



**40 Days**  
*of Prayer For*  
*Envisioning The Future*



United Institutional Baptist Church ~ 802 East Market Street ~ Greensboro, NC

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## **DAY ONE - The Power of Vision 1**

**Luke 5:3**

One day Jesus "saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats...belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.' When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break" (w. 2-6 NIV). Are you sitting today where Peter sat? Your outlook is bleak, your nets are empty, you've tried everything you know to do and you're ready to give up? It happens; you get to the place where you simply stop expecting anything good. You've experienced too many disappointments and you're afraid to dream, reach, stretch, or broaden your horizons. Jesus knows how hard you've tried, and today He's inviting you to try again—this time with Him. Even though you're wrestling with depression and tormenting memories, unemployment, addiction, financial failure, or sickness, the Lord of new beginnings wants to come on board. If you let Him, He will show you what to do. Now, what He says may not initially make sense to you. But if you're willing to respond like Peter—"Because You say so, I will"—you're on the threshold of a miracle. Today, invite Jesus on board and watch how your situation changes.

## DAY TWO - The Power of Vision 2

Php 1:10

God gave you feelings, and you should never be ashamed of them. They can alert you to danger and give you insight into various situations. God actually uses our feelings to draw us closer to Him and highlight areas in our lives that need to be submitted to His Holy Spirit. But feelings are subjective; you can't always trust them. One counselor says: "When old feelings creep back in we feel fearful, ashamed, hopeless, not good enough, unlovable, victimized, helpless, and resentful...An event can trigger these reactions...ending a relationship, stress, problems on the job and at home, times of change or illness...and sometimes these feelings return for no reason." So you must "test your feelings," otherwise you'll end up living "a life shaped by things and feelings instead of by God" (Col 3:5 TM). It can be disastrous to act on what you see, hear, and feel. Instead of reacting to feelings, you must learn to act on what God's Word says. That's the gold standard, and it never changes! For instance, even if you feel like you can walk on water, you can only do it if God has called you to step out of the boat. Paul says, "My prayer [is] that [you]...abound...in knowledge and...insight...that you may be able to discern what is best" (1 Cor 1:9-10 NIV). Bottom line: You're not defined by your feelings; you're defined by what God says about you. You may feel worthless, but God says, "You are precious to me ...I love you" (Isa 43:4 NLT). You may feel like a failure, but God says, "There is...no condemnation for those...in Christ" (Ro 8:1 NIV).

## **DAY THREE - The Power of Vision 3**

**Ps 104:27**

We fear losing our job, our health insurance, and our retirement benefits, so we amass possessions, thinking the more we have the safer we are. The same insecurity motivated the builders of the Tower of Babel: "Let us build... a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth" (Ge 11:4 NKJV). Can't you hear the fear in those words? Just like us stockpiling pensions, possessions, and property, they accumulated and stacked until their tower of stuff grew so tall it reached heaven. Then they said, "We are safer But God said, "No, you aren't!" The Bible says, "Command those who are rich...not to...trust in uncertain riches but in the living God" (1Ti 6:17 NKJV). Riches don't bring security. The more you have—the more you have to lose! It's ironic; the more you accumulate the more protective you become, and the greater your concern that it could all be swept away by events you can't control. That's not how God intended you to live. He wants you to save and He wants you to sow. And when you've done all that wisdom demands, to trust in nothing but Him. The Psalmist said, "Living things...small and great...all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season" (Ps 104:25, 27 NKJV). And He does. God's the great giver, absolutely generous and utterly dependable. The resounding message of Scripture is clear: God owns it all. God shares it all. So place your trust in Him—not in stuff.

## DAY FOUR - Take It To the Lord

Hos 13:6

Paul writes: "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share" (1Ti 6:17-18 NKJV). Are you "rich in this present age"? Almost half the world—more than three billion people—live on less than \$2.00 a day. So if your income is more than that— you're rich by comparison. But prosperity comes with a warning: Don't be arrogant. "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Pr 16:18 NIV). The Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle wrote, 'Adversity is sometimes hard upon a man. But for one man who can stand prosperity, there are a hundred that will stand adversity.' God wants you to enjoy things without becoming obsessed with them. Accumulating possessions has a way of eclipsing God, no matter how meager they may be. There's a predictable progression from poverty to pride. The poor man prays and works; God hears and blesses. The poor man becomes rich and forgets God. The faithful poor man becomes the proud rich man. As God said through Hosea, "When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me." How can you avoid this trap? Remember that everything you own comes from God, and He's the source of everything you'll need in the future. So live with a grateful heart, and in total dependence on God.

## DAY FIVE - Start Thinking Creatively

Hag 2:8

How would you describe someone who built a house without giving any forethought to the foundation? Foolish! Likewise, God says don't put your trust in "uncertain riches" (1 Ti 6:17). Between 1948 and 2001 the U.S. economy endured ten recessions, each averaging one year, and resulting in the loss of billions of dollars. That means every five years or so, the economy dumps its suitors and starts all over again. What word would you use to describe a husband who philandered his way through nine different wives over fifty years? Fickle? And how would you describe wife number ten? Foolish? Abraham was one of the richest men in his generation, and so was Job. The New Testament church had some rich folks in it. The Bible says, "All who were possessors of lands or houses sold them ...brought the proceeds...and laid them at the apostles' feet" (Ac 4:34-35 NKJV). God wants you to be blessed financially so you can bless His work. But the reason He doesn't give some of us more money is because He knows we don't have the maturity to handle it. It would be our undoing. And to those He does entrust with money, He says, "Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share" (1Ti 6:18 NKJV). You don't really own anything; you're just a steward. "'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord." The truth is, you'll never be financially secure until you're willing to say yes to God in whatever He asks you to do, knowing that He will always take care of you. Always!

## DAY SIX - Wait

Dt 10:14

When it comes to our money, we like to think, "I earned it, so it's mine." But that's where you're dead wrong! The Bible says: "To the Lord your God belong the heavens...the earth and everything in it." "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness...the power... the glory...the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours" (1 Ch 29:11 NIV). "The silver...and the gold is mine, declares the Lord Almighty" (Hag 2:8 MV). Riches are like Monopoly money; if you're better than your competition you end up with the deeds to the most expensive properties. But guess what? At the end of the day when the game is over, the participants leave the table and all the stuff goes back in the box. And if you were overly aggressive, the other players may end up not liking you. Here's a humbling Scripture: "Don't be impressed with those who get rich and pile up fame and fortune. They can't take it with them; fame and fortune all get left behind. Just when they think they've arrived and folks praise them because they've made good, they enter the family burial plot where they'll never see sunshine again. We aren't immortal. We don't last long. Like our dogs, we age and weaken. And die" (Ps 49:16-20 TM). The God who owns it all gives it to us for two reasons: (1) To enjoy. (2) To invest into fulfilling His purposes on earth. When we live with that attitude, we replace fear with faith in God.

George Washington Carver, an agricultural chemist who discovered three hundred uses for peanuts, shared these observations about God: As a very small boy exploring the almost virgin woods of the old Carver place, I had the impression someone had just been there ahead of me. Things were so orderly, so clean, so harmoniously beautiful. A few years later in these same woods...I was practically overwhelmed with the sense of some great presence. Not only had someone been there, someone was there...Years later when I read in the Scriptures, 'In him we live, and move, and have our being,' I knew what the writer meant. Never since have I been without this consciousness of the Creator speaking to me...the out-of-doors has been to me more and more a great cathedral in which God could be continuously spoken to and heard from...Man, who needed a purpose, a mission to keep him alive, had one. He could be...God's coworker...My purpose alone must be God's purpose—to increase the welfare and happiness of His people...Why, then, should we who believe in Christ be so surprised at what God can do with a willing man in a laboratory?" in 1921 Carver spoke before the United States House of Representatives. The chairman asked, "Dr. Carver, how did you learn all these things?" He answered, "From an old book." The chairman asked, "What book?" Carver replied, "The Bible." The chairman inquired, "Does the Bible talk about peanuts?" Carver replied, "No sir, but it tells about the God who made the peanut. I asked Him to show me what to do with the peanut, and He did." Need a creative idea or solution today? Ask God!



## **DAY EIGHT - Get Rid of your Entitlement Attitude**

**Php 4:8**

Be honest: Have you ever met a perfectionist who was truly happy? No, because when things must always "be a certain way," life becomes miserable because it's constantly changing. As soon as you solve one problem, another comes along. Instead of dwelling on their blessings and being grateful, perfectionists focus on what's wrong and why they need to fix it. It may be a job they did that was less than perfect, a few pounds they need to lose, or even a disorganized closet. Or it could be someone else's imperfections: the way they live their life, how they behave, or the way they look. Constantly dwelling on flaws—your own or someone else's—makes it impossible to be grateful. And gratitude is at the core of happiness. Now, let's be clear; we're not talking about striving to do better. That's a good thing. We're talking about obsessing over what's wrong. There'll always be a better way to do something, but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy life the way it is right now. So what's the cure? Catch yourself before you fall into the trap of insisting that things should be different from how they are. Stop and remind yourself that in the absence of your judgment, everything will work out just fine. Paul says, "In all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Ro 8:28 NIV). Are you getting it? God's in control; it's okay for you to let go. Instead of focusing on the negative, "think about the things that are good and worthy of praise." When you do, you'll begin to discover how wonderful life is.

## **DAY NINE - Give It Your All**

**Joel 2:28**

A boy once asked Michelangelo why he was working so hard chipping away on the block of marble that would become his greatest masterpiece: David. The artist replied, "There's an angel inside this rock and I'm setting him free." The power of vision enables you to see a potential masterpiece in what others overlook or consider worthless. It also helps you discover things within yourself you never knew were there. It brings out the best in you. Many of the people God used in Scripture looked like losers before they looked like winners. After the disciples fished all night and caught nothing, Jesus told them, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men" (Lk 5:10 NKJV). They did, and they ended up: (a) building a church that's still thriving two thousand years later; (b) writing history's greatest books; (c) having our sons named after them. Does that mean you can just dream a dream and God will fulfill it? No. Paul says, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God" (1Co 6:19-20 NIV). At Calvary you lost the right to take your talents, opportunities, and experiences and run off in any direction you please. But why would you even want to? What could possibly be more fulfilling than God's purpose for your life? And what could be more tragic than missing it? You can't wring enough meaning out of secular accomplishments to satisfy your soul. The hole you're trying to fill has an eternal dimension only Christ can fill. That's why you must Pray, "Lord, show me Your vision for my life."

## **DAY TEN - Don't Go By Your Feelings**

**Pr 3:6**

Having a vision for your life gives you four things: (1) Passion. It makes you wake up in the morning and bound out of bed because there's something out there you love to do; something you believe in and are good at; something bigger than you; something you can hardly wait to get at. (2) Motivation. Author Richard B. Ether said: "Safe living generally makes for regrets later on. We're all given talents and dreams. Sometimes the two don't match. But more often than not we compromise both before ever finding out. Later on, we find ourselves looking back longingly to that time when we should've chased our true dreams and talents for all they're worth. Don't be pressured into thinking your dreams or talents aren't prudent. They were never meant to be...They were meant to bring joy and fulfillment to your life." (3) Direction. Vision simplifies decision-making. Anything that moves you closer to your vision gets a green light; everything else should be approached with caution. Vision brings what's important to the surface, and weeds out anything that stands in your way. Without vision, good things will keep you from achieving great things. People without a clear vision are easily distracted. They've a tendency to drift aimlessly from one thing to another. They've no spiritual, relational, financial, or moral compass. Consequently, they make decisions that rob them of their dreams. (4) Purpose. Having vision is like getting a sneak preview of things to come. It says, "If you don't show up, something important won't happen. Your life matters. Without you, what could be—won't be."

## **DAY ELEVEN - It All Belongs To God 1**

**Ps 32:8**

Mother Teresa didn't set out searching for fame, it found her. She simply went to India, found a need no one else was meeting, heard the call of God, allowed her heart to be consumed by it and ministered to multitudes of the world's most neglected and forgotten people in the slums of Calcutta. One of her most famous slogans was, "A life not lived for others is not a life at all." Let's face it, much of what we do each day doesn't seem to matter until it's evaluated as part of a larger picture. When you take the minutiae of any given day, drop it into the cauldron of a God-ordained vision, and stir it around, suddenly there's purpose, worth, adrenaline, and the joy that comes from knowing you're fulfilling your destiny. It's like the difference between filling bags with dirt and building a dike to save a town. There's nothing glamorous about filling sandbags, but saving a town from the ravages of a flood is another matter entirely. Building a dike gives meaning to the drudgery of shoveling dirt into sandbags. And it's like that with your vision. Many times the everyday routine of life can feel like shoveling dirt. But take those same routines and view them through the lens of a God-given purpose, and suddenly everything looks very different. Vision brings your world into focus. It brings order and purpose out of chaos. It enables you to see everything in a fresh light. And the good news is that God is the giver of visions—so ask Him for one!

## DAY TWELVE - It All Belongs To God 2

Jn 9:3

When Jesus encountered a blind man, His disciples immediately began to discuss the reason for the man's condition. They asked Jesus, "Was this man's blindness the result of his own sins, or the sins of his parents?" Jesus answered, "(He was born blind] so the power of God could be seen in him." Notice four things: (1) The disciples were eager to attribute the man's problem to his sin. And Satan will try to convince you that because of your sin you're disqualified from God's grace, but you're not! God doesn't examine your past to decide your future. (2) When Jesus healed him, the neighbors were more interested in debating than celebrating—and not much has changed! They started asking "'Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?' Some said he was...others said, 'No'" (w.8-9 NLT). (3) His healing failed the "religiosity test," because the Pharisees said, "This man Jesus is not from God...working on the Sabbath" (v.16 NLT). (4) Even the man's parents weren't free to praise God, because "anyone saying Jesus was the Messiah would be expelled from the synagogue" (v.22 NLT). To the neighbors he was a misfit, to church leaders he was a topic of debate, to his parents he was a social stigma, so they "threw him out" (v. 34 NIV). End of story? Thank God—no! "Jesus...went and found him...[and]...said, "I came...so that those who have never seen will see" (w. 35, 39 TM). So instead of rehashing your problem and listening to other people's opinions, take it to the Lord in prayer. When you share it with others the best you'll get is sympathy, but when you share it with Jesus you'll get a solution.

## **DAY THIRTEEN - It All Belongs To God 3**

**Jas 5:9**

Whatever you keep doing becomes a habit. That's why James says, "Do not complain." Author Jon Gordon says, 'A complaining fast won't just make everyone around you happier...you'll experience more joy, peace, success and positive relationships.'" So instead of complaining when things go wrong: (1) Practice gratitude. Giving thanks for three blessings every day energizes you and makes you feel happier. It's impossible to be grateful and negative at the same time. (2) Encourage others. Instead of complaining about what people do wrong, focus on what they're doing right. "Encourage...people who are afraid. Help those who are weak. Be patient with everyone" (1 Th 5:14 NCV). It's okay to critique people's weaknesses as long as you balance it with three times more praise. (3) Focus on your success. Start a success journal. Every night before you go to bed, write down something great about your day. It could be an uplifting conversation...or an accomplishment you're proud of. There's truth to the old saying, "Nothing succeeds like success." When you focus on success you set the stage for more to follow. (4) Learn to let go. Instead of obsessing about what you can't change, focus on what you can influence. When you stop trying to control everything and place your life in God's hands, things have a way of working out. (5) Use the power of prayer. Paul says, "Pray...on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests" (Eph 6:18 NW). Prayer reduces stress, boosts positive energy, and promotes health. When you're under pressure, instead of complaining, plug in to God's power and recharge your batteries.

## **DAY FOURTEEN - It All Belongs To God 4**

**Ps 27:14**

It's in looking back that we realize: (1) God had something better in mind for us. (2) We weren't mature enough at that point to handle what we were asking Him for. We think we're ready, but God knows when we are. Over forty times in the Bible we're commanded to "wait on the Lord." Learning to wait is a test of maturity. Scott Peck writes: "Delaying gratification is a process of scheduling the pain and pleasure of life in such a way as to enhance the pleasure by meeting and experiencing the pain first and getting it over with... It's the only decent way to live." Waiting forces us to accept that we're not in control. It humbles us in ways we need to be humbled. Consider the trapeze artist: For a split second, which must feel like an eternity, he or she is suspended in nothingness. They can't go back, and it's too soon to feel the grasp of the one who'll catch them. They must wait in absolute trust. You may be at that same point in your life right now. You've let go of what God called you to let go of, but you can't feel His hand catching you yet. Moses waited eighty years for a ministry that lasted forty years—two-thirds of his life was spent getting ready! Jesus spent thirty years preparing for a ministry that would last three and a half years. From God's perspective, your life isn't measured by its length but by its effectiveness and its impact for His kingdom. So wait, and keep a good attitude while you're doing it. God won't disappoint you.

## DAY FIFTEEN - Ask God

Ps 40:1

The Psalmist said: 'I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair...He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what he has done and be amazed' (w. 1-3 NLT). Waiting means trusting that God knows what He's doing, even when He doesn't give you all the details. Perhaps you're single and looking for someone to share your life with. Maybe there's a relationship at your fingertips, but you know it wouldn't be pleasing to God. It isn't the right person, because he or she doesn't share your values, goals, or commitment to Christ. Maybe they're putting pressure on you to get involved sexually even though you're not married. Sampling the product before you buy it may be the world's way, but you know it's not God's way. Still you're tempted to think, "I'm tired of waiting. I'm going to reach for whatever satisfaction I can get and worry about the consequences later." Samson did that and ended up losing his sight, his strength, his reputation, his freedom, and his life. Hold out for God's best! Pray: "Lord, I don't want to get involved in any relationship that I know would dishonor You, hurt me, and bring pain to the lives of others. You said the plans You have for me are good. So even though I sometimes feel no one understands how hard it is, I'll trust in You and wait patiently."



## **DAY SIXTEEN - What Are You Called To Do**

**Est 4:16**

Esther, a Jewish girl married to a pagan king, broke with long-standing tradition, marched into her husband's throne room, spoke her mind, and rescued her people from annihilation. One girl saved a nation because she was willing to put everything on the line. Are you feeling inadequate today? Are you thinking, "Someone else should be doing this job instead of me"? Then read these words written by clergyman Edward Everett Hale: I am only one; but still I am one. I can't do everything; but still I can do something: and because I can't do everything, I will not refuse to do the something I can do." How many people did it take to rescue the dying man on the Jericho Road? One Good Samaritan. How many people did it take to confront Pharaoh and lead the exodus out of Egypt? One man, Moses. A respected leadership expert writes: "God has put a dream inside you. Its yours and no one else's. It declares your uniqueness. It holds your potential. Only you can birth it. Only you can live it. Not to discover it, take responsibility for it and act upon it, is to negatively affect yourself as well as all those who would benefit from your dream." Poet John Greenleaf Whittier wrote, "For all sad words of tongue and pen; the saddest are these, it might have been." In your twilight years, will you look back and feel like you've spent your life struggling to fulfill other people's expectations? Or know that you lived it to the fullest by striving to fulfill your God-given dream? Think about it now, while there's still time to change direction.

## **DAY SEVENTEEN - Go On A Complaining Fast**

**Heb 11:1**

When you're in the middle of a crisis, what you really believe manifests itself in your words, attitudes, and actions. When Lazarus died and his sister Martha said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (in 11:21 NCV), she was voicing past-tense faith. When Jesus said, "[Lazarus] will...live again" (v. 23 NCV) and she replied, "I know that he will...live...in the resurrection" (v. 24 NCV), that was future-tense faith. And when she said, "Even now God will give you anything you ask" (v. 22 NCV), she was demonstrating "now" faith, which is present-tense. As believers, the Bible tells us not to "look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen (2Co 4:18 NKJV). "Now" faith stakes its claim on "something...even if we do not see it" (Heb 11:1 NCV). Paul says, "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2Co 5:7 NKJV). Too often we base our feelings on what we see, instead of what God says in His Word. But as Jon Walker writes: 'When we believe that reality is confined to what we see, we become trapped into thinking the only truth is what we see. We become prisoners of our own perceptions; we cease walking in faith...For those who walk by faith, appearances are never the ultimate reality...Reality extends beyond what you can see...the things we do not see are eternal [time and circumstance do not diminish or alter them] (2Co 4:18 NIV). Even though things may appear bad, God is working things out for our good (Ro 8:28). He knows how the story ends, so fix your eyes on the unseen and not on what you see.'

## **DAY EIGHTEEN - Get Rid of Your Scarcity Mentality**

**Jn 3:16**

David said, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Ps 32:1). No matter how hard we work, we can never pay off our sin debt. And thank God we don't have to, because "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Years ago a congregation decided to honor one of its retired pastors. He was ninety-two, and some people wondered why the church even asked the elderly man to speak. After a warm welcome and introduction, he rose from his chair and walked with great dignity and effort to the pulpit. Leaning on the podium to steady himself, without notes of any kind he began to speak: 'When your pastor invited me here, he asked me to talk about the greatest lesson I've learned in fifty-plus years of preaching. I've thought about it for a few days, and boiled it down to the one thing that has made the most difference in my life and sustained me through all my trials. The one thing I can rely on when tears, heartbreak, pain, fear, and sorrow paralyze me...the one thing that always comforts me: Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong. They are weak but He is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so.'" You could hear a pin drop as the old man shuffled back to his seat. It's something the congregation never forgot. And it's something you should never forget either—Jesus loves you unconditionally. That's so today, tomorrow, and forever!

## **DAY NINETEEN - Rules For Serving**

**2 Co 9:8**

God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory" (Php 4:19). Whose riches? God's! And His ability to bless you is not limited by the job market, the stock market, or the housing market. For forty years He fed His people in the wilderness with manna from heaven. He sent ravens to deliver meat to Elijah during a famine. He fed five thousand people with a boy's lunch. Paul writes, "God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others...Yes, you will be enriched in every way" (2Co 9:8,11 NLT). The scarcity attitude is rooted in fear, and shows distrust of the awesome power of God to supply all our needs according to His unlimited resources. It's based upon the faulty assumption that if someone else has something, you can't have it because there's only one pie, and every slice that someone else gets means less is available for you. It makes you believe that the blessings of others come at your expense. It says, "You win, I lose." That's no way to live the abundant life! Start today to reprogram your thinking. Remind yourself that you're not in competition with anybody, for anything, in any area of your life. Cling to the words of Jesus: "I have come that [you] may have life, and that [you] may have it more abundantly" (in 10:10). Pray: "Father, help me to reject all thoughts of scarcity. Show me how to help others achieve their goals by sharing my time, talents, treasure. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen."

## DAY TWENTY - Pray, And Keep Praying

Pr 27:12

Half Dome is a granite peak that towers above the valley floor in Yosemite National Park. The final climb is between steel cables bolted to the rock; they were designed as handholds to safeguard and help climbers reach the top. Columnist Mary Hunt writes: "The final ascent up the sheer granite surface...is by far the most challenging. Once you see the cables you experience terror like you've never known...and you've no choice but to finish the trip. At that moment you're thankful for cables that become the guardrails you need to pull yourself to the top. The secret to [continuing] when you feel like quitting, is to erect 'cables' in your life before you need them so that when you face difficult situations, the help you need to make it will be there to protect you from your own fears and self-defeating attitudes." Solomon says, "A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences." Sooner or later you'll face a mountain you can't conquer alone. And if the "cables" you need are in place, you'll conquer it. What are they? (1) God's Word. Jeremiah said, "Your words...sustain me" (Jer 15:16 TLB). Get into God's Word, and get God's Word into you. That way when trouble comes you'll be able to handle it. It'll "guide you when you walk...guard you when you sleep...speak to you when you are awake" (Pr 6:22 NCV). (2) A strong prayer life. "The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with" (Jas 5:16 TM). Time spent with God changes you; it makes you more like Jesus and strengthens you for what lies ahead.

Dad, your children deserve a father who will model the Christian life before them, teach them the truth of God's Word, and show them how to receive the gift of eternal life. And it could be that in your family this beautiful tradition will begin when you commit your life to Jesus Christ. Author and Bible teacher Gordon MacDonald writes: "Among the legends is the tale of a medieval sidewalk superintendent who asked three stonemasons on a construction project what they were doing. The first replied that he was laying bricks. The second described his work as that of building a wall. But it was the third stonemason who demonstrated genuine esteem for his work when he said, 'I'm raising a great Cathedral.' Pose that same question to any two fathers concerning their role in the family and you are liable to get the same kind of contrast. The first may say, 'I'm supporting a family.' But the second may see things differently and say, 'I'm raising children.' The former looks at his job as putting bread on the table. But the latter sees things from God's perspective: he's participating in the shaping of lives." R. A. Torrey, the great Bible teacher, once said, "A man's success as a Christian leader cannot be determined until one sees his grandchildren." Dad, think about that—you're not just raising sons and daughters, you're raising future fathers and mothers. You're shaping lives today that tomorrow will be shaping the lives of generations to come. And in order to succeed you must take God with one hand and your children with the other.

## **DAY TWENTY-TWO - The Power To Change**

**Lk 1:17 NAS**

Research shows the results of the "dad deficit." Too many kids today are growing up without a father's influence. And as a result they end up making poor life, relationship, and marriage choices. So how does a dad equip his kids for life in the real world? (1) Know what they're up to. Get to know what makes them tick. Ask what subjects they enjoy in school, and which ones they're struggling with. Learn who their friends are; who they spend time with at recess and after school. Try to listen and [learn. Take them out occasionally for breakfast or a hamburger; they'll feel like royalty spending one-on-one time with Dad! (2) Teach them to stand tall. A tragedy of their young world is the increasing suicide rate because of schoolyard bullying. Teach your kids to stand up for themselves. Teach them respect, and how to self-protect by speaking up appropriately in class when they're unclear about the lesson, or to courageously say what they believe. Teach them assertiveness in confronting unfair treatment. Kids who become "punching bags" are set up to be victimized! (3) Give them an example. However accomplished your "preaching" skills may be, unless you're "walking the walk" your kids only hear one thing: "Blah, blab, blab." You can tell them it's important to be healthy and active, but if you're a couch potato inhaling bags of chips and watching endless ball games, they're not convinced. Set an example by getting fit, pursuing a healthy lifestyle, activities, and interests, and watch them think how "cool" it is to be like Dad!

## **DAY TWENTY-THREE - What You Need in the Wilderness 1 1 Co 4:15 TM**

Dad, do these three things for your kids: (1) Alert them to the dangers of having a sense of entitlement. Yes, they need parents who express unconditional love for them. But some of us think our kids can do no wrong—even when they do! Consequently they grow up having unrealistic expectations and a distorted view of how life works. Everybody gets a scorecard in life, and it records both our wins and our losses. Let your kids know that we all blow it. Failing to recognize that just makes them self-deceived and sets them up for heartache. Kids learn to deal with disappointment by experiencing failure; it prepares them for later life when things don't go their way. (2) Teach them the truth about death—yours and theirs. The Bible says, "It is appointed unto men once to die" (Heb 9:27). Let them know that death is universally ordained and not a form of divine punishment. Tell them that life, however long, is a gift to be maximized, and heaven is a family reunion not to be missed. The death of a friend or loved one can be an opportunity to diminish their fears and equip them to handle loss, grief, and recovery. (3) Show them why you married their mother. It's the most formative relationship in their early lives; one that will influence who they ultimately become, their choice of a partner, and their future happiness. When they see you loving their mother, treating her like a queen, and giving her consideration and honor, they'll admire, appreciate, and emulate their awesome dad!



Too often our actions are dictated by a misguided need to please others. We care so much about what they think, that with every step we take we look over our shoulder to see whether they're smiling or frowning. Understand this: If you're always looking for people's approval, you're not looking where you're going and eventually you'll hit a wall or trip over your own two feet. The Bible says, "We ought to obey God rather than men." What do you think will happen if you open your mouth and stand up for yourself? The truth is, people who don't respect your rights and honor your wishes are not worth your time or effort. Nor are they worthy of a long-drawn-out discussion; just say goodbye! (We're not talking about your marriage or children.) When the land became too small for the flocks of Abraham and Lot to graze together, strife broke out. Abraham loved his nephew Lot, but he realized he could no longer live in this situation. So he said, "Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left" (Ge 13:9 NKJV). How does their story end? Lot chose the best grazing land close to Sodom, and as a result everything he worked for went up in smoke. But Abraham, who always sought to please God, ended up not only being blessed himself but being a blessing to the nations of the world. So the word for you today is—God wants to set you free from people-pleasing.

After many years of marriage, John decided to divorce his wife. The reasons he gave his counselor were: "She's not attractive, she's not interesting, she's overweight, and she's a poor housekeeper." So the counselor gave him this suggestion: "Starting today, I want you to go home and treat your wife like a goddess. Start doing everything in your power to please her. Listen intently when she talks about her problems. Help around the house, and take her out to dinner on the weekends. I want you to literally pretend that she's a goddess. Then after two months of this wonderful new behavior, pack your bags and leave. That should get her attention!" John agreed it was a great idea, and decided to implement it. He took his wife away on romantic weekends, and read poetry to her every night. After two months the counselor called and asked, "John, did you file for divorce? Are you looking forward to being a bachelor again?" John replied, "Are you kidding? I'm married to a goddess. I've never been happier in my life, I'd never leave my wife in a million years. In fact, I'm discovering new, wonderful things about her every single day. Divorce? Not on your life!" The Bible says, 'A man reaps what he sows" (Gal 6:7 NW). And when John changed his strategy and started sowing seeds of love, he reaped a marriage he never dreamed possible. Do you think this same strategy might possibly work for you? What've you got to lose? Give it a try and see what happens. Chances are you and your spouse will love the results.

Evolution says where there's a want, nature will provide what's needed. Really? In Natural Theology, Dr. William Paley writes: "To keep the eye moist and clean—which qualities are necessary to its brightness and its use—a wash is constantly supplied by a secretion for the purpose; and the superfluous brine is conveyed to the nose through a perforation in the bone as large as a goose quill. When the fluid has entered the nose, it spreads itself upon the inside of the nostril and is evaporated by the current warm air which in the course of respiration is continually passing over it...It's easily perceived that the eye must want moisture; but could the 'want' of the eye generate the gland which produces the tear, or bore the hole by which it's discharged—a hole through bone? Let the evolutionist tell us who bored the hole...and laid a water pipe through it for the dispersion of tears." When it encounters darkness, your eye's ability to see increases one hundred thousand times. The finest camera ever made doesn't even come close! And what's more, your eye will find the object it wants to see, and focus on it automatically by elongating or compressing itself. Both eyes moving in tandem must adopt different angles in order to fix themselves on what's to be seen. Evolution tells us when the eye got ready to create itself, it had forethought for its own protection and built a bony ridge of the brow, which provided a nose on which to position the glasses many of us need. Then it provided a shutter to protect itself from foreign objects. Perhaps it takes more faith to believe in evolution than creation! What do you think?

More than anything else in life, Hannah wanted a son. And as the years passed she wrestled with disappointment and despair. "In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord" (1 Sa 1:10 NIV). However, she did two things that worked— and they'll work for you too! (1) Instead of turning away from God, she turned to Him. Instead of praying less, she prayed more. She knew that while her husband couldn't give her a child, God could. She may not have been happy with God's timing, but she never doubted His goodness. Unfortunately, one of the things we're tempted to do when things fall apart is to avoid God's presence. That's a mistake, because He's the one you need most! Yes, it's hard to pray when your heart is breaking. But unless you've prayed with a broken heart and a deep sense of your need, you've never really poured out your heart before God, or learned what the Bible truly means by prayer. (2) She didn't just think about what she wanted, she also thought about what God wanted. "She made a vow, saying, 'O Lord Almighty, if you will...not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life — (v. 11 NIV). And shortly after that Samuel was conceived. When you're willing to make a promise to God that He can hold you to (which is what a vow is), you're getting serious about prayer. And that's when God will get serious about your prayer as well! So, "pour out your heart before Him."

Charles E. Fuller, one of the first radio Bible teachers, started his daily broadcast with the song, "My Lord knows the way through the wilderness; all I have to do is follow.' To get them from Egypt to Canaan, God took His people through the wilderness—and spiritually speaking, you'll have to go through it too. You can have a wilderness experience anywhere. At a graveside, in a cancer ward, in a divorce court, in an unemployment line, or in a home foreclosure proceeding. But the wilderness can also be a place of miracles. So for the next few days, let's look at some things you need to survive in the wilderness.

Direction! Without it, you end up going in circles. Notice how God led Israel. He "went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud...and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light...He took not away the pillar of the cloud...nor the pillar of fire...from before the people" (Ex 13:21-22). God told Moses: "Whenever the pillar moves, you move. And when the pillar stops, you stop." But what do you do at night when it's pitch black? There are no candles or oil lamps, and you risk sharing your bed with a scorpion or stepping on a snake on your way to the bathroom. Don't worry; God's got you covered! The wilderness isn't alien territory to Him. The Psalmist said, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps 119:105 NKIV). For every contingency, condition, and circumstance you face, your Bible will guide you, protect you, and keep you safe. So stop worrying and start reading it every day.

## **DAY TWENTY-NINE - Today, Let's Remember It's About Trust! Ps 78:53**

You can be in the wilderness and still be in the center of God's will. "He made His own people go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock...He led them on safely, so...they did not fear" (w. 52-53 NKJV). In the wilderness you get to know God in a way you never knew Him before. So, what else did Israel need to survive in the wilderness? Food! Someone calculated it would have taken about twenty-six train carloads of food to feed that many Israelites every day. The problem is there were no trains and no tracks! But they had something much better—God! For forty years He delivered manna, "the perfect food," to the doors of their tents. The supply was according to each family's individual need—and God never missed a day. So if the economy has you feeling anxious and wondering whether or not God can take care of you—this is the word for you today! God may not give you everything you want, but He will give you everything you need. The God we serve doesn't suffer from lack or limitation! The Psalmist said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread" (Ps 37:25 NKJV). The old country preacher got it right when he said, "Where He leads me I will follow; what He feeds me I will swallow." Think of it: For forty years Israel never missed a meal or went without. And their God is your God, so put your trust in Him today and stop worrying!

## DAY THIRTY - Practice Soul Care

Dt 8:15

What else do you need in the wilderness? Water! You can live without food for about forty days, but without water you'll die much faster. It's the same in the spiritual realm; you can get by in life without a lot of things, but you won't make it without God. In the wilderness God was teaching His people a lesson He wanted them to remember when they arrived in the Promised Land: "Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord...who brought you out of...slavery. He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you" (w.12-16 NIV). Note the words "that it might go well with you." In spite of what you're going through today, God has great blessings in store for you. But in order to handle them properly you must learn humility, develop a heart of gratitude, and never forget that He alone is the source of every good thing you'll ever have. Then God added this P.S. "If you ever forget...you will surely be destroyed" (v. 19 NW). That's how serious He is about making sure you depend on Him each day.

## **DAY THIRTY-ONE - Shake It Off**

**Ps 105:37**

Notice something else Israel enjoyed in the wilderness: divine health. Think of the health issues you'd expect among two million people walking through endless desert with no doctor or hospital in sight. Yet from the youngest to the oldest, "He...brought them out...and there was none feeble among His tribes." That's because they lived on a diet provided by God Himself. Their troubles began when they complained and wanted to go back to the food they ate as slaves in Egypt. Hello! There's an important lesson here for those who live on fast foods that promote ailments like heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. Imagine pouring five pounds of sugar into the gas tank of your car and complaining that it won't run. Now, when health problems run in your family, or economic circumstances force you to eat less than ideal food, God understands and you can go to Him with confidence, believing, 'The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up' (Jas 5:15 NKJV). But when the choice is between exercising wisdom in order to have good health or exercising faith in order to be healed, your choice is clear, When Israel entered the Promised Land, God told them, "Serve the Lord...and He will bless your bread and your water...take sickness away from the midst of you...[and] fulfill the number of your days" (Ex 23:25-26 NKJV). Then He gave them dietary laws to live by that set them apart from the surrounding nations. Question: How many of us fail to "fulfill the number of [our] days" and the assignment God gives us, because we refuse to exercise discipline when it comes to our diet? Think about it!



## **DAY THIRTY-TWO - The Power to Solve the Problem Job 22:21**

When you find yourself in the wilderness, what's the one thing you need more than anything else? God! That's why the Lord told Moses to build the tabernacle and He used it as a teaching tool to show His people that: (1) He wants to meet with us regularly. The word "tabernacle" means "tent of meeting." God wants you to spend time with Him. He wants you to get to know Him. Because when you do, you'll worry less and trust Him more. The Bible says, 'Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace.' It's important to listen to God's Word being taught, to meet with other believers, and be encouraged by their testimonies. But at some point you've got to stop trading in second-hand information and get "up close and personal" with God. James writes, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (Jas 4:8 NKJV). (2) God wants to be at the center of our lives. When Israel set up camp each night, the twelve tribes pitched their tents in formation surrounding the tabernacle, where God's presence dwelt. Every man, woman, boy, and girl could stand in the door of their tent and see God in their midst. Could the message be clearer? When your deepest affections and greatest ambitions are centered around Christ, your life will take an upward swing. "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps 37:4 MV). The formula for thriving in the wilderness is: Center your life on Christ and soak yourself in His Word!

## **DAY THIRTY-THREE - Are You Afraid to Trust God?**

**Ex 25:2**

God's people already possessed everything necessary to build the tabernacle. So Moses went to God for the plan, and to the people for the resources. And that's still how it works! Pastor, don't come up with a plan of your own, or one you got from somebody else, and then ask God to underwrite it. Ask God for His plan, because that's the only one He will bless. And don't feel intimidated about going to the people and asking them to give. Perhaps you're reluctant to talk about finances because some folks in church complain and say, "All the pastor ever talks about is money." Of course, if they're right, you need to get back into balance. But generally speaking, people need clear biblical teaching on giving; to see it as a privilege and an opportunity to go into partnership with God. Over and over the Bible refers to giving as "sowing." And when you sow, you should expect to reap. The law of giving is like the law of gravity, it never fails. God said, "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest...will never cease" (Ge 8:22 NIV). Observe how it works: First you sow your seed, then there's a time of waiting, and finally you get to reap. Money can be a touchy subject; it can stir up resistance and resentment. But God promised that when you sow generously you will reap generously (See 2Co 9:6). Now, either God told the truth or He didn't. And you need to find out whether or not it's true. The only way to do that is to try it and see for yourself.

## **DAY THIRTY-FOUR - Are You Selling Your Dream?**

**Dt 8:18**

On March 3, 1863, anguished by the ravages of civil war, Abraham Lincoln declared a Proclamation Appointing a National Fast Day: "Whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord...We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us then to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness." God warned Israel: 'When...your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied...you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant' (Dt 8:13,18 NKJV). Today, let's remember that!

## **DAY THIRTY-FIVE - Are You Burying Your Talents?**

**Ps 23:3**

David said, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul" (w. 1-3 NKJV). Today car engines are computerized. A light on your dashboard will let you know something's wrong and that it's time for a checkup. Your soul will do that too. But you've got to pay attention to the signals! Don't wait until you have a spiritual, moral, emotional, or relational breakdown before you stop and pay attention. When your soul's thirst is not quenched and its needs are not met, it will seek relief some other way, often a way that will hurt you. You must know when to say "when." Most of us don't take breaks that enable us to "restore our souls." We're ensnared by guilt, as if stopping would somehow be irresponsible. Or we fear losing ground because we took a minute for ourselves. One of the hardest things in life to achieve is not success, but a sense of balance. So in all your goal-setting and "go-getting," don't forget your soul. Even God rested (See Ge 2:2). And if He did, then you need to also. The power of rest is that it allows you to enjoy the journey of life and not just the destination. Indeed, if you don't learn to walk in the park by choice, you may end up in the hospital by necessity. When God "makes you lie down in green pastures," enjoy them. When He "leads you beside the still waters," it's to refresh and restore you. So practice soul care!

There are two ways you can respond to negative criticism. If there's truth in it, humbly accept it and grow through it. If not, practice what Jesus taught: "You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say...If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also" (w. 38-39 NLT). Sometimes a person's criticism may actually have nothing to do with you at all; they simply feel cheated by life. And rather than take control of their heart's dreams, go around trying to squelch other people's dreams in an attempt to drag them down to their own level of despair. And while it's tempting to want to retaliate and point out their weaknesses and failures, that's not the example Jesus set for you. Nor is it the high road you are called to take. "Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone" (Ro 12:17-18 NLT). What does it mean to turn the other cheek? It means don't let your critics get under your skin. Simply listen to them, thank them, and take their criticism with a grain of salt. Save your time and energy for those you trust, those who love you enough to tell you the truth even when it hurts. Someone has said, "You owe nothing to a critic?" Actually, you do. Jesus said, "Pray for those who persecute you!" (Mt 5:44 NLT).

## DAY THIRTY-SEVEN - Can You Take Advice?

Ro 8:27

Someone who's better at prayer than you are, is already at work on your behalf. "God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in us and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves...and keeps us present before God" (w. 26-27 TM). Notice, the Holy Spirit "keeps us present before God." Sometimes we've a hard time being "fully present" in prayer. We all know what it's like to be with another person when their mind is a million miles away. What's the answer? Try jotting down what goes on while you're praying. The two most common hindrances to praying successfully are: (a) your mind gets easily distracted by other thoughts; (b) you get tired. When author John Ortberg shared these two frustrations with a friend, he suggested that John go outside alone and simply invite Jesus to come along with him. Ortberg writes: 'The next day I went to the ocean, took off my shoes, started to run and invited Jesus to come along. I found the strangest thing. When I thought I was supposed to be talking to Him, I found it effortful and difficult. Now that all I had to do was invite Him, I couldn't stop thinking about Him. My mind kept reflecting on His being with me. I found myself wanting to point out the pelicans and the waves to Him. People and concerns would pop into my mind, and I would find myself telling Jesus about them. Everything changed.'" So, invite Jesus to come along with you today and share each thing you do with Him.

## DAY THIRTY-EIGHT - Divine Protection

Isa 37:14

Hezekiah, king of Israel, received a threatening letter from a much more powerful king of Assyria. The Assyrian potentate demanded unconditional surrender, and told Hezekiah not to trust in God. The letter was graphic, warning that resistance meant the Israelites would have to "eat their own filth and drink their own urine" before they died (2Ki 18:27 NIV). So Hezekiah went to the temple "and spread it out before the Lord." Then he prayed: "God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, O Lord, and hear; open your eyes, O Lord, and see" (Isa 37:16-17 NW). Hezekiah literally said, "Lord, would you read this, then do something about it!" And God did. Indeed, what He did was spectacular. "Then the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies!" (Isa 37:36 MV). So, what piece of paper would you like to spread out before the Lord? A financial statement that's overwhelming? A divorce decree? A medical diagnosis? A pink slip? An angry email? Any piece of paper that causes you stress can be an invitation to prayer, and a candidate to be spread out before the Lord. If it's important to you, it's important to Him. You say, "I've never done anything like that before." Try it. Give it to God, trust Him, and watch how He works things out for you.

## **DAY THIRTY-NINE - Give God His Tithe**

**Dt 9:25**

Find a prayer style that works for you. In Scripture people pray as they stand, kneel, lie on the ground, sit, stretch out their hands, lift their faces toward the sky, or bow them toward the earth. Just find the method that works best for you, and use it. Some folks pray better in motion. If you're one of them, take a walk, go for a drive, or run. You are free to use your body and posture to help you turn your mind and heart toward God. When you're acknowledging your sins you may find it helpful to have your head bowed and to kneel; worship, you may want to turn your face toward the sky. In asking for guidance, you may find it helpful to turn your palms upward as a way of expressing with your body: "Lord, whatever You want." When praying for someone, say at a restaurant, you may want to look that person right in the eye while talking to God and say, "Father, I'm so grateful for this person. You know what they need. Give them what is required by their heart." When you're praising God, put on a worship CD and sing along. The point is, you should approach God with the joy, excitement, and simplicity with which a child runs into the arms of a loving parent. Just as you don't have anyone else's fingerprints, you don't have anyone else's temperament. So just approach God in a way that's natural, spontaneous, and comfortable; for you.



## **DAY FORTY - Give God His Tithe 2**

**Ps 91:15**

When we try to spend an extended period of time in prayer, our minds tend to wander. When that happens, is God upset with us? No, when your mind wanders— God's Spirit is still with you. Sometimes your wandering thoughts can actually guide you into prayer. One author writes: "I begin praying, and then I imagine myself being wildly successful at something. Or I replay a conversation with a person I'm upset with. Or I try to figure out how to solve a problem I'm worried about. I used to think of those kinds of thoughts as obstacles to prayer, but I've come to think of them as prayers waiting to be offered. Maybe the reason they pop into my mind isn't simply my short attention span, but rather what my mind is really concerned about. So instead of trying to suppress these thoughts, it's better to begin to talk to God about them. And just like that, I'm back in the flow of prayer. Indeed, we are free to pray in ways that will best help us live in the joyful awareness of God's presence." Obviously, things like getting your hair done or your car fixed are distractions. When these arise, just write them down and say, "I'll get to that later," then get back to prayer. Developing a rich and rewarding prayer life isn't something you accomplish overnight, you have to work at it. But the rewards are more than worth the effort. You're not unique; everybody battles distractions in prayer. Those who succeed are those who learn to deal with the distractions.