

# 2016 Congregational Fast

January 11th – February 29th, 2016

“The Church On A Mission For The Master”



**United Institutional Baptist Church  
802 East Market Street  
Greensboro, North Carolina**

**Rev. Dr. Johnny R. Freeman, Pastor**

# The Church On A Mission For The Master

Most organizations these days have a mission statement. A mission statement represents the primary purpose that organization seeks to serve or accomplish. While most organizations usually determine their own mission the church's mission comes from its founder and sustainer Jesus Christ! Jesus gave the church its mission to "go into all the world and make disciples of all men..."

Too often the church has been more inwardly focused than mission oriented. That's the reason why this year's congregational fast focuses on the 'church on mission for the Master!' Whenever church members are more interested in their individual needs and wants, without any attention being given to seeing people come to Christ then the church is essentially neglecting its primary mission. Church it's time for us to get back to doing the mission God has placed us in this community to do.

During the next 50 days of fasting and prayer let's seize this moment, by preparing ourselves to be the church on mission for the Master! When the church is on mission we are praying for the salvation of our family members, our friends and for people everywhere. When the church is on mission we're looking for opportunities to share our faith with others and trusting the Holy Spirit to lead us as witnesses for Christ. I said when the church is on mission we're intentional about setting a godly example so that those who don't know Jesus are able to see Christ in us. When the church is on mission we remain committed to sowing seeds for Christ into people's lives recognizing always that every time we share our faith our witness has the potential to change people's lives.

It's my prayer for this great family of God that this time of fasting will inspire us to recommit ourselves to be the faithful witnesses God is calling us to be! On behalf of the Freeman family to our United Institutional Baptist Church family, Happy New Year and God's richest blessings for 2016!

*Pastor Johnny R. Freeman*

# CONGREGATIONAL FAST

## “The Church On A Mission For The Master”

January 11<sup>th</sup> – February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Tuesdays ONLY

**Fast Time Period:**

**6:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.**

No meat, No sweets (desserts), No soda

All other foods permissible except items listed above Fish, Fowl  
(chicken, turkey, duck)

Children’s Fast (with Parental Guidance)

**6:00am – 6:00pm**

No **sodas**, No **sweets**, No **video games**, No **secular music**,

No **TV** (*except for school assignments*)

### **NOTE:**

If you are sick and/or under medical care, taking medication(s), have a diagnosed medical condition or disease, pregnant or lactating, or younger than 21 PLEASE CONSULT WITH YOUR DOCTOR OR PARENTS OR GUARDIAN BEFORE FASTING. United Institutional Baptist Church is not responsible for adverse effects of fasting under the above mentioned conditions.

# DAY ONE

## THE CHURCH ON A MISSION FOR THE MASTER

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: The bible says in 2 Peter 3:9 '...that it is not God's will that any should perish...' Since Adam and Eve fell from grace in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-19) God has been on a mission to redeem humanity to a right relationship with Himself. God demonstrated His love for us by sending His Son for us while we were yet sinners separated from Him! When God saved us He also commissioned us to join Him in fulfilling His plan of salvation in the world. The church is on a mission for the Master. The way we know we are on mission is when we're praying, seeking and seizing every opportunity God gives us to share the love of Christ with others. Now run and tell that!

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Lord, Your word says that 'it is not Your will that any should perish!' We thank You for saving us from eternal separation from You, and we pray You will burden our hearts to feel the love You have for those who remain dead in their sins. Help us keep our focus on fulfilling the mission You have given us to make disciples for Jesus! In Christ our Lord's name we pray Amen!

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Matthew 28:16-20

Pastor Johnny R. Freeman

## DAY TWO

### A CHANGED PEOPLE CALLED TO CHANGE THE WORLD

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: There's no doubt that our world has a multitude of problems. People are anxious about where the next terrorist plot will be. Our world continues to be faced with hunger, mass immigration, economic inequality, war and the list of global problems continues to be felt everywhere. Given the magnitude of problems we face today it's hard to imagine how one person or one church can make a difference. According to the message given to us in Second Chronicles we are capable of accomplishing far more than we can imagine. The word of God teaches us that we are God's agents of change in the world. After all, we who are in Christ we are connected to the only Source capable of bringing about the change the world really needs. We who have been changed by the power of God's Spirit are living witnesses that God can turn any person's life or nation around no matter how helpless or hopeless things may seem. As born again believers in Jesus Christ we are called by God to be His witnesses in a world that so desperately needs a word of hope! Although we don't have any power to change people's lives we can point them to the ONE who can! We can tell the nations, one person at a time, that the same Savior who has changed our lives God is still able to bring about a change in them.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Heavenly Father, You have saved us and call us to be Your witnesses in the world You created. Even though the world is filled with so many perplexing problems Your word reminds us that You are still able to bring about the change that we need today. Give us the faith to believe in Your ability to work through us, to sow seeds of Your word in the hearts of others that will lead to a life changing experience in them even as You have brought about in us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!

SCRIPTURE READINGS: 2 Chronicles 7:12-16

**Pastor Johnny R. Freeman**

# DAY THREE

## A TIME TO BE BOLD

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: It seems these days that individuals and groups with an agenda, or cause to promote, they are advancing their beliefs and demanding to be heard and respected for their particular views. Whether it's protesting the world's reliance on fossil fuels and their adverse effects on the environment, or the constant messaging on TV shows and movies, promoting the legitimacy of gay and lesbian rights, even the murders of innocent workers at a planned parenthood facility in the name of preventing abortions, individuals and groups are boldly promoting their agenda in the world today. That raises a question for our consideration today. As a church, established by God in this community and this city, are we bold and courageous in declaring our message about Jesus, or are we keeping our faith a secret? It takes faith and courage to compete with the other messaging for the hearts of men, women, boys and girls. However, as members of the family of God, who have experienced the grace and goodness of God we do have a message that is worth sharing! This is **A TIME TO BE BOLD!** Not in an arrogant way, or with a spirit of superiority, as though we think we're better than the sinner man but with a sense of urgency, because we recognize that time is winding up and we don't want to miss an opportunity to share the message of Jesus Christ with as many people as God gives us an open door!

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Heavenly Father, Your world is ever-changing, for what society deems socially acceptable continues to vary from generation to generation. But we thank You for being the same yesterday, today and forever! It is still Your deepest desire to reach the masses. Your will remains that all will come to the knowledge of Your saving grace through Jesus Christ! Help us to be bold and unflinching in the midst of this rapidly changing world, so that through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us we may be the witnesses for Christ that You are calling us to be. When we would be anxious give us strength and when we would want to be silent give us boldness to speak the message You give us to share. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 9:16-17

**Pastor Johnny R. Freeman**

# DAY FOUR

## BREAKING THE HUDDLE

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Everyone has seen a football team huddled together to talk about the next play they want to run during a game. The coach sends in the play that he wants the team to run, and then the quarterback huddles up with the team and goes over everyone's assignment. Don't miss this; everyone on the team has an assignment! During the huddle, the quarterback gives everyone their assignment. The lineman receives instructions about the blocking scheme for either a run or a passing play. The running backs are positioned to either run the ball, or provide protection for the quarterback so he has time to complete a passing play, and the receivers are told how to line up as well as which particular routes to run for a passing play. Again, **everyone on the team has their assignment!** This is an analogy for the church's mission today. Every week the church huddles for worship, bible study, ministry meetings and other occasions to be equipped, informed and empowered for the mission God gives us to fulfill. However, when it comes to doing the mission, it appears the church continues to remain in huddle mode, in that too often we are not going forward from the church to fulfill our mission of sharing what we learn with those that aren't in church. We go home, we go to work, school, or wherever we go once we leave the church and we hardly ever share the good news of Jesus Christ with others. It's time to **BREAK THE HUDDLE** and get the word out to those who don't know Jesus, that He is real and He is the One who is able to save, deliver and set free!

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Lord, we thank You for our church, and our church family, and for the wonderful relationships and the warm caring fellowship we have with one another. We are also grateful for the inspiring pastors and teachers we have here at United that speak the word that builds us up and strengthens us in our faith! Help us to understand that You established Your church to encourage, as well as equip and empower us for an assignment beyond the walls of United. Give us a willing and trusting heart to carry the message we receive from this church, and share it with those who desperately need to learn about Your love so they too will come to know Your Son Jesus! In Jesus' name, Amen!

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Acts 2:1-11

**Pastor Johnny R. Freeman**

# DAY FIVE

## SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE THE GOSPEL MESSAGE DAILY

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: The bible says ‘that it is not God’s will that any should perish but that all would come to the knowledge of Christ.’ God is absolutely passionate about people. Throughout the bible we see that God is unrelenting and never ceasing in expressing His will for all men to have a personal relationship with Him. When God called Abraham to a special covenant it wasn’t just about the blessing of Divine favor and provision God wanted Abraham to be a part of God’s plan of redemption in the world. It was Abraham’s obedience and trust in God to lead, guide, as well as provide him with everything he would need, to fulfill God’s purpose for his life. God did not let Abraham down nor will God fail us today! Our message today reminds us that God can be trusted to lead us and give us opportunities to fulfill our mission as His faithful witnesses today! The example has been set by faithful witnesses of old that whenever we ask God for His direction each day He will give us an opportunity each day to share the gospel message with someone who needs to know about Jesus. When we seek God for the words to share we will find that God will give us the words we need. When we knock gently with the love of Jesus in our words we will discover that the Holy Spirit will open someone’s heart to receive the good news of Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Lord, You are always working all around us. We acknowledge that too often we miss seeing what You are doing all around us because we are too busy with our own lives to seek You. Give us that gentle reminder each day, to stop and take the time to seek Your face, for the strength and direction we need to be Your witnesses, each and every day that You give to us. Help us to be ever mindful that You want everyone to experience the same saving grace that has transformed our lives and give us at least one opportunity each day to share a message about Jesus with someone. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Acts 14:20, 16:11, 20:15)

**Pastor Johnny R. Freeman**



# DAY SIX

## BEING FAITHFUL IN SHOWING GOD'S LOVE

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: In First Corinthians chapter 13 we are able to see a portrait of God's love. We are taught in this epic chapter that 'love is patient; love is kind. Love does not envy; is not boastful; is not conceited; does not act improperly; is not selfish; is not [easily] provoked; does not keep a record of wrongs; finds no joy in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.' (HCSB) What a high standard to try and live up to. The fact is it's impossible to love at such a high level with our own strength or human will. It takes a life changing experience of God's love to be able to love at this level. Indeed, we need the power of the Holy Spirit working in us to help us love others as God loves us. It is only through God's Spirit working in us that we are able to show others the 'agape' love which is God's way of loving others.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Heavenly Father, since the fall of the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden, human relationships have not always lived up to the loving standard that You ordained. Too often instead of showing patience we are too quick to point out each other's faults, and when Your word teaches us to be forgiving we tend to hold on to hurt feelings. We confess sometimes we struggle with showing love toward others because we haven't learned to embrace the message of Your love for us. Heal whatever hurts we may still have, and help us to see how You can transform those painful experiences we've had in life, into opportunities to minister to others, by faithfully showing a message of Your love, through compassionate acts of kindness, patience and forgiveness. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen!

SCRIPTURE READINGS: 1 Corinthians 13, Galatians 5:16-26

**Pastor Johnny R. Freeman**

# DAY SEVEN

## EMPOWERED TO WITNESS

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: In Acts 1, Jesus has returned to prepare His disciples for their ultimate purpose—to draw others into the body of Christ through witnessing. His very return is one of the most witnessed events in the history of mankind. More than five hundred witnessed the One who had risen from the dead. So, even His return caused others to believe.

According to Acts 1:2, Jesus gave His instructions through the Holy Spirit. As believers, the Holy Spirit is our principal guide. The Holy Spirit indwelt us from the moment we believed, but it's our choice on whether or not we let Him do His job. We can fill up with Him and experience more of God, or we can quench His power and barely escape the fiery flames of Hell (John 20:22; Ephesians 4:30, 5:15-20; 1 Corinthians 3:15, 12:13).

Notice that Jesus does not command the apostles to wait to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Rather, He tells them they will be baptized by the Holy Spirit. The apostles received the Holy Spirit when Jesus appeared to them prior to this event (John 20:22). The word baptism implies that the Holy Spirit was going to move upon the apostles in a special way for a specific purpose. And that's exactly what He did. He moved upon the apostles causing them to witness to men who had gathered from all over the world.

We, too, are God's witnesses of Christ. We don't "send" God anywhere. He is already omnipresent. We are to walk upon this Earth in such a way that everywhere we go, we do so with the guidance, the boldness, and the power of the Holy Spirit. It is in lifting up Christ through poured out lives that we draw others to the only One who can save them from eternal damnation. When we do that, we enlarge our territory as witnesses of Christ. The foreigners in our text eventually went home. I am sure that the foreigners who believed told others about what they had experienced. I am also sure that others in their hometowns became believers as a result. So that one event that took place in one part of the world because of faithful witnesses spread possibly to every corner of the Earth. Everything God does has a purpose.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Father, help me to pattern my life in such a way that I draw others to Your Son Jesus Christ. I want to live a life poured out to Your glory. I recognize that if I am not lifting up Christ, I am not pleasing You. I recognize that if I am not pleasing You, I am in sin. So, I ask that You help me today by reminding me that I was brought with a price, and I now belong to You. Help me to enlarge Your family by being what You have called me to be in the territory that You have provided for me. I recognize that I enlarge my territory as I faithfully, lovingly, and obediently live a poured out life. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Acts 1:4-8

First Lady Felicia Freeman

# DAY EIGHT

## LISTENING FOR THE STILL SMALL VOICE OF GOD

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Elijah was an Old Testament prophet who God used to return His people from a life of sin. The people had forsaken their covenant with God; torn down altars to God; and killed the prophets of God in order to worship a man-made fertility idol called Baal. In today's terminology, God's people had made three decisions. First, they disrupted the relationship they had with God by ignoring His word. Second, they attempted to destroy all visible reminders of God through things like separation of church and state. Third, they tried to kill all attempts at restoration to God by killing God's preachers with their words and deeds. In other words, God's people were so in love with darkness that they rejected His light (John 1:11).

But then there was Elijah, an obedient, faithful, and committed man of God. He was depressed. He was disappointed. He was dismayed. Elijah wanted to die. He was a hunted man. He was hunted because he obeyed God, and obedience requires sacrifice. In Elijah's lowest moment, God began to minister. God heard Elijah's cries, and He responded by sending an angel to minister to Elijah (Hebrews 1:14). God used His angel to bring Elijah provision, protection, and purpose. The angel provided food. The angel kept Elijah safe, and prepared Elijah for a journey that would bring Elijah into the very presence of God.

Please don't miss this. Elijah was an ordinary man who experienced God in extraordinary ways because of his obedience. Everything God does has a divine purpose. He spoke to Elijah in ways that Elijah needed. In other words, God made it personal. And He wants to do the same for us. God still speaks, but He won't waste His words on those who are unwilling to listen. Today, if you hear God's voice open your heart. Let's get personal with God, so that we can hear Him when He speaks. Begin the journey of obedience, and experience God in extraordinary ways.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Father, I thank You that You personalize my experience with You based on what I need. Help me to have a listening ear and an obedient heart. Forgive me for becoming so me-focused that I have failed to recognize Your voice calling me, drawing me closer to You. But today I thank You for giving me another chance to bring You glory. Here I am. Speak Lord. I am listening, and I am ready to obey Your word. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: 1 Kings 19:9-12

**First Lady Felicia Freeman**

# DAY NINE

## QUALIFIED WITNESSES

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: As born again baptized believers, Jesus Christ has commissioned each of us to share the good news, and “seek the lost.” He said, “go and make disciples of all nations, and go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” The Great Commission was not intended merely for the disciples, or just for the apostles, or for those in present times who may have the gift of evangelism. This command is the responsibility of every man and woman who professes salvation in Christ Jesus! It is our greatest calling, then, to share with those who have never received Jesus as their Savior the message that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world!

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Lord, help us not to be caught up in religion, but to be caught up in Jesus Christ; that we might be more effectual in our prayers, and witnessing to others. In Jesus name, Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Matthew 28:19. Mark 16:14-18, John 15:16

**Reverend Hattie Easterling**

# DAY TEN

## PRAY FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO BE SAVED

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Our lives can be bogged down with so many things that we really don't have time to think of others. From bills, to illness, to work, our minds can get preoccupied so much that, when we are looked to for help, we are quick to say "I'll do me, You do You". The problem is no man's an island. Life is better when you consider someone else. Take a moment to pray for a loved one. Just do as He says and He will take control. Just as prayer changed the homes of Cornelius, the soldier and Paul's guards,, don't be surprised what prayer can do in your own home.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Lord, Thank you for the family and friends I have in my life. Allow me the focus and compassion to keep them at the forefront of my mind and heart. Help my loved ones who aren't saved, see you as a Redeemer, a Deliverer, and a Savior for everyone. In Jesus Name, Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Acts 11:5-14; 16:26-34

**Reverend Montrel Caldwell, Sr.**

# DAY ELEVEN

## YOUTH ON A MISSION FOR THE MASTER

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: It feels great to know you are important doesn't it? To feel like you are needed or necessary makes a person feel like they really mean something in this crazy rollercoaster of life. Sometimes you may feel like you aren't important but God wants you to know that you have a place in His plans for His church. You have been blessed with a unique opportunity to be able to clearly recognize who God is in your life at such a young age! That is AWESOME! Don't let anyone tell you differently. You are Gifted by God and He wants to show you exactly what your purpose is in His plans. All He wants from you is Obedience, Humility and a Zeal, or excitement, to share your love of Him. You are an example to others through the creativity of your speech, your kindness of sharing, your joy of spirit, your wide-eyed faith in humanity, and your love and purity of heart. Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to let your light shine in your life and from that, be the best Child of God you can!

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear God, Thank you for blessing me with this moment in time. At times I feel like I don't count or that I'm not important to your plans for this world. But I now realize that You've blessed me with an important mission. Help me remember to be a light for You and share Your love the BEST ways I can. I'm thankful that I'm not just a child, I'm a CHILD OF GOD ready and willing to do what Your Spirit says do! Thank you for my purpose! In Jesus Name, Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Jeremiah 1:4-9, 1 John 2:14

**Reverend Montrel Caldwell, Sr.**

# DAY TWELVE

## TELLING YOUR STORY

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: I am from a working class family. Allowances did not happen in my family. When I was in middle school I got a job as a paper boy. In high school I worked as a grocery boy and a shoe shine boy. During the summers I worked as a farm boy. Then I was fortunate enough to go to college. While I was in college I worked at a fast food restaurant and as a janitor. I did some construction work during the summers in college and immediately following college. Then I got my first professional job. It has been an up and down situation since then. People see me now and they think this is how it's been all my life. They don't know my story. Mark tells us of a man with an unclean spirit that Jesus encountered in a graveyard. After Jesus removed the unclean spirit from the man, the man wanted to go with Jesus. Jesus told him he couldn't go with Him but "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." (Mark 5:19) In other words, go tell your story. When is the last time you told your story? Told your story of who God is and what He's done for you. Don't just tell your story in church among believers. Tell it to everyone who needs to know who Jesus is.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Lord, I have a story that is uniquely mine. A story of where I have been and where I am now. Thank you Father for bringing me to where I am. Thank you for helping me to understand that I couldn't have gotten here without Your help. I understand the church is on a mission to save the unsaved and to help those in need of help. Please give me what I need to not be afraid to tell my story to all that need help to get closer to You. In Jesus name, Amen!

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Mark 5:1-20

**Deacon Alonzo Hines**

# DAY THIRTEEN

## LABORERS FOR THE HARVEST

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: When Jesus came down from the mountain, after giving what is now known as the Beattitudes, He encountered many people with all types of physical illnesses. There was the centurion's servant, Peter's mother, a woman with an issue of blood, two blind men and every sickness and disease He encountered in all neighboring cities and towns. Yet when He finished healing all physical ailments presented to Him, there remained a large crowd following Him. He described them as "scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd". (Matt. 9:36) As so many of us today know, healing the body is not healing the spirit. Man has made drugs that will get you through a heart attack but nothing that will get you over heartache. Drugs can heal the body but no drug can heal the spirit. That is what Jesus saw in the crowd that followed Him. They had their bodies fixed, but that spiritual need was still there. That is when He told his disciples that "the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few". What harvest? The harvest of persons looking for guidance, hope and comfort in their lives. What laborers? Those out telling people about God and His goodness. When you are in pain you want the doctor to prescribe something that will stop the pain. You are the receptionist for Dr. Jesus. Let the hurting know the doctor is ready to see you now.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Lord help us to recognize that to gather the harvest of lost souls we don't need to send the pastor or deacons to minister to them. Please give me the courage to go to the field of hurting souls and the words to encourage them to follow You. The church is on a mission and I volunteer to help achieve that mission by being a much needed laborer. In Jesus name, Amen!

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Matthew 9:36-38

**Deacon Alonzo Hines**



# DAY FOURTEEN

## WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: The story of the three servants, allows you the opportunity to closely look at three types of people. One he gave five bags of gold, another two bags and another one according to their abilities. Two out of the three servants were able to double their gift, but one servant buried the one bag of gold he was given. The question is “what keeps you from being the person God needs you to be? Ask yourself “what are you afraid of?” In Matthew, when we look at the three servants that were given the gifts the only one who lost was the one that buried his gift. Upon first glance we may think that it makes sense to bury what he was given, because maybe, just maybe he would not get anymore. In reality he was the servant that had the least to risk. Are you holding onto the talent that God has given you because you are afraid, did you dig a hole and bury your gift? Why would someone bury their gift? Most people bury their gift(s) because they are afraid. They are afraid to step out on faith (fully trust God) because of the things that have happened in the past. Being afraid is an indicator that you do not fully trust God. Will you allow: fear, doubt, low self- esteem, bad decisions, pain, abuse, neglect, abortion, drugs, promiscuity make you bury your gift? Again, ask yourself, “what am I afraid of?” Do you not think that whom He predestines that He also called them and also justified them: and whom He justified He glorified? God is waiting on you to declare Him your best gift, like the present you put first on your wish list, or the one that comes with a bow, or a ring. Will you allow your fears to decay the relationship you could have with God? Will you continue to live on half full or will you stir up your gift(s) from God. Will you let fear keep you from your eternal gift God has in store for you? Everything you need to succeed He has given you.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: God, today I ask that You take away the things, or people that are keeping my spirit in fear, and keeping me from fully trusting You. Lord, I want to walk hand and hand with You despite what I’ve been through. I want to turn my fears into cheers for You Lord. Lord, thank You for the gifts that You have bestowed in me, now help me peel back the layers of fear so that I can be a living, breathing testimony and become fearfully and wonderfully made by You. These blessing I ask in Your name. Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Matthew 25:14, Romans 8:30

**Reverend Lakisha Tucker**

# DAY FIFTEEN

## ARE YOU SALT OR SALTY?

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Have you ever been on the beach and wondered if the water was salty? Have you ever been sick and need to gargle with warm salt water for that pesky soar throat? Ever played too hard and needed to soak in Epsom salt? In Matthew 5:13 Jesus makes a statement, "you are the salt of the earth." When you think about table salt you normally pick it up to add flavor to your meal when you find it does not have enough seasoning. Some of us are even accustomed to adding salt without tasting our food. In that statement "you are the salt of the earth," Jesus is telling us that it is our responsibility to share the good news of Jesus Christ, despite our circumstances. Just like when we shake the shaker we are not aware of where each granule lands, but we can taste it on our food. Just as when we are out and about we don't know who is listening to our conversations, after that first sentence of how good the sermon was on Sunday. Are you salt or salty? If you are salty then you allow your bitter past (anger, fear, death, etc) to prevent you from being able to use your setbacks as setups or building blocks for your next blessing. Every grain of salt (positive words) that falls from our lips can be used to add flavor (Jesus) to the life of those we encounter. You never get a second first chance. So the next time you are going through and, you have some down days or someone reminds you of a painful event in your past, thank them for pushing you into your destiny, because just like salt you won't lose your flavor. Ask yourself will you keep pressing or will you become salty/bitter? If you are bitter you cannot be a tool in God's tool bag that he uses to adjust or fix or even remove stripped screws. Even a stripped screw (salty) person has a tool that will remove them like the thorn from your side. So, the question remains are you salt or salty?

PRAYER FOR TODAY: God, as I go about this New Year I ask that You take away the salty side of me. I pray that You would help me remember the times that I needed to be seasoned without being salty. Lord, give me the spirit of discernment to identify when others are being salt or salty. Help those that I have been salty with forgive me for my iniquities. I ask that You would allow me to be just like salt and that I would be able to season those with whom I come in contact. Lord I want to be able to shed my saltiness just as I would any extra baggage that I may be carrying. Yes Lord, I am the salt of the earth, I want to use my words to help not hurt others. Lord please give me a clean heart, in Jesus name Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 5:13

**Reverend Lakisha Tucker**

# DAY SIXTEEN

## REACHING THE UNSAVED AND UNCHURCHED AROUND YOU!

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: As believers in Christ, we have the responsibility to not only study God's word and strengthen our personal relationship with God but also to share with others the goodness of Jesus so that they can experience HIM! We are modern day disciples for Jesus and that means we share Him with others who may not know Him. It is doing work beyond the four walls of our church building that makes the impact. It could be through community outreach, casual conversation, or the things we do in our everyday lives to be representatives of God. Will we encounter resistance or be challenged in our beliefs? Of course! Jesus was challenged by those who physically saw him and personally witnessed him performing miracles and teaching others about God! So imagine what someone may say that only hears about Him and is expected to "believe" and have faith in Him! In Luke 9:51-56, the disciples were disappointed in the way they were treated by the Samaritans when they went into the village to make preparations for Jesus and were not welcomed. The disciples knew Jesus just as we know Him. Maybe the Samaritans were not at a place where they were ready to receive Jesus so they were neither welcoming of the disciples nor excited about Jesus' arrival in their village. The disciples were attempting to reach the unsaved and unchurched in this village and due to the rejection they faced, they asked Jesus to punish the unbelievers (Samaritans of the village). Jesus was not offended nor was He defensive; He simply dismissed the suggestions of His disciples and moved on to another village. God does not force Himself on us as believers so when we share Him with others, we should use the same approach. As we share Jesus with others, be mindful of your approach and actions because you may be the only evidence of Jesus that person(s) may see today! I challenge you to tell at least two people about Jesus today!

PRAYER FOR TODAY: God I am so thankful for the things You have done in my life and I want to bring others to You. Give me the humble demeanor that Your Son Jesus had so that I do not become frustrated when faced with resistance to You. Help me to show others How You live in me and make it desirable to them so that they want to learn more about You. Help me to understand that it is not about me but it is about building Your kingdom here on earth and saving those who do not know You. I ask all of these things in the name of Jesus, Amen!

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Luke 9: 51-56

**Sister Lalani Bullock**

# DAY SEVENTEEN

## FRUIT BEARING DISCIPLESHIP

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: I can recall a sermon preached by my pastor where he spoke about staying connected. Within the sermon he spoke about cell phones and in order for them to work properly, or work at all for that matter, they must be connected to a power source. The battery starts to run low and we immediately are looking for our chargers that connect from that cell phone into a power source. Well friends, it is the same in our walk as disciples for Jesus. In order for us to be effective in our ministry, we have to stay connected to Him! Life throws all kinds of curve balls at us, but what makes us different than the rest of the world is how we handle those curve balls. We have our true source of power in our faith and knowledge that Jesus is our provider over our jobs or any other source of income. It is because of HIM that we even exist.

In John 15, Jesus reminds us that He is the true vine and we are the branches. So think of a tree that has branches, at the end of those branches we expect to see some sort of fruit whether it be apples, oranges, a flower or just leaves! If we want to continue to be prosperous and “bear fruit” in our lives, we must stay connected to Jesus, “the vine”. In John 15:4 Jesus said, **“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”** How do I stay connected? Glad you asked! Jesus speaks about staying connected to Him by keeping His commands and loving one another so that we can remain in His love and He will no longer consider us “servants” but He considers us “friends”! Now imagine that! Jesus is a friend of mine, the Son of God who laid His life down just for you and me; so that anything we ask in His name will be done!

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Lord, help me to stay connected to You. Live in me and through me so that I can be a fruitful disciple for You. I am so thankful for Your everlasting love. Help me to love others just as You have loved me and keep your commands. You are my source and my provider. Without You, I cannot exist. Continue to strengthen me when I am weak and let me continuously feel Your presence in my life. In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: John 15

Sister Lalani Bullock

# DAY EIGHTEEN

## EVERY MEMBER, A MISSIONARY

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Most people feel that being a Missionary means belonging to a Missionary Ministry, but that's not totally true. We are all Missionaries because we are all placed on this earth to help and serve others. Webster's Dictionary describes Missionaries as persons commissioned by a church to spread its faith or carry on humanitarian work. We are commissioned by God to do His will. As Missionaries, we have to step outside of our comfort zone and be the servants God expects us to be. Stepping beyond our comfort zone means we have to go beyond the doors of United and help those who need to be served. God's word states, the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve. We have been saved in order to serve others and we lead by serving. We must be servants not only by helping in our church, but servants of Jesus in our homes, communities, cities and beyond. God is calling us to step out on faith and show others the goodness of our Father. When we allow our light to shine and spread God's word to the unsaved, we are being the Missionaries that God wants us to be. Serving others is the most noble of human endeavors.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Lord, I thank You for blessing me so that I can be a blessing to others. All that I have is because You gave it to me so that I may be the Missionary that You would have me to be. I extend my helping hands beyond the doors of my church to help others in need and to spread Your word among those who are hurting and don't know You for themselves. I give it all back to you by being obedient to what is required of me. Use me Lord to be the servant You expect me to be. In Jesus' name, Amen!

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Matthew 20:26-28, Matthew 17:9-10, Matthew 23:11, Acts 1:8, Galatians 5: 13-14

**Sister Hanan Barrett**

# DAY NINETEEN

## TAKING JESUS WHEREVER YOU GO

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Have you ever stopped and looked back over your life and realized how far the Lord has brought you. Did you ever think, if God had not been on your side leading and directing you, where would you be? There are times when I sit and think about my past and the goodness of the Lord. Remembering times that I felt so lonely, and thought I was in this world all by myself. It didn't matter how much love my family and friends showed me, there was an empty place in my heart. Others don't always understand what you are going through, but Jesus knows everything there is to know about you. Hearing about Jesus, and being taught about Him at a young age is much different than knowing Him personally for yourself. When I accepted Christ as my personal Lord and Savior, I realized that all I went through, I was never alone. Jesus is our constant Source for whatever is needed in our life. How comforting it is to know that wherever we go Jesus is there, leading, guiding, loving, protecting and providing for our every need. We can trust Jesus to be with us through all the good and the not so good. Jesus lives in our heart and goes with us wherever we go.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Lord, thank You for always being with us regardless of our situations. Thank You for never leaving or forsaking us during our times of trouble. Thank You for being such a forgiving God, and continuously loving us in spite of ourselves. For guiding us through Your word to be who You would have us to be. We thank You for going everywhere we go and being with us in everything we do. We are never alone and for that we say thank You. In Jesus' name, Amen!

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Luke 14:23, Joshua 1:9, Deuteronomy 31:6, Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 28:20, Hebrews 13:5-6

**Sister Hanan Barrett**

# DAY TWENTY

## WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Most of us know the families that live beside us or in our block, but are these really our neighbors or is there more to the story. The times people ask questions, these questions maybe an opportunity God has given us to point them to the One who is the Answer to all their questions. Jesus doesn't berate the lawyer He gave the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this parable the idea is a radical truth, in Christ we are given a right standing before God (justification) and we are propelled in love for God and others by the new power of his Spirit in us (sanctification). This affects the way we see those around us. It's not because they've become something different , but because we have God's justifying work for us and transforming work in us commissions a path of good works prepared beforehand "that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). On this path are real people with real lives full of real stories. And now when we encounter them, they are a divine call to us. They are an opportunity, a welcome mandate for us to be who we are in Christ.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Lord, thank You for the opportunity to be a vessel of compassion to a broken and hurting humanity. Help us to see others through the spiritual lenses of Your grace so that we may be examples that point others to You. In Jesus name, Amen!

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Luke 10:25-37

**Deacon Winslo Douglas**

# DAY TWENTY-ONE

## THE GOSPEL IS GOOD NEWS

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Christ offers His salvation as a free gift, that can only be received by faith, apart from any works or merit on our part. As the apostle Paul tells us, the gospel is “the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile” The same inspired author tells us, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news! It remains forever, good news! It is the best news to ever come to mankind. We should be sharing the good news all around the world. We cannot personally go all around the world but can support those that are in the world sharing the news. When we share the gospel we are not the one’s to compel those that we share the gospel with to accept the good news, it depends entirely on Jesus Christ, not on human action or human response of any kind.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Lord help us share the positive power and good news of Jesus Christ as a vehicle through which You work through the Holy Spirit to draw men to Your Son. In Jesus name, Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Jeremiah 20:15, Luke 2:10, Romans 1:16, Romans 5:15; 6:23, Ephesians 2:8–9

**Deacon Winslo Douglas**



# DAY TWENTY-TWO

## LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: There are those today who would have us to believe that our religious faith is a purely personal thing; and that we should keep it to ourselves. I agree that our faith is personal in that it requires a personal decision on our part, as to whether or not we are going to believe in Jesus, Jesus taught that we are not to keep it to ourselves. The words "*let your light so shine*" (v.16) are the translation of a single Greek verb (*lampsato*) which is an imperative, meaning that it is a command. The question that we ask ourselves is "*What must I do to let my light shine?*"

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Heavenly Father Your word says You have given us the light of Your presence at work in us. Help us be Your reflection through the Christlike words and deeds You inspire us to share with others that they may see the reality of who You are through us. In Jesus name, Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Matthew 5:14-16

**Deaconess Joyce Douglas**

# DAY TWENTY-THREE

## TRUSTING GOD'S GUIDANCE

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: If you have a GPS system and know how to use it, you have a pretty good source for getting to your intended destination. Even when you make a wrong turn, that GPS voice will say “calculating new route” to get you back on the right track. But what do you do when you need direction for the many transitions that life can take you through? Your best answer is to trust God's guidance. Whether you are waiting for a medical diagnosis, the results of a job interview, or trying to get your kids through school, or mend a broken relationship, your best answer is to trust God's guidance. You may be trying to figure out whether or not you should return to school, move out of your parent's house or what your next step should be in fulfilling God's purpose for your life. In every situation, your best answer is to trust God's guidance. So how do you do this? It is through God's Word that our paths are made clear. For every situation in life, the Bible holds the answer for you. If you can trust a GPS system, why not trust God by allowing His Word to lead you. Whether it comes through a devotional, a poem or story, a song or dance, a photo, a sermon or even a conversation with a friend, the thing is God knows you, He created you, and He will lead and guide you if you open up your heart, have faith and trust Him.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Almighty God, thank You for creating us and knowing all about us even when we are lost and confused. Thank You being a personal God who has particular plans for us and is willing and able to guide us in this life's journey. Thank You for Your word, for it truly is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Please God, continue to order our steps as we trust Your guidance more and more each day. We thank You in advance for the joy and hope it shall bring to us and to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Proverbs 2:1-8, Psalm 119:72-74, Isaiah 30:21

**Sister Sheila Williams**

# DAY TWENTY-FOUR

## LIFESTYLE EVANGELISM

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: If we combine the definitions of the words “lifestyle” and “evangelism”, according to Webster it would read like this: a particular way of living that wins or revives a personal commitment to Christ. In simpler and more visual terms, it’s like a continual, daily walk with God, planting the seeds of His love in His kingdom. You may or may not see the results my friends. As a disciple of Christ your mission is to seize the opportunity, plant the seeds, and God will take care of the rest. The genuine love of Christ that you show to others will always take root, form branches, and eventually blossom into something beautiful. So share God’s word, be a source of encouragement, show acts of random kindness. If you see someone without a smile, give them one of yours.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Father, Thank you for brand new opportunities every day to share Your love, Your hope and Your salvation. Help us to seize those opportunities and truly serve as Your disciples as You have commanded us to do. Lord, help us to be discerning, yet bold and confident as we share our testimonies of Your goodness. Let our lives reflect Your glory and be praise only unto You. In Jesus name, Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: 1 Peter 3:15, John 13:34-35, Hebrews 10:24-25

**Sister Sheila Williams**

# DAY TWENTY-FIVE

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE CHURCH PRAYS?

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Prayer changes things for each of us and should be used without ceasing to thank God and let our requests be known. Not only does this work for us as individuals, but it can create a whole different dominion when the church prays. In Acts 12, when Peter was jailed King Herod planned to execute him. The prayers of the church caused God to act miraculously, by sending an angel to rescue Peter from jail as He had done previously in Peter's ministry. We as disciples should follow the example of Jesus Christ as He went to His Father regularly, by praying to make sure He was staying on task and to gain additional instruction for His work. As disciples when we come together, and pray we begin to unleash the power of God to help us succeed with our primary task of developing more Disciples for Christ.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Father, as the church pursues the mission of discipleship and evangelism please help us to follow the example of Jesus Christ. Help us to become more and more like You as we strive to love you more and love each other in Jesus name we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Acts 12

**Deacon Cornelious & Sister Ida Lamberth**

# DAY TWENTY-SIX

## PRAYING FOR THE GOSPEL TO BE PREACHED EVERYWHERE

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Jesus gave us the great commission that He gave to His disciples in Matthew 28: 19-20. There He taught them what their assignment would be once He departed. That assignment is ours as we move through our Christian walk. Jesus changed His task for the disciples because He had in the past told them to take the gospel to the Jews only. Now He was laying hands on them and consecrating them to do the work not only for the Jews, but they were to take the gospel to the uttermost parts of the world. As we go into our fast this year, we should remember the Great Commission that Jesus gives us today. We must not only take the gospel to our family and community, but to our state, our country and the world.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: God give us the spiritual and physical strength to touch Your people, to be good disciples. Help us to study Your word and allow it to become a part of us. Teach us to pray for our leaders and ministers that they and we will carry the gospel everywhere in Jesus name we pray. Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Matthew 28:19-20

Deacon Cornelious Lamberth

# DAY TWENTY-SEVEN

## SHARING THE GOSPEL OF GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: God's indulgence of us is amazing, even when we are selfish. He yields what is His and allows us to misuse it out of respect for the freedom that He has given us. God trusts that we will learn our lesson and come back to Him, when we give up a relationship with God for the pleasures of this uncaring world. It is unwise to give up what we can't **LOSE** to gain what we can't **KEEP!** We delude ourselves into believing that disobeying God will lead us to experience some joy we are missing, by tolerating Sin... our "*far country*" breaks the fellowship and separates us from our Heavenly Father. Someone asked Abraham Lincoln toward the end of the Civil War "How are you going to treat the rebellious Southerners when the War is over?" He replied "I will treat them as though they have never been away." That's what God does, when we fall away from Him. Once we recognize our sin, confess it, forsake it and return to our Heavenly Father, He 'restores the joy of our salvation' Peter 51:12 and 'redeems us so that we can receive the full rights of sons,' Galatians 4:5. He joyously hurries to welcome a repentant sinner back into His presence. God is like a love-sick Father...who cares more about us than our sin. He longs to welcome us home to restore us to full sonship.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Father, thank You for Your patience, mercy, grace and forgiveness of sinners. Please don't let me fall into temptation and fool-hearty living. Help me to trust Your Word. Please protect me from sinful desires and an evil heart. God please continue to have mercy on me, saving me, keeping me, leading me back into the fold when I slip into habitual sin. You are my only hope. In Christ's name, Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Luke 15:25-32

**Sister Anne Gregory**

# DAY TWENTY-EIGHT

## SHARING GOD'S HEART

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: God loved man so much that He created us in His image. Genesis 1:26 says, "Let us make man in OUR image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

His ultimate act of love was the giving of His only Son for our sins. There are many ways to share God's heart including the way we love, communicate, give and live. Giving freely is a demonstration of God's love. 1 John 4:11 says, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. We must demonstrate agape love, which God so generously shows to us. Scripture gives us many examples of God's heart in His grace, love and mercy towards us. Loving God is to be obedient to His will and His way. John 14:15 simply says, "If ye love Me, keep my commandments."

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Lord, thank You for Your boundless love. Help us to demonstrate our love for You through meaningful acts of service and kindness to our fellow man. Help us to share Your heart by taking the focus off of ourselves and seeking You in all we do. We take nothing for granted, trusting and believing in Your plan and purpose for our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Leviticus 19:33-34, John 3:16, Galatians 2:20, 1 John 4:11

**Sister Cheryl Porter**

# DAY TWENTY-NINE

## SEEING PEOPLE THROUGH GOD'S EYES

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: As humans we view others through our physical eyes. However Genesis 1:31, says, "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good". To see the best in others we must look through God's eyes and with our Godly vision.

Jesus gave His life, knowing that one of His disciple's would betray Him and not love Him in return. Psalm 86:15 says, "But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness". For others to see the best in us, we must be more like Christ, looking beyond ourselves.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Lord, thank You for this day. Thank You for creating us in Your image. Thank You for Your word, which leads, guides and directs us in Your will. Give us Your view of others. Help us to see beyond our limitations. Help us to see and value the uniqueness in others, the gifts and the talents You gave to each of us. Father, we love You beyond ourselves, knowing and believing that every good and perfect gift comes from You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: 2 Kings 13:23, Psalm 119:2, Matthew 9:2, 14:14, Mark 6:34

**Sister Cheryl Porter**



# DAY THIRTY

## ADVANCING THE KINGDOM OF GOD ONE PERSON AT A TIME

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: I chose to follow God because I wanted to be a better person. So as I share what God has done in my life with others I ultimately want them to ask what do I do to follow Christ so He can become a part of my life. “Confess with your mouth, believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved”. When we are advancing the Kingdom of God we must reach one and teach one so the cycle’s never broken and our lives are example to others who will want to know Christ.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Jesus I know I am a reflection of You. When people see me they should see You in me so I ask that You continue to help me be a better person in actions and deeds. Holy Spirit guard my mouth to encourage, speak life over families and friends. Make me aware quickly of watchers so I can turn them on to You and not be a turn off. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Roman 10:8-10.

**Sister Donita Leggett**

# DAY THIRTY-ONE

## SHOWING GRACE

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: We have no problem accepting grace, but when it's time for us to show grace we quickly forget. What if you have to choose a not so smart person for your team or your co-worker needs to leave work at 5:00 but their task for today is incomplete. Based on God's word in 1Peter 4: 9-10, we can show the grace of God by cheering, encouraging and helping others. God has shown us His ultimate grace by dying for us and our sins. How will you show grace?

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Heavenly Father, I know sometimes I don't always do what is right when it comes to showing grace to others but I will take it when it is shown to me. So help me God not to be the taker. Let Your Holy Spirit nudge me, so I can change my actions to please You and bring glory to Your name! In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen!

SCRIPTURE READINGS: 1 Peter 4:8-10

Sister Donita Leggett

# DAY THIRTY-TWO

## GOD USES CRACKED POTS TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Do you ever hesitate to step up when the Pastor asks for volunteers to take on a particular church project? You convince yourself that surely there's another more spiritual and gifted than me. Maybe the worship leader has extended an invitation for you to become a part of the music ministry but your excuse is "nah, I'll pass, I certainly can't be used because I don't have the voice of one of the great gospel artists of today" or perhaps you've been approached about working with one of the many ministries but you declare that you're too young, too old, too short, too tall. We often provide all types of reasons why we would just rather sit uninterrupted and enjoy the service without being used. We would rather remain hidden amongst the crowd. What is our true fear? Is it possible that we are afraid of exposing our imperfections?

The Bible is full of examples of leaders with imperfections. Moses had a stuttering problem, David was the youngest and the smallest in statue of his family. Jeremiah was a worrying man. Jonah disobeyed God's instructions, and consider the woman at the well who was a five- time divorcee and currently living in sin. Yet to God, their limitations were the very tool He needed to accomplish His mission! God chose them because they were flawed but He transformed them because they were humble. 2 Corinthians 4:7 reminds us that we are vessels full of power.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Heavenly Father, Your word reminds us that we all are simply jars of cracked and broken clay in need of being put back on the potter's wheel. Thank You God for not seeking out the perfect, but choosing to use our imperfections to accomplish Your mission. Take the cracked and broken and reshape us into something beautiful and useful. In Jesus name, Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: 2 Corinthians 4:4-7

**Deaconess Sharon Yancey**

# DAY THIRTY-THREE

## DEVELOPING A RADIANT FAITH!

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: The word radiant is a synonym for light. It literally means to send out light or to show with glow according to the Webster's definition. Now as you are reading this devotional text keep the question in the back of your mind "How do I **develop** and **keep** a radiant faith in 2016?" Within the two scriptures of reference Jesus is teaching lessons or parables, when He is interrupted with challenges and individuals who possess very little faith in His capabilities. In the book of John He is speaking to the Pharisees, while simultaneously they bring Him a woman who has committed, in this particular era, an unforgivable crime, adultery! The ultimate consequence for something such as this was to be stoned to death. Thus, Jesus is simply reckoning with the Pharisees and questioning them to examine and look over each person in the room who is without sin. Just so you know no one came forth! So, in retrospect even with mistakes, even with sin and short comings, you still can be presented faultless in the sight of God! Jesus ends His teaching and declares that "if you follow me", develop, and keep your faith in Me that light will not become dim and you will have access to the light of eternal life!

Moreover, Faith is an interesting concept to wrap your Earthly physical eyes and mind around. Most people place their faith in the most ridiculous things such as, the chair that's holding you up as you read this or that Bank of America checking account that holds all your hard earned monies. Well, in the book of Luke chapter 5 verses 1-5, these particular fishermen had lost their faith. In a world such as this, in 2016 it is easy to develop faith in God as new Disciples of Christ, but what about **keeping** that Faith when all things are being speculated around you? Jesus gave a simple request to the fishermen, which was to cast their nets one last time after several tries. Isn't that just like God? To try and push you, even when you feel as though there is nothing left? Like the fisherman in Jesus' parable, after toiling and dealing with a situation that can be difficult or challenging to keep a radiant faith... keep your ear to his guidance and listen to those last instructions. Those last instructions from God may be the difference in you keeping a radiant Faith or falling victim to a FAITHLESS 2016! With mistakes, flawless doubts, and fears remember it's indicative to keep your faith radiant and remember with Jesus' light inside your heart that light can never grow dim.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Lord, humbly I come to You asking for guidance and the ability to have an unshakable and unquenchable faith in the year of 2016! I know You are my source and my strength. God I'm praising You on credit and expecting You to aid me in developing and keeping an unquenchable faith. Trusting You to be God, I thank You and I praise You for everything that You are in Jesus Amen!

SCRIPTURE READINGS: (NKJV) John 8:12, Luke 5:1-5

**Sister Kiarria Watson**

# DAY THIRTY-FOUR

## YOUR OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S CALL TO EXPERIENCE A DEEPER FAITH!

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: As you embark on another year, understand there has already been a test of your faith and if there hasn't just wait until February! Nevertheless, your faith will be tested at some point in 2016. So now that you know that, how can you embrace it, become so immersed in your faith that it can't even budge just a little bit? In the gospel of Luke, chapter 5 verses 1-7, a group of fisherman had their faith shaken as well. As believers it will happen, but being obedient to God's guidance and direction can make a world of difference when you feel your faith is on the rocks. In this parable about the fisherman, they too had been working at a goal, and the harder they worked, the worse the outcome was; sounds a lot like reality? God came to them one last time, and presented them with clear directions to cast their nets down for fish one last time. I know what you're thinking, haven't they been at it all day? YES! That's the point, which is how you grow a deep water faith! It does not grow over night you have to keep working at it! The fishermen obeyed Jesus' command, and just like that, their nets and boats were overflowing with a profusion of fish. You see, all it took was an ounce of faith and an obedient spirit! You want to see abundance, overflow, and purpose in 2016? You have to practice being obedient to God's guidance and actually exercising the tiny bit of faith you do have. One simple exercise of small faith can lead to a DEEP water faith without limits.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Lord, I want to possess a deep water faith. I know at some point my faith will be tested in this life, but God incline my ear and my heart to Yours, help me to exercise all the faith I do have, and when I'm in doubt, remind me of Your word and Your promises that You can do anything, but fail. Guide me and direct me as I exercise my deep water faith in 2016 in Jesus name I do pray, Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Luke 5:1-7

**Sister Kiarria Watson**

# DAY THIRTY-FIVE

## WITNESSING IN SAMARIA

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: What do you call a “Set-up” in the Biblical sphere? Yes, the woman that met Jesus at Jacob’s Well. Jesus developed a **relationship** with the woman by telling her the things that she had done, the laundry list of husbands and one that was not her husband. He meticulously drew her in by first of all talking with her which was against customs. He lovingly explained the gift of everlasting life that He had to offer her. He met her where she was! The relationship developed, the unveiling of the truth was so grand that the woman left her water-pot and ran to the city to” tell it”! A Set-up for a born witness, a Set-up for you and for me to witness in Samaria; the prelude to Jesus’ command to us all in Acts 1:8! Now, what does your Samaria look like? Do you live in Samaria or do you witness in Samaria? For today, let’s talk a bit about witnessing in Samaria.

Are you in a mental or physical state where you are afraid to talk with people who don’t look like you? Will you be breaking barriers by reaching out and sharing God’s love with another from the other side of the tracks or-- from under the tracks? Has something so good ever happened to you and you just dropped everything and ran and told it to everyone that you saw?

The foundation of good evangelism is relationships. Intentionally network to nonbelievers and build up true friendships with those so that when a good opportunity to share Christ occurs, you would have the credibility and trust in place to support your presentation of the Gospel. The Lord reminds us that we can witness, not of our own power, but that of the Holy Ghost in Acts 1:8. Our responsibility is to serve as capable witnesses of God’s love through a clear expression of the Gospel message.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Lord thank You for being our source of strength enabling us to witness so others can know You.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: John 4:6-30, Acts 1:8

**Sister Betty Williamson**

# DAY THIRTY-SIX

## SHARING JESUS WITHOUT FEAR

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: It is just amazingly wonderful to watch an infant sleeping: arms and legs all stretched out, seemingly totally confident in the protection and care of his loving parent or caregiver. Somehow, as we grow older, as situations come into our lives, and as we are called upon to do things outside of our comfort zone, our sleeping positions changes. We become more and more curled-up; almost into a fetal-like position. We have allowed worries and fear to take over that confidence of being protected, of being cared for, and of being lovingly watched over.

Perhaps sharing our faith and the Good News of Jesus Christ makes you uncomfortable or downright fearful. You've made up in that "battlefield" of your mind that your voice will crack, your palms will become sweaty, the person will say something ugly to you or you imagine even worst things. The Lord says that we should love one another. What **great love** would it be to share Christ with an unbeliever for an opportunity for them to be saved, to be reborn, and to have an opportunity for eternal life! John 13:31-35 encourages us to proclaim Christ in LOVE! Witnessing is an act of love for other people. When sharing our faith in Christ becomes a matter of the heart and not the mind, our motivations are pure and both our strategies and persistence are more likely to have sticking power. After all, God is that loving caregiver continuously watching over us, and Paul reminds us in Hebrews 13:6 NIV "So we say with confidence, *The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid.*" Step out of your comfort zone and share God's love. Share Jesus with someone without fear!

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Precious Father, always let me remember whose I am so that my light may shine for Your glory as a beacon for others to see You in me. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Isaiah 47:13; Psalm 34:4; John 13:31-35; Acts 4:19-29; Eph 6:19-20; 1 John 4: 18a; Heb 13:6 NIV

**Sister Betty Williamson**

# DAY THIRTY-SEVEN

## KEEPING THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: It is written in 2 Corinthians 5:17, therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. We are grateful that God loved us enough to provide a way to redeem us from our transgressions. Sharing that message with others should be the main focus of our lives because of this alone! In Romans 5:8 it says, God commended His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. The Apostle Paul eloquently wrote, in 2 Corinthians 5:14, for the love of Christ constrains us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died, and He died for all, so that they who might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Because Christ died for us all, we should “KEEP THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING” and no longer live to only please ourselves, but spend our lives pleasing Christ. We could not save ourselves alone, without God. Through God’s Son Christ, sacrificing His life for our sins we can be reconciled to God through our repentance from sin and believing in Christ as our Savior. God declares the repentant sinner righteous and does not count our sins against us because, He covers us with the righteousness of Christ the moment we place whole hearted faith in Christ and His sacrificial death. Because God loves us so much, we should be faithful to Him and eager to share the message of God’s salvation plan for all mankind. We should live our lives in a way that places His will for us at the forefront of our life actions. It is important that we as believers live our lives as Jesus would have us to. For example, we should never make judgments that those who might not know Christ are not worthy of our sharing the good news of Jesus Christ’s atonement for our sinful nature because of the life they apparently are living. God wants us as believers to be representatives and messengers for Christ.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Heavenly Father please guide my heart as well as my thoughts that I might effectively share the good news of Jesus Christ. I pray Lord that Your will, will be done through me and be manifest in my life that I might be a doer of the word. Help me that I might do things that are real and concrete to help others who may be in need. I pray that the Holy Spirit will continually dwell in me so others will see the Christ in me and will accept my witness about what You have done and are doing in my life. I thank You Jesus for sacrificing Your life for me and believe that Your blood covers me. I pray that my life will be focused on living to do Your will rather than living solely for myself. Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS: 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

**Deacon Clinton Patterson**



# DAY THIRTY-EIGHT

## THE APPLAUSE OF HEAVEN

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: We should not judge others and dismiss or count them as lost or not worthy of our love and compassion. Where would we be if God took the same attitude towards us as the Pharisees and the scribes took toward those who were disliked as tax collectors and those who were notorious sinners? All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We should not look down on others who are living sinfully and not pray for their salvation. As believers in Christ our attitude should be one of giving personal witness as to how God has saved us and encouraged others by sharing the word of God and the good news of Jesus Christ. In this parable God is taking the initiative in seeking sinners. We don't have to wait for sinners to come to church to share the good news of Jesus Christ. We can witness and encourage others in our daily encounters away from the church building. God rejoices when one of the lost returns to Him. So should we!

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Father in heaven I am thankful that You thought me worthy of saving! I confess my sins and repent my transgressions against You and others. I pray that I will be able to convince others that the blood of Jesus Christ covers them once they believe in Jesus Christ, and repent from sin and accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. Lord help me to be encouraging and a doer in applauding and rejoicing with others who are lost and come back to you. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Luke 15:1-7

**Deacon Clinton Patterson**

# DAY THIRTY-NINE

## GETTING OUT OF YOUR OWN WAY

(Getting pass stuck)

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Have you ever been driving in heavy rain on a country road and your car got stuck in the mud? No matter how hard you pressed the gas in an effort to get out, the tires just spin and mud splatters everywhere. Yet and still, you are still stuck in the same spot. What you need is a push or a shove in order to move forward. You just have to call on someone for help!

It's just like in life when you feel like you are in a rut and nothing good is coming your way. Many of us have had the feeling where it seemed as though the path you were on had come to a dead end. Did it ever cross your mind that God was working for your good behind the scenes because He knows and sees what we can't? Of course not! Often times, we blame God, when in reality we are the hindrance because we tend to get in His way when He is growing us. We just don't think that our inability to move forward is our own doing. We have got to get out of our own way so He can work in us!

I can recall a time when I decided on some things I wanted to accomplish for the upcoming year. I called them my New Year goals instead of resolutions. In fact, I had created what I felt was a well thought out plan of my own. As I worked diligently to reach the goals, I tried many things and many ways and it seemed like my accomplishments were very minimal. I just could not figure out why this was not working for me. It seemed like nothing I tried worked like I wanted it to. I was spinning my wheels with no progress. Finally, after many instances of frustration, I surrendered to God for a push. I said, "God, please help me do this!!" Within a couple of weeks, I could see positive movement. I realized that I was literally in my own way! It was me blocking God by thinking "I" had the power to reach these goals. What was I thinking not consulting God first? This could have saved me a lot of time and anguish.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Lord, In life, being stuck may not be a very comfortable place but help me to remember that I always have You to give me the push or shove I need to move forward. Help me to seek You first, allow You to work in my life and help me to understand that the discomfort is part of the growth. The most important detail is to consult first about Your will for my life. I know there is much to be accomplished if I just stay out of Your way.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Acts 11

**Sister Val McMillian**

# DAY FORTY

## HOW GOD MULTIPLIES

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: It never ceases to amaze me how God can take little and make much! For instance, taking 5 loaves and two fish to feed a multitude. That's something ONLY God can do! This is just an example of one of His many miracles. As Christians, He expects us to take what we have and do greater with it. (just like the man who hid his talents instead of making use of them) We often think that we need to have large finances or material things to help or give to others. We may even think this when giving back to God. What we think is impossible, God makes possible. God is the greatest giver so we have the perfect example and should put forth the effort to be like Him.

Yes, God has tasked us with tithing which is financially giving back to Him but He has also commissioned us with sharing His love and witnessing to others in order to bring souls to Christ. This is how we can help multiply in a way that would be pleasing to Him. As one person, we may do little but by coming together we can do much. As a church or as a ministry, by doing things together in our commitment to Christ, we can do His kind of math! This means we can carry the torch just like God grew the early church. When others see the progress and what God is doing at United, they will want to be a part of it! This is where our witnessing becomes very important! If we share a little here and a little there, that's what we can expect from God in return...a little. If we bond together in our quest to grow our church for God's glory, He will keep adding abundantly. As our elders would say, "If we take one step, He will take two"! That's what I love about God's calculations, it just does not always add up like we expect. He does exceedingly abundantly above all!

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Lord, Help us to come together as a church and share the love of Christ with those outside of the walls of United. I believe when people see us consistently bond together to share Your word, and be living examples, You will touch their hearts and add numbers to our church. Help us to devote ourselves to doing Your will the way that wins souls for you!

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Acts 2: 38-46

**Sister Val McMillian**

# DAY FORTY-ONE

## DOING FIRST THINGS FIRST

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: When we get up in the morning, we often do many things such as make coffee, go to the gym, check social media and/or many other different things without pausing to address God. We have busy schedules with work, family activities, meetings, and often leave God out of the equation. This is not uncommon to these times. The first chapter of Haggai shows that people have been putting things before God since the Old Testament and because of this, the church fell apart. Often times we put so many things before we look to God in our daily lives but those things will not benefit us in the long run, comfort us when in need, strengthen us as Christians, or give us eternal life. This is very important because in order to bring more people to Christ, we need to continuously work on and strive to have our own life in the right order before we can help others with their walk. On this day and going forward, exalt the Lord, speak to Him in prayer, offer praise and worship to Him daily; let's try to make God our priority in our daily activities.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: I thank You for life and all the blessings that You have put around me in my life both big and small. You are a mighty God who is capable of doing wonderful things. I ask that You will help me to do a better job of making You first in my life. Convict my heart and help me to have a spiritual transformation where I put You above everything else in my life. Help me to realize that Your ability can be magnified by my availability to You and Your holy will multiply in my life, Your church and everywhere. In Jesus' name. Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Mark 16:16-20

Brother James Weeks

# DAY FORTY-TWO

## MAXIMIZING THE MOMENT

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Often times, there is only one opportunity to accomplish a task, such as presenting the impression of Christ in our lives to another person. In the background text, the Ethiopian eunuch needed Philip's help understanding a scripture passage that he was reading. Philip took advantage of his opportunity to explain it to him and share the good news of Jesus. There are many people that we come in contact with daily, who have either heard of God but do not have a personal relationship with Him, or they may not have heard about Him, or do not understand why it is important to have a relationship with Christ. We are here to be Christ's intermediaries and to help grow His Kingdom. When we come across someone whom God has convicted us to speak to, or asks us about Jesus, we can maximize that moment by simply telling our own personal story of how we found Christ. You can do this easily by telling those individuals where He brought you from, what He's taught you, how He's changed your life, and what He has done through you. People are impressed with our successes but impacted by our failures and recovery. God has given us everything we need to be successful in our Christian walk. It is up to us to take advantage of the opportunities that are presented to us and maximize those moments so that we can grow the Kingdom of Christ.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Help me to make the best out of every opportunity that is given to me to help grow the body of Christ. Help me to be bold and confident when speaking about the good and wonderful things that You have done for me and through me so that I may fulfill Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Acts 8:26-38

**Brother James Weeks**

# DAY FORTY-THREE

## MASTER'S PLAN OF EVANGELISM

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: When fishermen Peter and Andrew heard Jesus call, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men," they "immediately left their nets and followed Him" (Matt. 4:19-20). And He saith unto them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." God chose His first followers at an unlikely place. He didn't search the religious schools for the most learned scholars. He didn't look among the ranks of brilliant military leaders. On the contrary, Jesus went to the shores of Galilee and called out four common fishermen—Peter, Andrew, James and John. After having spent all day on the shores only to end up with empty nets, imagine the disappointment they must have felt. But, these four fishermen were about to be taught the Master's plan of evangelism.

Now, if you survey the avid fisherman, they will likely tell you that fishing is an art. Honing your skills as a fisherman can mean the difference between bringing in a bountiful catch or simply spending the day out on the lake with nothing to show for your efforts. It takes patience. Jesus wanted to teach these ordinary fishermen the art of catching souls. The fish they had caught before were to benefit them but the "fish" that Jesus would teach them to catch would bring lost souls to Christ. God uses ordinary, unlikely people from unlikely places to do extraordinary work, people like you and me. We too have been called to be "fishers of men" using the Master's plan of evangelism. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit," (Matthew 28:19).

PRAYER FOR TODAY: As followers of Christ, Lord, You have summoned us to announce, proclaim and preach the gospel. Help us to be faithful in seizing the opportunity You give to us casting our net by sharing the message of Your Son with those to whom You send us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Matthew 4:18-20

Deacon Karl Yancey

# DAY FORTY-FOUR

## OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF FAILURE AND REJECTION TO BE A WITNESS FOR CHRIST

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: What is it that causes fear in the believer to witness as we have been commanded? Many Christians are so hesitant to witness for Christ because they fear failure and or rejection but we must remind ourselves that never would the Lord ask us to do anything that we could not accomplish with His help.

In the days of the early church, local religious leaders came together to warn the disciples, Peter and John, not to speak about Jesus. They were arrested and placed in a public jail. Surely this had to serve as a warning of the consequences to follow if Peter and John disobeyed the orders of the religious leaders and continued in their teaching. Much to the astonishment of the prison guards, who when they arrived at the prison the following day, found the prison doors securely locked but the cell was empty!

During the night, an Angel of the Lord had opened the prison doors and had set the apostles free! However, their release came with explicit orders. They were commanded "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." (Matthew 5:18-23). The apostles had been ordered to continue to proclaim the gospel. Regardless of their arrest and imprisonment, they were not to be intimidated by the persecution of the Jewish religious leaders. Although the Council strictly charged the disciples not to teach in Jesus' name, (Matthew 28) Peter and the other apostles continued in their teaching. They boldly proclaimed "We must obey God rather than men. (Matthew 29)

Even the Apostle Paul experienced fear in witnessing. Paul says, "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (I Corinthians 2:3) but Jesus spoke to a fearful Paul "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace; For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:9.10). We should never allow fear to prevent us from being a witness for Christ. We are to go forth in His Power and Strength. Jesus reminds us that he has ALL POWER.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Lord, You have called us to be Your witnesses in a world where men aren't always open or receptive to a word of Your truth. Help us resist the temptation to allow the fear of failure and rejection to intimidate us but give us the courage and resolve to overcome anxiety and seize every opportunity You give to share the good news of Jesus with others. In Jesus name Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Acts 5:18:29

**Deacon Karl Yancey**

## DAY FORTY-FIVE

### PRAYER FOR GOD TO REMOVE ALL HINDRENCES AND WALLS FOR THE GOSPEL TO BE SPREAD FULLY

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Have you ever started a conversation with a total stranger or had someone to seem like randomly approach you? Think back on those times. It may have happened because you noticed something you had in common or maybe a new project has placed you together. Whatever the reason you now find yourself deep in conversation. Then it happens the conversation takes a slight turn and you realize you have an opportunity to share the gospel but you freeze. Your mind is racing faster than you can process. You start thinking about the rejection and the fear of not knowing what you should say. So you say nothing... I want to share with you that those are types of walls Satan will use in an attempt to distract you, but you are not alone. I let a chance to share the gospel slip from my grasp. I allowed Satan to create a wall in my mind thinking because we were of different ethnic backgrounds he would reject and not be willing to hear what I had to say. It also became clear that I immediately felt a lack of confidence in my ability to "Do it right" another wall. I remember feeling so convicted realizing what an opportunity that could have been.

God has commissioned more from us. Look at how Paul spent his life living for the Lord and sharing the gospel despite all the dangers of rejection and even imprisonment. He shared the Word free of all hindrances and fear. They could bind him in prison but the word of God could not be bound. We have to be prepared for all the walls that Satan will try to put before us. Pursue the prize of the spiritual harvest without any hindrances or fears just like Paul did. Through God's word I learned that he has already equipped his believers with everything that we need to reach the lost. Paul also said it's better to speak words that people understand instead of using a bunch of terms that people can't understand, so be you and speak your truth. I've now learned through this journey that sharing my personal testimony works for me and with that I know that all will not receive it, however I will not let that or anything else distract me from spreading the gospel without fear. Remember this is our assignment from the Lord and there is nothing more satisfying.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Lord, Be with us daily as we live our lives for You. Help us Lord to remember that You do not give us the spirit of fear and open our hearts and minds that they may be filled with Your word and truth; blocking all distractions that might prevent us from reaching the lost. Give us what You would have us to say to Your people and allow us to be bold servants winning souls for Christ. In Jesus name Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS: 2 Timothy 2:8-9

**Sister QuaNesha Bennett**

## DAY FORTY-SIX



# RAISING THE NEXT GENERATION FOR CHRIST IN THE MIDST OF NEW AGE THINKING, FALSE TEACHING AND DOCTRINE

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: We reach the next generation to witness for Christ by following the first command Jesus gave His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20. We go to the people. In witnessing, we share the gospel of Christ. We exclaim who Jesus Christ is as the Son of the Living God. We witness in love, with a pure heart, good conscience and sincere faith. We must pray and ask the Lord for guidance and protection and fearlessness. This is just the opposite of how Christianity is being portrayed on television.

Next, we teach them what it means to be a witness for Christ. We plant the seed and water it by teaching the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are living examples of Christ. We show the world that, we too, have trials and tribulations, but it's how we respond to these trials that set us as Christians apart from the rest of the world.

Just as Paul urged Timothy to continue his tasks in taking on these false teachers, Paul also encouraged Timothy to press on. We must encourage upcoming generations of witnesses and each other. In these times, the criticism we face because of the weakness of a few can be hard fought and tiring. We need each other as Christian brothers and sisters to march forward.

As witnesses of Jesus Christ, we appeal to the spirit of man and word with pierce His heart. If the people are open to receive it, the word will fill that void with the love of Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Father, I ask that you keep my mind strong with unwavering faith. Guide me in discerning what is true sovereign doctrine from the deceptions of the world. In your Son, Jesus name, I pray. Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS: 1 Timothy 1:6-7

Sister Armeniqua Wallace

DAY FORTY-SEVEN

# JESUS CHRIST THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: The birth of Jesus Christ, who is God's salvation, brought the light that offers hope to a world of despair. Jesus has promised us an eternal life in heaven. However, the hope that Jesus gives us and to the world cannot be fulfilled unless we accept him into our lives. Just like there is lasting hope in our Savior, our Savior also has hope in us as Christians. No matter how long you have been a Christian, there is overwhelming hope for you, since God has given his life for you. If you allow yourself to accept Christ as the hope of the world and keep your promise to Him, then He will keep His promise of everlasting life in heaven to you.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Dear Heavenly Father, we lower our heads before You and we confess that we have too often forgotten that we are Yours. Sometimes we carry on our lives as if there was no God and we fall short of being a credible witness to You. For these things we ask Your forgiveness and we also ask for Your strength. Give us clear minds and open hearts so we may witness to You in our world. Remind us to be who You would have us to be regardless of what we are doing or who we are with. Hold us to You and build our relationship with You and with those You have given us on earth. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: 1 Peter 1:3

Brandon Freeman

DAY FORTY-EIGHT

JESUS LOVES EVEN ME

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: Growing up without a father and being raised in a single parent household, I'd say was hard. Not having that role model in my life took me into a dark place. It came to the point where I wondered if God loved me? Why did all my friends have these wonderful fathers? In His word He said He loved me, so it has to be true right? My father stepped out of my life at the age of nine, only to try to return at the age of 15, to having no contact at the age of 17. And through all of this I have learned and gained so much. I gained a heavenly Father, and most importantly I learned how to love myself and look forward to what God has in store for me. The amazing part is that I know what I need to do to be a wonderful father to my kids. When that time comes I want to be able to show my kids the love and compassion that a child needs. God truly knows how to open your eye's to new ideas. Life is too short to stay in the past. I have learned to press on, forgive and to look to what God has for me.

I personally want everyone to lift their heads up, and stop walking around feeling angry or sorry over the past! I also want you to keep pressing on because Jesus loves you so much that He die for you!

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Father we come before Your throne once more and again to acknowledge that You are God. We want to thank You for all that You have done and continue to do. We thank You for all you have done in our lives and for the many blessings You continue to bestow upon us. We ask that You take complete control. Oh God we know that this walk is not easy. We ask that Your light will shine though us so that we may be a reflection of Your love to others. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: John 3:16

Andrew Walker

DAY FORTY-NINE

PREPARING TO WITNESS

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: As you prepare to be a witness for Christ, you must understand what a witness is. In the Webster Dictionary a witness is define as “to give or serve as evidence of; testify to”. As Christ has said in the Bible “Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead they put it on its stand and it gives light to everyone in the house.” (Matthew 5:15) Thus testify of God’s good work so that His light may shine. As God prepares us to be a witness for Him, He lets us know this in John 16:7 “But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you”. God is letting us know that He is the truth and we may be confident that everything Christ has told us is not false. Therefore we can go out in the world and witness and testify of the goodness of Christ and the truth which He has told us.

PRAYER FOR TODAY:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Lord, We want to give You thanks and we're grateful that You are present in our lives. We thank you Lord for not changing and being the same God that you were yesterday, that you are today and that you will be tomorrow. We thank you lord for you protection over our lives each and every day. As we prepare ourselves to become good witnesses for you Lord, let us remember that you are always with us as a hedge of protection as we tell people about your good works. Lord, let your light shine through us so that people my see your good works and your truth. And help us lord not to be arrogant or boastful but keep us as humble in our hearts and minds as we testify of your goodness. Lord, We want to give You thanks and we're grateful that You are present in our lives. In your precious name we pray.

Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS: John 16:7-11, Matthew 28:19

**Sister Keisha McNeil**

DAY FIFTY

MESSAGE IN THE MUSIC

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: All music was written with a purpose in mind, be it, gospel, jazz, blues or rock. “For what purpose was this song written?” Does the song communicate the Word of God? Does the message appeal to all listening ears? What is the writer trying to promote or encourage? When we apply the purpose to our music, we choose songs or music that lines up with our own Christian values? What does the music bring to mind in the heart of the worshipper? No music exists in a vacuum. It is not just what a song inspires in my heart, but what does it inspire in the heart of the worshipper? If we seek to glorify God, it is important that the message of songs be consistent with what God has already told us in the scriptures.

PRAYER FOR TODAY: Lord, I come to You today thanking You for the opportunity to sing, play and minister through music before You and Your people. Lord, thank You for the gift of music that You have bestowed upon me. As I seek to sing or worship, help me to be mindful that music is a vehicle to reach hearts and inspire others to come to faith in You. The church will be edified and inspired by my service in Your house and help me when I depart Your house to continue to spread Your message to others. Lord, have Your way with me. Let Your presence be with me. I praise You and I worship You. In Jesus Name, I pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Ephesians 6:12, Colossians 3:16, John 4:24

Minister Tony Gillion