go as planned, we can trust the promises we’ve been given and allow our words to overflow with hope, confidence, and assurance.

Faith doesn’t hide; it boldly speaks the truth. When challenging circumstances come knocking at our door, true faith gives us the backbone to speak aloud what we believe. If we completely trust God and His promises, our words prove that. Our voices and our hearing must be in harmony with God’s Word. Our convictions can become the catalyst that alters perceptions, instills confidence, and evokes hope in our lives and the lives of others.

The deep journey of faith is a lifetime of peaks and valleys. It’s easy to say we trust God when everything is going well, when we feel we are on top of the mountain and know what is going to happen next. But real faith shines through when life is unclear, when our plans go wrong, and when fear tries to put out the light of hope. At those times, what we say is very important. Speaking from a place of faith doesn’t mean ignoring the facts of our situation; it means knowing that God’s presence is greater than any problem we face.

David stood strong against Goliath, declaring his victory not because of his physical strength but because of the strong faith that came through in his words. David’s speech didn’t make people afraid; it made them believe. When life gets too hard to handle, we must let our words remind us of the strength, provision, and promises that come from God. Our words don’t just show what we believe; they also build our faith.

As we go through life, we will face tough challenges like doubts, fears, and setbacks that put our faith to the test. Today, let's choose words that are in line with the promises of God instead of our doubts. May the voice of faith be stronger than the whispers of fear as we trust in the Holy Spirit, who has always been there for us and will be there for us now and forever.

Reflection

In what part of your life do you need to choose to believe in faith-based statements instead of giving in to fear-based ones? Have the courage to speak faith into the situations you face today.

Prayer

Dear God, I pray that the voice of my faith will be stronger than the fears I face as I trust the Holy Spirit, who has always been there for me. Even as I encounter challenges, doubts, and setbacks, I will choose words that reflect Your promises and not allow fear to take over my heart. In Jesus' name, amen.

Confessing Faith, Changing Destiny

Romans 10:8-10 NKJV

“What does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Words are powerful because they reveal the truths in our hearts. In this passage, Paul emphasizes how belief in the heart and confession with the mouth are connected. It is not enough to have private thoughts about faith. We must say out loud that we trust in Jesus, because that is the evidence of what is in our hearts.

When Paul wrote Romans, many Israelites had a hard time recognizing Jesus as their Messiah. They were used to the laws, rituals, and customs of their religion, and they thought that by working hard enough, they might be good enough to please God. Paul countered this way of thinking by declaring that performing good deeds or following rituals doesn't make a person righteous. We are the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, not by being able to check off a list of good things we have done. The key point is clear: Real faith always speaks up. It doesn't stay quiet or do nothing; it actively trusts Jesus and embraces Him as Lord and Savior.

Do you remember the first time you trusted Christ? It wasn't simply something you thought about; it was something that made you want to stand up, confess, and openly announce your new beliefs. Whether it was a private prayer or a public testimony, that confession was a turning moment that led you to a new path of faith and purpose.

Paul's message isn't just about getting saved; it also has to do with how we live our lives every day. Confession not only saves us, it also changes the way we grow spiritually. What we say every day either supports or goes against our faith.

What we say when we have troubles indicates what we really think. Do we talk about giving up, doubt, and fear? Or do we bravely declare God's promises, putting His Word above what is happening in our lives?

Picture your words as seeds that you plant in the soil of your life. Doubtful thoughts lead to worry and failure. Faith seeds grow into peace, strength, and hope. If you want a future that is full of God's presence, strength, and victory, start by making sure that your words match what you believe in your heart.

Paul makes it clear that confession isn't about impressing people or performing religious duties. It's a sincere admission to God that we depend on Christ's finished work. Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection are the only things that can save us and keep us winning.

What we say out loud is a confirmation of that deep trust we have in Him, which becomes outward expressions of confidence in Him.

Reflection

Take a moment to think about your words. Do they always show how much you believe in Christ's power, promises, and love? If not, ask the Holy Spirit to help your words match your faith, because in the end, your confession affects your life, the lives of others, and God.

Prayer

Father, thank You for the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. Forgive me for the times when my words showed doubt instead of faith. Help me make sure that my confession is always in line with what Your Word says. Give me the strength to boldly declare Your promises in every situation, knowing that what I say can change my future. In Jesus' name, amen.

Moving Your Mountains

Matthew 17:20 NKJV

“Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.”

In the Bible, mountains often stand for big problems that get in the way of where God is leading us. In Matthew 17:20, Jesus talked to His disciples after they couldn't get rid of a demon. He made it very clear that the problem wasn't how big their faith was but where it was and how they used it.

Jesus used the picture of a mustard seed, which was one of the smallest seeds known at the time, to make a strong point: Faith's power doesn't come from its size but where it originates from. A little bit of real faith in God can move mountains.

The disciples had seen amazing things. They had been given the power to heal and get rid of demons. But at this point, they depended on themselves instead of God. Jesus admonished them for not believing, not because they didn't try but because their hearts were cut off from the power they had been given. Faith isn't about being loud or exciting; it's about relying on God and His character and promises.

Faith isn't about believing hard to get what we want. We need to trust God completely, not measuring the mountain but speaking to it. Even when we can't see any progress, real faith stays strong. It doesn't back down when circumstances don't change quickly. It chooses to believe that God is working, even if the mountain hasn't moved yet.

Are you facing a mountain today? Maybe it's a broken relationship, a long illness, money problems, or a calling that seems too big. You've prayed. You're still waiting. And you're starting to wonder if your faith is too weak. Jesus never said we needed a lot of faith; he said we need real faith. Trusting God's timing is faith that stays strong even when things don't make sense. Faith that dares to say “I hope” even when we feel tired and alone.

God doesn't always move mountains in the way we expect Him to. Sometimes He takes away the problem. Other times He gives us the strength to endure it. And sometimes He uses it to change how we see life, reminding us that the real miracle is what He is doing in us while we wait.

Reflection

What mountain in your life seems impossible to move? Have you stopped speaking faith over it? What would it be like to plant your mustard seed of trust today and keep watering it with prayer, praise, and obedience, even if you don't see results right away?

Prayer

Father, I thank You for only requiring real faith that is rooted in Your Word. I release the mountains that are in front of me, those I have spoken of and those I have been silent about. Help me to trust You in the whole process, not just for the end result. Change what needs to be changed in me, and move what needs to be removed. In Jesus' name, amen.

Faith Without Doubt

Matthew 21:21 NKJV

“Jesus answered and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done.”

Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like your faith was being overshadowed by doubt? At those times, it can be hard to believe that God will really help. But Jesus calls us to live a life of faith without doubt, a confidence in God’s goodness and power that mountains will truly move when we speak.

This passage from Jesus was not just meant to inspire people; it was meant to change the world. He said something very important: Real faith, without any doubt, can move things that seem impossible to move. His example of commanding mountains was not just a poetic metaphor; it showed the spiritual power that people who have complete faith in God can have.

If we’re being honest, it seems impossible to live without any doubt. We often bring our past hurts, unanswered prayers, and lingering questions with us into the present, which can weaken our faith without us even realizing it. To keep ourselves from being disappointed, we pray carefully, hope cautiously, and keep our expectations low. This weak faith keeps us from fully experiencing God’s power.

Jesus tells us to have a bold and unwavering faith. He asks us to believe not because of our situation but because of who He is and what He has promised. Real faith trusts God’s unlimited power even when our senses tell us something else. Abraham believed God’s promise that he would have children, even though he and Sarah were too old to get pregnant. Joshua believed the walls of Jericho would fall just by having his troops march in a straight line. Both Abraham and Joshua saw miracles because they had faith that did not waver.

What mountain do you see in front of you today? Jesus is asking you to do more than just pray about it cautiously; He wants you to speak boldly and with faith, trusting that He can and will help.

This kind of faith does not come from your strength or ability to change things. It is based completely on God's character and promises. Faith without doubt means always believing in God's goodness, sovereignty, and dependability, no matter what. It is knowing that He is stronger than your biggest problem.

Think about how different your life would be if doubt didn't have any power over you. Imagine your prayers being full of faith and hope, knowing that God hears them and answers them in the way He knows is best for you and for others. When you trust God, your faith can have a huge effect on your daily life, giving you the strength to face anything with courage instead of fear.

Today, choose to put your doubts aside and fully trust God. Speak His promises with confidence, knowing that the one who made mountains can move them.

Reflection

What doubts are making your faith weak right now? What would change in your prayers and in your life if you decided to trust God completely, without a doubt?

Prayer

Lord, help me have more faith and get rid of any doubts that are holding me back. Help me believe completely in Your promises and trust that You can change my life. Give me brave faith that fills my heart so I can speak boldly and confidently, trusting in Your perfect character and unchanging love. In Jesus's name, amen.

Faith Makes the Impossible Possible

Mark 9:23 NKJV

“Jesus said to him, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.”

There are moments in life when we feel powerless. It may be when a loved one is in trouble, when financial burdens seem overwhelming, or when long-held dreams feel out of reach. In Mark 9, we meet a father who was in that very place. His son was tormented by an unclean spirit, and in his desperation, he pleaded with Jesus, “If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us” (v. 22). His words revealed both pain and doubt.

Jesus answered with both a challenge and an invitation: “If you can believe, all things are possible.” He shifted the father’s focus from “if You can” to “if you believe.” The question was not about Jesus’ ability but about the father’s trust in Him. Jesus, full of compassion and power, was asking for faith.

The father’s response was honest and humble: “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief” (v. 24). That prayer shows us something important. Faith does not require perfection. Jesus honors real faith, even when it is mixed with weakness. He healed the boy not because the father’s faith was flawless, but because it was genuine and dependent.

True faith does not ignore reality. The boy was suffering. The disciples had failed. The father wrestled with doubt. Yet in the middle of all this, Jesus was still able. Faith looks honestly at the present while holding fast to the truth that God can change it.

Perhaps you find yourself in a similar struggle. You have prayed for healing, direction, or breakthrough, but uncertainty lingers. Take heart. Jesus does not demand perfect belief. He invites you to come with honesty, trusting Him to do what you cannot.

When our perspective shifts from “Lord, if You can” to “Lord, I believe You can,” the impossible becomes possible. Faith does not guarantee instant results, but it prepares our hearts to receive what

only God can give. It anchors us in His promises instead of our fears.

Today, let's trade our doubts for hope. Like that father, we can pray, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." And just as Jesus answered him, He will meet us with grace, power, and the assurance that all things are possible for those who believe.

Reflection

What situation in your life right now seems impossible to get through? What do you think would happen if you gave in completely and prayed with faith, no matter how small, trusting Jesus to act on your behalf?

Prayer

Oh, God, I bring my worries, questions, and fears to You. I ask for Your help in getting over my doubts. God, strengthen my faith. Help me to fully trust You, especially when things seem impossible. I know that with You by my side, I can do anything. I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Ask in Faith, Not in Doubt

James 1:6 NKJV

“Let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”

Life has a way of pushing us to the limit, like when we lose something we valued, our prayers go unanswered, or our future is unclear. We often turn to God in those times and ask for wisdom, direction, provision, or peace. James warns us, though, that how we ask is just as important as what we ask for.

James wrote to believers who were under a lot of stress because they were being persecuted and going through hard times. Like us, they had to fight the urge to wonder if God was really listening or willing to do something. James told them to pray with faith, not doubt. He wasn't talking about the normal questions that come up when things get hard. He was warning against having divided hearts, which lead to prayers that sound faithful on the outside but are full of doubt on the inside.

Doubt here means more than just being unsure; it means having a conflict within you between trusting God and relying on yourself. The heart asks, Will God really come through? and makes backup plans just in case. This kind of wavering makes us spiritually unsteady, like waves blown by the wind that react to whatever happens, instead of resting in what God has said.

Faith, on the other hand, keeps things steady. It reminds us of who God is: unchanging, faithful, wise, and good. When we ask in faith, we don't try to control God or make Him do what we want. Instead, we trust who He is and give in to what He wants, knowing that His answer—whether it is yes, no, or wait—is always the best one.

When was the last time you prayed with hope mixed with doubt, hoping for the best but getting ready for the worst? Many of us treat God like a vending machine: We put in our prayers and then wait nervously to see what comes out. But James wants us to pray like children who trust their father.

When you pray in faith, you hold on to what you know is true about God, even when nothing around you proves it. Faith says, "I trust You, even when I don't see the answer yet. I believe in You, even if the answer isn't what I wanted." That kind of faith makes us different. It changes our prayers from panic to peace, from trying to surrender.

Reflection

What in your life have you prayed about but still have doubts? What would it be like to give up control and really trust God's heart, timing, and wisdom for you?

Prayer

Father, I want to have more faith in You. I admit that I've doubted Your goodness and questioned Your timing. Teach me to pray with faith that doesn't waver, based on who You are, not on what I see or feel. Help me hold on to Your truth and calm the storms of doubt that are raging inside me. Lord, I believe. Help me with my unbelief and doubts. In Jesus' name, amen.

WEEK TWO

Speaking

The Power of Your Words

Proverbs 18:21 NKJV

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”

Do you realize how powerful your words are? Our words can heal emotional wounds or cause lasting grief, lift people up or tear them down. “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me” is a lie from the pit of hell. It implies that words don’t mean anything. Every conversation we have can have a huge effect on relationships, feelings, and the future.

Although the use of “death and life” in today’s passage may appear to be an exaggeration, many places in the book of Proverbs illuminate the profound impact words can have on people and situations. Harmful words sever relationships, erode self-esteem, cause deep emotional wounds, fracture trust, and make situations worse. Positive words, on the other hand, heal, lift spirits, give hope, and bring refreshment to tired spirits.

Think about a time in your life when a parent, teacher, or friend said something that made you feel bad about yourself or helped you feel better. Harsh criticism may have affected your self-esteem for a long time, while kind words likely gave you the strength you needed to get through a difficult situation.

What we say has a big impact on how we feel, what we think, and how we get along with others. If you often talk about bad things, criticize other people, or complain, you will feel bitter, anxious, and unhappy. Saying words of gratitude and encouragement and talking about good things most of the time can help you feel positive and happy, and other people will want to be around your uplifting presence.

Before you say something, think about how each word could affect someone who hears it. What kind of a lasting mark will it leave?

Spending time reading the affirmations, promises, and words of encouragement in the Bible will have an immense impact on what

you say. Speaking in line with what you read in God's Word will significantly influence your mental, social, and spiritual health.

James 1:2-4 (NKJV) tells us to "count it all joy" when we "fall into various trials." We are to be thankful in all things, though we don't need to be thankful for all things. Choosing to be thankful changes how we see situations, which affects how we feel inside. It makes us less worried and happier. It also helps us connect more intimately with others. Saying "Thank you" brings our feelings, our relationships, and our spirits to life.

Speaking words that give life can change your family, friends, and coworkers. Relationships will get stronger. People will be nicer and more respectful toward one another and will therefore work better together. Instead of places of stress and criticism, homes and businesses will be life-giving sources of support and encouragement.

Reflection

Think about the words you used yesterday, and consider how they could lead to either life or death. What can you do today to make sure you speak life more often?

Prayer

Lord, teach me to speak the truth in love, give encouragement, and express gratitude that reflects Your grace. I allow the Holy Spirit to shape my words and use them to breathe life into every interaction I have. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Guard Your Words

Matthew 12:36-37 NKJV

"I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Every word we say has the power to heal or hurt, lift or tear down, bless or curse. Jesus made this clear when He told us that God the Father remembers every careless, thoughtless, or idle word we say. And they have eternal meaning. He cautions us that on the day of judgment, our words will be carefully examined, and they will prove our innocence or guilt.

This passage from Matthew follows a confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees and other religious leaders of His time. These men knew the prophecies and had seen Christ perform miracles, but their hearts remained hard. Instead of admitting that the Holy Spirit was Jesus' source of power, they said that Beelzebub gave Him the ability to do miraculous signs and wonders. Their malicious accusations showed how corrupted their hearts were with pride, jealousy, and spiritual blindness. Jesus didn't hold back when He exposed their hypocrisy and called them a "brood of vipers" (Matthew 23:33).

Why did the Savior use such strong language? He knew their words showed who they really were deep down. When people's hearts are full of anger, pride, jealousy, and doubt, their mouths will betray them by saying what they're feeling inside. On the other hand, a person whose heart is full of humility, faith, grace, and love for God will say things that are true, encouraging, and full of life.

Even the most casual comments are important. Every cruel thing we say in anger, every reckless piece of gossip we share, and every thoughtless statement that hurts someone shows how we truly feel. If we want to live lives that honor God, we need to be very careful about what we say and how we say it.

James 3:8 (NIV) states, "No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison." But there is good news. We don't

have to try to control our tongues just by being determined or by following rules. God gives us His Holy Spirit, who gently corrects, convicts, and gives us strength. When we give our hearts to God, His Spirit changes the way we talk so that our words show who He is through us. Because of how gracious He is, He can use our words to heal broken relationships, give hope to people who are down, and clear up confusion. The things we talk about can be strong testimonies of God within us.

Reflection

Do your words reveal Christ? How can you intentionally use your language to glorify Christ today? What conversation should you revisit, correct, or start?

Prayer

Father, forgive me for my careless, angry, frustrated, or proud comments that went against You. Lord, cleanse my heart. Help me think clearly and exercise Your spirit of self-control so I can speak with kindness, honesty, and consideration. Let my words heal, inspire, and reflect Your presence in me. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Small Spark, Great Impact

James 3:5-6 NKJV

“Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.”

A tiny spark can start a fire that burns down an entire forest. James uses this strong image to show that even a small thing, like a word said in passing, can hurt a lot. Our tongues, though they are small like a big ship’s rudder, guide our words, which affect the lives of those around us.

James, Jesus’s half-brother, knew this truth on a personal level. Early on in his life, he turned down Jesus’ mission and used his words to mock Him and question His authority. But meeting the risen Christ changed James. He became one of the most humble and loyal leaders in the new church. His previous doubts became a burden he had to bear, and that memory probably deepened his conviction when he warned believers about the power of the tongue.

We speak without thinking every day, sometimes out of anger, pride, impatience, or bitterness. You might have been hurt by an offhand comment, gossip that ruined a close friendship, or criticism that left deep emotional scars. Once you say something, it’s difficult to take it back. Thoughtless words spread quickly, causing pain, confusion, and division.

But our tongues can also do a lot of good. A kind word can heal a broken heart. A humble apology can fix a broken relationship. Encouragement spoken at the right time can give someone hope and courage. With purpose, humility, and submission to the Holy Spirit, our words can bring about good change, hope, and healing.

Jesus is the best example of speech that has a purpose. His words gave people life, healing, forgiveness, and freedom. Jesus never spoke without thinking; every word was carefully chosen to bring people closer to God.

As Christians, we should speak in a way that shows His love, mercy, and truth. We are not only to stay away from harmful speech but also to strive for speech that builds others up, glorifies God, and brings His grace to every situation.

Reflection

Take a moment to think about the words you've said lately. Have they made other people better or worse? Is there someone whose feelings you've hurt with your words who needs you to say you're sorry? Or a friend who needs you to cheer them up today? What steps can you take right now to make sure that your words consistently show the heart and grace of Christ?

Prayer

Dear God, forgive me for every careless word I've said and every spark I've started without thinking. Help me understand how important my words are. Holy Spirit, guide my tongue so that my words bring life, healing, and hope. Lord, let my words always show Your love, grace, and truth. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Words That Give Life

Ephesians 4:29 NKJV

“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

Think about a time when someone hurt you deeply with careless criticism that left scars that lasted long after the conversation was over. Now think of a time when someone’s words gave you strength at just the right time, renewing your hope, courage, or sense of purpose. Paul makes it clear in today’s verse that we are responsible for how we speak. Every word we say should have a purpose: to build up, encourage, and extend grace to others.

Paul knew how powerful speech filled with grace could be because he had experienced it himself. Paul had been a harsh critic of Christ and His followers, but when he met Jesus in person, his heart and speech changed completely. Even from prison, his words showed grace, truth, and support. His advice to the Ephesian believers, and to us today, is simple but difficult: Stop using words that are hurtful, careless, and destructive. Instead, make a point of saying things that encourage others to be more like Christ.

Negative talk abounds in our modern world. Gossip, criticism, cynicism, and complaints are common in casual conversations, work discussions, and on social media. As Christians, we are called to rise above the culture. Our words should be full of grace, patience, and kindness. Every time we talk to someone, whether it’s a spouse, child, coworker, or stranger, we have a chance to show God’s grace and love through what we say.

Think of the things you say as seeds that you plant in the hearts of other people. Every word has the power to bear fruit, whether that fruit is pain and bitterness or joy and encouragement. Paul’s message is clear: Speak in a way that reflects God’s character and brings life and grace into every conversation.

What does this look like in real life? When you’re angry, choose to be silent instead of criticizing. Tell family members that they are valuable. Thank a coworker in a way that shows you mean it. Remain

calm when situations get heated. Say you're sorry when you realize you've offended or hurt someone.

Jesus spoke life to everyone, even from the cross. The right words can unite people, repair broken relationships, and give weary people hope. They can demonstrate how Christ has changed us. Daily opportunities abound to speak grace words like Jesus did.

Reflection

Think about the conversations you had yesterday. Would people say your words were kind and encouraging or harsh and critical? Today, who in your life needs words of grace and support? How can you use your words to build up instead of tear down?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, empower me to use my words to edify, encourage, and bring comfort. Help me to be aware of what I say and to speak with purpose so that my words reveal Your grace in me. Remind me that every conversation is a chance to show Your love and kindness to others. May what I say today bring life and hope to everyone who hears it. In Jesus's name, amen.

Words Reveal the Heart

Luke 6:45 NKJV

“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

Words don't just appear out of nowhere; they come from our hearts. Have you ever said something mean and then quickly said, "I didn't mean that"? The uncomfortable truth is that what we say shows what's really going on inside us. Our conversations are like windows into our souls that show how we truly feel.

When we speak to others with kindness, generosity, and encouragement, our hearts are full of love and grace. When anger, bitterness, resentment, or criticism comes out, that indicates deeper problems, like unresolved pain, insecurity, pride, or lack of forgiveness.

What we say is an indication of how spiritually and emotionally healthy we are. Jesus taught this important truth because He knows how people work. Just changing the way we speak doesn't bring about lasting change. Biting your tongue or counting to ten might stop you from saying something mean in the moment, but true transformation takes more work. It requires dealing with the state of your heart.

Trying to clean up your speech without dealing with your heart is like polishing the outside of a cup while leaving the inside dirty. We need to ask God to be with us and allow His Word to cleanse us from the inside out.

How can we fill our hearts with good things? By asking the Holy Spirit to uncover and heal our hidden wounds, bitterness, pain, and unforgiveness. By intentionally and consistently reading God's Word and saturating our minds and hearts with His promises, wisdom, and truth. As we regularly align ourselves with God, our speech will naturally reveal who He is in us.

How different would your speech be if it always showed that Christ

was in you? Think about the people you live with, work with, and hang out with. Imagine a world where every conversation embodied genuine wisdom, love, support, and patience. How would this impact your life and your community? Our words can change relationships, heal wounds, and build bridges when they are spoken from a heart that is completely surrendered to God.

Reflection

Take a moment today to think about what your recent words have revealed about your heart. Look for patterns that show your deeper needs. Is there pain that needs to be healed? Anger that needs to be released? Fear that needs to be replaced by God's peace? Ask God to help you with these things. Let Him fill your heart more deeply with His love, peace, and truth. As He does, your words will reflect this change inside you, bringing blessings, hope, and encouragement to yourself and others.

Prayer

Father, I understand how strong the link is between my heart and my words. Forgive me for the times when I've said things that did not reflect Your heart. Change me from the inside out so that my speech shows how good and gracious You are. Clean my heart, heal my wounds, and fill me with Your love and truth. In Jesus' name, amen.

Healing Words

Proverbs 15:4 NKJV

“A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.”

Recall a time when someone’s words inspired you or lifted your spirits. It may have been a parent expressing pride in you, a friend providing support, or a mentor offering affirmation. Those transformative words had a profound effect on you. A virtuous tongue, like a healthy tree that consistently produces life-sustaining fruit, is characterized by grace, wisdom, and kindness.

Now think of a time when someone’s words inflicted harm on you because they were spoken in anger, frustration, or harsh criticism. Unsavory words in tense situations can break a person’s spirit and leave them with emotional scars that may take years to heal. God wants believers to be mindful of our words because “perverseness” in speech “breaks the spirit.” This harm may not be obvious in the moment, but it will have a significant effect on self-esteem, relationships with other people, and emotional health.

It’s easy to underestimate the impact of our words in casual conversations. Quips, rumors, gossip, and harsh criticism can erode and harm relationships. But kindness, sincere praise, and gentle encouragement have the power to strengthen bonds, restore hope, and nourish hearts.

During His time on earth, Jesus demonstrated how effective life-producing speech can be. Even when He was talking about immoral behavior, He never used His words to tear others down. Jesus could have denounced the adulterous woman, as the scribes and Pharisees did, and allowed her to be stoned. Instead, He encouraged her to seek healing and restoration, thereby restoring her dignity.

As disciples of Christ, we must be mindful of our speech and choose our words carefully and deliberately. When we are firmly rooted in God’s love, the things we say will have beneficial results. If we spend time in His presence and let His Word shape who we are on the inside, how we act on the outside will reflect and reveal that. Our daily interactions present myriad opportunities to serve as sources

of healing and restoration. How could our families, friends, and jobs change if our words continually fostered positivity instead of causing distress?

Reflection

Think about your recent conversations with family members, friends, and coworkers. Did you use your words to inspire or deflate them? How can you intentionally choose to infuse healing and vitality into your relationships today?

Prayer

Father, I pray that the Holy Spirit will make me more conscientious of the words I speak. May He guard my tongue and heart as He directs me to speak wisely and compassionately. I want my voice be a manifestation of Your healing and love. I choose to exemplify Your grace in my speech. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Words of Spirit and Life

John 6:63 NKJV

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”

We live in a world full of words. We hear and say countless things all day. But how many of those words feed our souls? Most of the words we hear make us feel empty, tired, even depressed. But Jesus’ words are life and spirit. They have the power to heal, renew, and strengthen.

Think of a time when you felt discouraged. You might have had to deal with an impossible problem, a personal failure, or just the stress of everyday life. Then someone said something encouraging that was based on God’s truth. Suddenly, your perspective changed. Your faith was renewed, and your hope was rekindled. Why? Because the Word of God is spirit and life. It revives weary souls, heals wounds, and reignites deferred dreams.

There is a stark difference between words of the flesh, which come from our natural ambitions, desires, or perspectives, and the words of the Spirit. The flesh speaks selfish worries, wavering opinions, and doubt. When spoken by us or shared by others, these words may make us feel better for a while, but in the end they leave us emotionally drained and spiritually hungry.

On the other hand, what Jesus said always matters. His promises give us hope that never wavers. His lessons show us how to live a real and full life. His promises of love and forgiveness bring healing. His teachings lovingly challenge us and turn our hearts and minds toward His eternal goals. Every word He said has the power to change lives and destinies.

When Jesus stood before a tomb and said, “Lazarus, come forth” (John 11:43 KJV), He literally raised a man from the dead, bring him back to life with His words. When Jesus said to Peter, “Come” (Matthew 14:29 NKJV), Peter literally walked on the water, but spiritually he walked on faith in the word of the Son of God. Jesus’s words changed everything for these two men. It made the .

impossible possible. The Great I AM is within us, and if we rely on Him, we can do anything.

If you read the life-giving words of Jesus every day, how would that change the problems, worries, or circumstances you face? Peace and faith could replace fear and worry. Worries of not being good enough could turn into solid faith and confidence based on Christ's promises.

Choose words that are full of spirit and life. Let God's Word fill your mind and change how you think, speak, and act. When we align our hearts and words with Jesus', we become channels of His life-giving power, which has a positive effect on others. Our words, when full of God's Spirit, can lift people out of despair, lead them to the truth, and give them hope that will last.

Read and think about God's words in Scripture. Let them sink in deeply enough to change your heart and show up in your conversations. When you speak from the Spirit of God, you can bring life to every conversation you have.

Reflection

Think about your recent conversations with family members, friends, and coworkers. Did you use your words to inspire or deflate them? How can you intentionally choose to infuse healing and vitality into your relationships today?

Prayer

Father, I pray that the Holy Spirit will make me more conscientious of the words I speak. May He guard my tongue and heart as He directs me to speak wisely and compassionately. I want my voice be a manifestation of Your healing and love. I choose to exemplify Your grace in my speech. In the name of Jesus, amen.



WEEK THREE

Believe



Week 3 - Connect 21



The Power of His Promise

Isaiah 55:11 NKJV

“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”

Have you ever made a promise you meant to keep, but something came up later that made it impossible? You might have planned a get-together or promised to be available for a friend, but then you got sick, had an emergency, or were just too tired. No matter how sincere we are, our promises are limited by time, ability, and circumstances.

God’s promises are reliable because they are backed up by the fact that He never changes and has unlimited power. Not only is everything He says true, it is guaranteed. Isaiah gives us a strong image of this when he says that the Word of God never comes back empty. It always does what it’s supposed to do.

In the beginning, God made something out of nothing with His words. When He said, “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3 NKJV), light didn’t wait or hesitate. That same creative power is still at work today, making, keeping, and fixing things. When God speaks peace into your chaos, strength into your weakness, or healing into your pain, His Word doesn’t just give you hope; it makes things happen.

This truth is hard to remember in the waiting times. When we’re holding on to promises of healing, clarity, or a breakthrough, but we’re not seeing much progress, it’s easy to wonder if God really sees us or if His promises still hold true. But waiting is part of the process. It took years for Abraham to get his promised son, Isaac. Joseph had to deal with years of betrayal and prison before his prophetic dreams came true. Israel spent forty years wandering in the desert before entering the Promised Land.

God never puts off keeping His promises because He is too busy or forgetful. They happen exactly as He planned them, in His wisdom and for His eternal purposes. His timing tests our faith, but it also makes it stronger if we don’t lose sight of His faithfulness.

You might be in a waiting season right now, hoping for a new beginning, a healing, or a change in your life. Let Isaiah's words remind you that God is working behind the scenes to get things done that you cannot see yet.

In the meantime, make sure your words match His. We work with what He's doing in us when we speak in agreement with His truth instead of out of fear or anger. This doesn't mean ignoring pain; it means putting our faith in something bigger than what we feel.

Reflection

What promise from God are you holding on to today? How does having faith in His unchanging Word help you wait patiently instead of getting angry?

Prayer

Dear God, thank You for Your Word, which never changes. Help me to believe in You even when the proof isn't clear. Keep my heart anchored in the fact that Your promises never fail. Achieve Your goals for my life at the right time, which You alone know. In Jesus' name, amen.

Meditate for Success

Joshua 1:8 NKJV

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

In our pursuit of success, we often look to external methods—books, seminars, social media, podcasts, to discover the right formula. While these resources may offer some value, the Bible gives us a clear and timeless foundation for true success.

When Moses died, Joshua found himself at a pivotal crossroads, suddenly burdened with the enormous responsibility of leading Israel into the Promised Land. He faced overwhelming uncertainty, unknown battles, and the same fears and doubts we often encounter when stepping into new seasons or major responsibilities. Yet instead of giving Joshua strategies for warfare or leadership techniques, God pointed him to something greater, His Word.

God’s instructions emphasize two things: meditation and obedience. Meditation involves pondering God’s Word, His character, and His promises, then repeating what He says over and over and applying it to our lives. It is not enough to simply read the Word; we must digest it and allow it to shape our conversations, decisions, and actions.

God told Joshua to always have His Word on his lips. Why? Talking about God’s truths makes them stronger and puts His promises deep into our hearts. Joshua could confidently speak about God’s promises because he based his view of life on divine truth instead of human fear.

Meditation alone isn’t the end goal. God adds, “that you may observe to do,” reminding us that reflection must lead to action. True meditation transforms the heart and produces obedience. The truths we allow to take root within us naturally shape our choices and behavior, aligning us with God’s perfect will. Joshua’s strength and success came not just from thinking about God’s word but from allowing it to guide his daily steps in obedience.

What does this mean for us today? We all have problems to deal with, like making career choices, handling relationship problems, worrying about money, and taking care of our health. Often, these difficulties seem too big or hard to solve. We might feel scared that we won't succeed. But God's advice to Joshua is still relevant now: Base your life on His Word, meditate on His promises, and do what He says.

How different would our lives be if our first reaction to stress or uncertainty was to meditate on God's promises? What if we exchanged focusing on the problem for focusing on the solution: God's Word and His promises? The shift in our mindset would have a significant effect on our responses and choices and, ultimately, what happens in the end.

According to God, success is not measured by popularity, wealth or power. In the Bible, success means living in line with God's plan, following His Word, and standing strong on His promises. This kind of life brings happiness, peace, and lasting meaning.

Make meditating on God's Word part of your daily lifestyle. Choose promises that apply to your specific situation and think about them with intentionality. Let the Word help you make choices, ease your worries, and motivate you to act. God wants us to have true prosperity, which flows naturally from a heart that is fully in line with His truth and plans.

Reflection

Are you feeling worried or anxious about anything right now? How might meditating on certain Scriptures change the way you think about, respond to, and make decisions about this issue?

Prayer

Father, help me to meditate deeply on Your Word every day. Put Your promises in my heart so that they guide everything I think and do. Help me to follow Your Word and do what You say. Guide me toward real, lasting success that brings You glory and fulfills Your plan. In Jesus' name, amen.

Capturing Your Thoughts

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 NKJV

“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

Your mind is a battlefield. This war is not fought with bullets or bombs but with beliefs, fears, habits, and thoughts. Paul makes it very clear that we need to win the battle in our minds if we want to live lives shaped by Christ. That means facing and breaking down strongholds of the enemy, which are lies, entrenched thought patterns, and beliefs that go against what the Bible says.

Strongholds do not emerge overnight. They are the result of repeated wounds, lingering fears, cultural distortions, and deeply rooted insecurities that go unaddressed. Thoughts like I'll never be enough, God won't come through for me, or My past disqualifies me develop roots and eventually grow tall trees in our minds. If these thoughts are left unchecked, they become the lens through which we see ourselves, and they stunt our growth and distort our identity.

Paul doesn't just tell us what's wrong; he also gives us a plan. Our weapons in this fight are not physical; they are spiritual and strong because of God. Prayer, worship, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit are not just religious practices; they are powerful tools that can destroy any argument or way of thinking that goes against God's truth.

You don't have to pretend that hard things don't exist. When you recognize that your thoughts aren't in line with the Word of God, you can decide to put them under His control. When you start to feel scared, ask yourself, Is this from God? If shame creeps in, fight it with what the Bible says about who you are. When doubt sounds louder than hope, you can stop it with God's promises.

This needs to be done consistently. Our minds are like a TV or radio station, and it is our responsibility to change the channel as often as necessary. Over time, this habit will alter the way you think and live.

Strongholds will fall, peace will grow, and your life will start to reflect Christ.

Paul's message to the church in Corinth wasn't just abstract theology. It was a call to take back spiritual power, beginning with the mind. These believers had let pride, worldly wisdom, and division grow. Paul's message to them, and us, is to fight back, not with mere words or charm but with the truth that comes only from the Word of God.

Reflection

What lies keep coming back into your mind? What does the Bible say that contradicts them? What one thought can you start to take captive today to better align with the truth of Christ?

Prayer

Lord, I want my mind to reflect Your truth instead of the lies I've believed. Help me see and deal with every thought that puts itself above Your Word. Give me the wisdom and self-control to make my thoughts obedient to Christ. Let Your truth break down every stronghold and set me free for good. In Jesus' name, amen.

Thoughts That Transform

Philippians 4:8 NKJV

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”

There is always a conversation going on in your head. After a difficult conversation, you might play back your mistakes over and over. When your bank account gets too low, fear whispers doom. This inner voice may be quiet, but it is strong, and it can gradually change how you see God, other people, and yourself.

Paul’s advice to the Philippians is not to “think happy thoughts.” It is to make a conscious effort to train our minds to see life through the eyes of truth, beauty, and virtue. This command doesn’t ignore the hard facts of life. It shows us how to deal with them without letting them take over our lives.

We can’t always control what happens around us, but we can choose what we think about. Paul gives us clear goals for our meditation: things that are true, good, lovely, pure, beautiful, and worthy of praise. Why? Because our thoughts affect how we feel and our spiritual health. What we ponder shapes our choices, our words, and our relationships.

If fear takes over your thoughts, you will live cautiously and defensively. Believing lies about your worth will affect how you interact with others and how you accept God’s love. If you purposely fill your mind with good and pure things, you will see clearly, speak wisely, and love freely.

This mental discipline doesn’t just happen. It requires spiritual awareness and daily focus. You can’t expect to be mentally and spiritually healthy if you don’t guard and guide your thoughts, just like you can’t expect to be physically healthy if you don’t eat and exercise.

In this mental battle, God’s Word is what keeps you grounded.

When bad thoughts come in, the truths in Scripture give you something to hold on to. If anxiety rises, remembering His promises helps you feel better. Though the world may be in chaos, concentrating on God keeps your spirit at peace.

Paul doesn't just tell Christians to "think better." He calls us to meditate. That means to stay focused on good things, to go over them many times, to practice them in our daily lives. To ponder God's truth, beauty, and greatness and let them change our hearts and minds until they affect everything we do.

In a world that is always trying to scare, anger, and distract you, God wants you to focus on things that reflect Him. Then you'll feel calm and clear.

Reflection

What have you been thinking about the most lately? What do your thoughts say about where your heart is? What ideas have been influencing the way you think? What do your thoughts say about where your heart is? What truth from the Bible can you start meditating on today to refresh your mind and heart?

Prayer

God, today I give my thoughts to You. Help me not to think about fear, shame, or negativity but about what is true, pure, and beautiful. Let Your promises keep my mind steady, and let Your truth guide my feelings and choices. Your Word will renew me, and my thoughts will show Your peace. In the name of Jesus, amen.

The Fight That Matters

1 Timothy 6:12 NKJV

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

We all face battles in this life. For some, fear lingers like a shadow. For others, it may be temptation, doubt, or waiting for something deeply important. Timothy knew what it was to feel discouraged, pressured, and spiritually opposed. That is why Paul urged him to “fight the good fight of faith.”

This fight is not about proving ourselves or earning God’s approval. And it is not one we fight in our own strength. Faith can feel hard to hold on to when lies seem louder than truth or when giving up looks easier than pressing forward. Every believer will encounter that kind of struggle.

Paul calls it a “good fight” not because it feels easy, but because it has eternal value. It is worth engaging in because it aligns our lives with heaven. It strengthens us against the pull to drift, settle, or surrender. Most importantly, it keeps our eyes fixed on Christ, who has already secured the ultimate victory at the cross.

When Paul tells us to “lay hold on eternal life,” he is not only pointing to life after death. Eternal living begins now through a relationship with God, sustained by grace and anchored in hope. To “lay hold” means to embrace this gift fully and refuse to let it slip away.

So how do we fight the good fight of faith? We remember who God is and what He has promised, even when circumstances press against us. We stay rooted in the Word for strength. We pray, releasing fear and receiving His peace. We surround ourselves with people who remind us that we are not in this battle alone.

Paul also mentions “the good confession,” urging Timothy to remember his public declaration of faith. Think back to when you said yes to Jesus. Something eternal began in that moment. But when life grows complicated, that confession can fade into the

background. Paul calls us to bring it back to the forefront, to live with a steady remembrance of who we are and why we follow Christ.

When the fight feels long, weariness and discouragement can creep in. But God's Spirit is with you, strengthening, guiding, and reminding you that your faith is not fragile. It is anchored in Christ, and He has already won.

So, hold fast to your faith. Grasp the life that is yours in Jesus. The fight is worth it.

Reflection

Where do you feel weary in your faith right now? What truths about God or His promises can you hold on to as you keep fighting the good fight?

Prayer

Father, thank You for giving me a life of faith that is worth fighting for. When I'm tired, give me strength. Help me to remember what is true, hold on to Your promises, and live the life You've given me. Every day, remind me that I'm not alone in this fight. In Jesus' name, amen.

The Type of Prayer That Makes a Difference

James 5:16 NKJV

“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

On some days, our prayers are long and strong. On other days they can feel weak and unsure. Whether you pray through tears or just stand there hoping God hears you, James reminds us that our prayers are not only heard, they are powerful.

The first thing this verse urges us to do in prayer is confession. It can seem dangerous to admit your mistakes in a world that values perfection. But this is crucial. We make room for grace, forgiveness, and connection when we confess our faults to each other, not just to God. You don't have to tell everyone about your deepest problems, but you should be totally honest with someone you trust. Being vulnerable doesn't mean you're weak. It is the ground where healing can begin.

The next thing this verse encourages us to do is pray for one another. When things get tough, we tend to pull away from others. But God made us to be part of a community.

One of the best ways to love someone is to pray for that person. When you pray for people, you give their problems to God so He can help them heal.

James says that a righteous person's prayer, when it is full of faith and passion, gets things done. Righteousness isn't about being perfect. Here, it means being in a good relationship with God through Christ. You don't have to be able to speak well or have spiritual credentials. You just need to be honest, have faith, and be willing to show up.

“Fervent” prayer is focused, passionate, and steady. It's not loud or showy. You pray as if you believe God is listening and will do something. You keep coming back even when the answers take a long time. This kind of prayer comes from a relationship, not religious duty.

Right after this verse, James talks about Elijah. James says he was “a man with a nature like ours.” But he prayed “earnestly,” and no rain fell on the land for three and a half years. Then he prayed again, and the clouds parted. His prayers weren’t strong because of who he was. The God he prayed to made them strong.

Are you tired of praying for a healing or breakthrough that hasn’t happened yet or a weight that hasn’t lifted? Don’t lose hope. Your prayers are not in vain. They are in the ground, like a seed. And they will bear fruit for God at His chosen and perfect time.

Being honest heals. Praying for people makes everyone stronger. And prayers that come from faith and are said with passion can change circumstances, encourage people’s hearts, and let heaven’s power flow.

Reflection

Is there something in your life you’ve stopped praying for because you haven’t seen any results? How could going back to honest, passionate prayer, both alone and with others, bring about healing and renewal?

Prayer

Thank You, Father, for reminding me that prayer works and is powerful. Help me to pray with faith and hope. Let my prayers show Your heart, and let Your healing power flow. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Believing Without Seeing

Hebrews 11:1 NKJV

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Faith isn't just wishing for something to happen; it's believing in God's promises even when you can't see their fulfillment. It's holding strong to faith that what God has said will happen, even if there isn't any physical proof just yet.

The writer of Hebrews says that faith is both “substance” and “evidence.” These two words describe something concrete, not vague or emotional. This faith doesn't depend on how you feel; it depends on the unchanging truth of who God is and what He has done.

When things go our way or we see our prayers answered the way we want, it's easy to believe. But our true faith shows when we're in the middle of a challenging situation and nothing seems to be moving. Abraham believed God's promise of a son even though he and his wife were too old to have children. Noah built an ark when the sky was clear. These actions were not based on blind hope; they were based on what God said.

You may be hoping for peace in the middle of chaos, reconciliation in a broken relationship, or help during a financial crisis. You can move forward with confidence even though your situation isn't what you want it to be because you know that God is working on it.

Faith changes how we see suffering, delay, and uncertainty. Instead of doubting or being afraid, we expect something. This gives us the strength to act as if God has already answered, because we know He will in His perfect time and way. Your faith may not be visible right now. But like a seed buried under the ground, it is taking root and getting ready to bear fruit in God's time.

Faith is both objective and personal. It's not based on feelings, situations, or imagination. It is based on the Word of God, which

tells us who He is, what He has done, and what He has promised. Your faith will grow stronger as you learn more about His character, not because of what you see but because of who you know Him to be.

Reflection

What promise from God are you holding on to right now, even though you can't see it coming true yet? Are your thoughts and actions in line with a faith that believes God will keep His promises?

Prayer

Thank You, Father, for calling me to live by faith. Help me to hold on to my hope in Your promises and not let what I see shake me. Show me how to live today with the faith that Your Word is true, You deliver on Your promises, and You will always be there for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Thank you!

We pray that these 21 days have sparked spiritual growth and deeper connection with God. While Connect 21 may be coming to an end, this is not the finish line, it's the foundation. Our hope is that this time of fasting and prayer has helped you establish consistent habits that continue to strengthen your faith and shape your daily walk with God.

As you move forward, remember: what you've built in these past 21 days can become a rhythm of life. Keep seeking, keep believing, and keep trusting that God will continue to move in and through you.

How to Keep the Fire Burning *at Home*

- **Keep prayer a priority**
Talk to God before you talk to anyone else.
- **Speak life**
Over yourself, your family, and your future.
- **Make space to listen**
Prayer is a conversation, not a monologue.
- **Stay in the Word daily**
Let scripture fuel your prayer life.

How to Keep the Fire Burning *at Linked UP North*

- **Take your Next Steps**
Register for our 4 step membership classes.
- **Get Involved**
Join a Dream Team and serve with purpose.

- ▶ **Find Community**
Be a part of a Connect Group where faith grows stronger together. | *Learn more at linkedupnorth.com/connectgroups*

- ▶ **Go Public with Your Faith**
Register for Water Baptism.

- ▶ **Continue Your Personal Growth**
Attend a Purpose Central class to learn how God uniquely designed you to make an impact. | *Learn more at linkedupnorth.com/classes*

Connect 21 was a journey, but prayer is a lifestyle.

Let this be the beginning of something lasting, powerful, and personal.

S.O.A.P.

Scripture: _____

Observation: _____

Application: _____

Prayer: _____

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