

50 Days to **Spiritual Rest**

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Day 1

Preparing for this Devotional

This devotional is a walk through the Scripture. It is not a wandering. There is a purpose to this journey. I want you to examine your relationship with God during this time. The goal is to deepen your relationship with God and remove the obstacles that prevent you from entering into the rest promised to you by Jesus.

Make sure you have the tools to do your disciplines:

1. A Bible that you find easy to read.
2. A notebook that can become your dedicated journal.
3. Pens or pencils – more than one.
4. A well-lit and comfortable quiet space where you will not be interrupted.

Here are some suggestions for making the most of this study:

- Approach each day with a surrendered and expectant heart. Hold nothing back and expect God to show up.
- Allow enough time to process the lesson. The lessons are fairly short but they may stir up deeper things that require time to process.
- Expect to find things to give up. It is very likely that you will discover things in your life that are hindering you from entering into the rest of Jesus. Get rid of those things.
- Start each lesson with prayer.

Discovery Question – Rate the following on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the highest.

- How restful is your relationship with God? ____
- How fruitful are you in your Christian faith? ____
- How satisfied are you with your ability to witness to others about Jesus? ____
- When considering how many people you have led to Jesus, how satisfied are you with that number? ____

Day 2

Rest in Relationship

We find rest in healthy relationships. I find rest with my wife. I have always been comfortable around her. I like her presence. After nearly 40 years I can't remember life without her. I have rest with her.

The presence of God should give us rest as well. Many say that Christianity is a relationship and not a religion. Few are living in the rest that comes from a healthy relationship with God. For the next fifty days we will examine the things that interfere with our rest in Christ. Let us consider the rest that our relationship with God is meant to produce.

In Exodus we see a conversation between God and Moses before the nation of Israel entered the Promised Land.

Exo 33:14-16 NASB - And He said, "My presence shall go [with you,] and I will give you rest." Then he said to Him, "If Your presence does not go [with us,] do not lead us up from here. "For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the [other] people who are upon the face of the earth?"

Notice 3 things:

1. Moses didn't want to go without the presence of God.
2. God's presence would be a sign of God's favor to others.
3. The presence of God would distinguish them from all the other people on the earth.

Now let's look at what Jesus said about rest.

Mat 11:28 NASB - "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

The presence of Jesus gives us the rest that He promised to us. As you start this devotional please consider the nature of your relationship with God. Is it restful? Do you feel the need to perform to a certain standard in order to be right with God? Write down some things that interfere with your rest.

Prayer for today – Ask God for His presence in your life today.

Day 3

Finding the Rest – Hebrews 4

Read Hebrews Chapter 4.

Heb 4:1 NASB - Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

In chapter 3, the author makes it clear that he is speaking to Christians. In the verse above it becomes clear that some Christians may not enter the rest promised by God. What causes this? We see several possible reasons cited. They are lack of faith, disobedience and hardened hearts. Later in verse 11 we are told to be diligent to enter the rest. How confusing this can be.

When our religious experience comes mainly from our institutional forms it can cause us to view our work as beneficial to God. In this passage there is one condition clearly stated for those that want to enter the promised rest.

Heb 4:10 NASB - For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

The rest of this devotional will investigate this relationship of work and rest.

Write down some things you do that you feel are necessary for your relationship with God.

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you what He requires of you.

Day 4

Abiding

Read John 15:4-10

What is the importance of learning to abide? We cannot bear fruit unless we abide. Apart from abiding, we can do nothing. If we do not abide, we are thrown into the fire. When we abide in Jesus and His word abides in us, it gives us power. Abiding allows us to bear fruit. This glorifies God and proves we are disciples of Jesus.

How do we abide? We must keep Jesus' commandments in order to abide. The result of abiding is that we become fruitful, glorify God, and our joy is made full. This is made possible by the presence of God.

1Jo 4:13 NASB - By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

Walking in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit is key to abiding. It is the Spirit that gives us rest.

Write in your journal your answer to this question. How can a Christian be saved and not abide?

Prayer for today – Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit.

Day 5

Sarah and Hagar

Read Galatians 4:21-31

Paul is using an allegory here. He tells us this in verse 24. He is using two real women, two real places, two real covenants, two real sons and two real ways of approaching God, to drive home a point.

Let's examine the two characters.

Sarah – Heaven – New covenant – heavenly Jerusalem – Isaac – the Spirit – Freedom

Hagar – Mount Sinai – the Law – the present religious system – Ishmael – the Flesh – Slavery

God only deals with us through Isaac – Genesis 22:2 – not Ishmael, even though Ishmael is the first born. We have a choice to decide who we serve. We can serve a religious system and become slaves to it. Or we can serve the Spirit and find freedom.

God relates Sarah to the Spirit and Hagar to the flesh in Galatians 4

Lesson – There are two options for who we obey and serve under. There is only one way to follow God and receive blessings of rest in the Holy Spirit.

Many will fail to enter God's rest due to the way in which they practice their religion. There is always a Hagar looking to take you captive and enslave you. Your rest in the Spirit is the best weapon against slavery.

Write in your journal about times where serving God in good intentions turned into a feeling of slavery.

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you the Hagers in your life.

Day 6

Walking in the Spirit or the Flesh

Gal 4:29 NASB - But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him [who was born] according to the Spirit, so it is now also.

How do we know that we are walking in the Spirit? We begin to answer that question when we examine the characteristics of the Spirit and the Flesh. Remember that the terms Law and Flesh are often used interchangeably in Scripture.

Flesh (Law) = Rules, Commands, our war against our sin, seeking answers over presence. The Law produces more awareness of our sin and even more damaging it builds our awareness of the sins of those around us. Flesh produces anxiety.

Spirit = Relationship that challenges us and leads us to places we don't want to go or wouldn't go unless prompted. Spirit produces more awareness of the Glory of God through Jesus and the amazing work he is doing in us and around us. Spirit brings us rest.

To minister in the Flesh (Law) = tasks, rules, acceptable social norms, awareness of our sin and our attempts to rid us of our sin. It is behavior centered. It is working in our strength, talents and resources. It attacks us at the core of who we see us as being.

To minister in the Spirit = learning to listen to God, obeying His voice, following His lead, working in our spiritual gifts, waiting for Him to work, overcoming our sinful state through the power He puts in us. It is kingdom centered and supports us in how God sees us and as a part of what God is doing.

The Law keeps your eyes on you and fixing you or fixing others.

The Spirit keeps your eyes on Jesus, His mission and what He is doing through you and around you.

In order to minister freedom to captives we must learn to minister in the Spirit and not the Law.

Write in your journal any things listed under Flesh that are a required part of your relationship with God.

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you how He desires to work through you.

Day 7

The Effects of the Flesh (Law)

Remember that the Bible uses the terms Law and Flesh interchangeably in many places.

Romans 7:1-7 There is an old way - obeying the Law and there is a new way called living in the Spirit. Which way are you living? How can we tell?

Romans 7:7-13 When we live for the Law we examine God's word to see what we are doing wrong. When we discover what wrong things are within us then sin uses our awareness to attack us.

New Christians will be discouraged by their failure and give up hope of ever changing. More mature Christians enter a religious cycle of self-examination and misery under the Law. We see our sin, are overcome with one more failure to live right (according to the Law) so we enter once again into yet another technique to engage God's word and destroy our flesh. We double down on disciplines, fasting, reading, praying, memorizing, putting up post it notes and reminder cards. We place the Law at the front of our minds and sin takes birth in our lives again. Either result is death and not life.

Romans 7:14-25 The law is good. Our sinful nature is bad. We are set free from this cycle by Christ as long as we walk in the newness of life He provides. We can either let our sinful nature be put to death or we can nurture its existence. How do we nurture it - by focusing on the Law. How do we kill it - by living to produce a harvest of good deeds for God. V.4 – Notice that it is the sinful nature that must be put to death and not the sin itself.

Write down any ways the Flesh has been condemning you.

Prayer for today – Ask God to kill your sinful nature and bring you life in the Spirit.

Day 8

Walking in the Spirit

When we accept us as we are - a sinful person in the process of dying - then we can move on from the Law to the Spirit. When we continue to strive to be good enough to serve God we are placing ourselves under the Law and that produces death for us.

Look at it this way. You once were dead in your sin - a slave - all you could do was act on your sinful desires. You didn't know any better. Now you have been born again. If you accept your new nature in Christ then you will naturally be led by the Spirit to do those things that are holy and pure. Your new nature is that of Christ and will lead you to please God. Your old sin nature was killed at the cross and the Law is what sustains it. Let it die!

Read Romans 8:1-4

We are free if we choose to be free! Do we sin - yes. Is our focus to not sin? No. Our new nature is to not sin and only by walking in that nature can we live holy lives.

Read Romans 8:5-8

If your focus is on your sin - you lose!

Read Romans 8:9-11

It is the Spirit that is to be our focus. He indwells us. He has gifted us for service. He will raise us from the dead. Why would we spend our time focusing on the sinfulness of our current life? He has done it all for us and He did it while we were yet sinners.

My fear today is that some of you are ministering the Law and not the Spirit. If we focus on the sin in our lives or the lives of our new disciples then we are putting us and them under the Law. If we wish to minister in the Spirit, we must cast vision, focus on the Spirit and what He brings to us and how He works through us. The church has taught us to minister a new Law of doing. We just changed the rules. We must remove the Law and teach people how to focus on the Spirit and what God is doing.

The truth in Christ is that we are heirs in our current state and not when we finally achieve an acceptable level of sin control. We walk in newness when we let the Spirit of Christ control us. He will never lead us into sin. When the Spirit leads us, we walk in our new nature which produces righteousness and new life. When we focus on the Law, we are dead in our sin and squelching the Spirit.

If we focus on sin then sin gives birth to death. If we focus on the Spirit then the Spirit gives birth to life. Which do you spend more time doing? Are you renouncing sin, understanding sin, avoiding sin?

Or are you accepting the Spirit, understanding the Spirit and seeking the Spirit?

Write down some ways you can seek the Spirit.

Prayer for today – Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit.

Day 9

Two Priesthoods

Read Ezekiel 44:4-31

This passage of Scripture gives the account of Ezekiel's temple and the two priesthoods that minister there. It is essential to note that this temple has never been built. The two priests mentioned here are real people that both were descendants of Aaron. Considering the use of allegory in Galatians 4 I think we can learn lessons from the two priesthoods mentioned here. The priests are real people but they never served together in this temple.

The temple is very different from the other temples built by the Jewish nation. It is missing many components and features that the other temples included.

Read the passage above and write down the things that stand out to you. Is it possible this temple represents the church today? Is it possible that this temple will be built in the future and these priesthoods will serve there? Will the priests actually be the sons of Abiathar and Zadok or are they types of priests?

Write your answers and other observations in your journal.

Prayer for today – Ask God to give you understanding of this passage of Scripture.

Day 10

The Cursed Priesthood – Abiathar

Ezekiel 44:9-14

According to this passage there is a God ordained priesthood serving the Lord that is under a curse. Let that sink in. You can serve the Lord and be under a curse placed on you by Him! What did they do to bring on this curse?

Verse 6 – They were rebellious

Verse 7 – They brought in unbelievers to the sanctuary and offered them the sacraments voiding the covenant.

Verse 8 – They put others in charge of God's holy things and placed them over the sanctuary

Verse 10 – They went astray after idols

What is the result of this curse?

Verse 11 – They shall minister in the house and oversee the sacraments.

Verse 12 – They must minister to the people in the house.

Verse 13 – They are cut off from God and His holy things.

Verse 14 – They are appointed to keep charge of the house and all its service.

Write in your journal any observations you have from this passage. Have you been guilty of these things? Do you view the type of service spoken of in the curse as a curse or blessing?

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you any ways you may have voided His covenant.

Day 11

The Blessed Priesthood – Zadok

Read Ezekiel 44:15-31

There is a second priesthood operating in this temple. They are the sons of Zadok. God only lists the line of Zadok in 1 Chronicles 6:50-53 even though there are two lines remaining (Abiathar). They get a special place to minister that the other priests don't get to approach. Seven times in this passage the Lord uses "me" or "mine" to describe the ministry of this priesthood.

The sons of Zadok are faithful when others are not. They minister to God. They keep His charge. Their ministry does not make them sweat. They are balanced and sober minded. They teach the people the difference between the holy and the profane.

Notice that both priesthoods minister in the outer court. Only the sons of Zadok have access to the inner court to minister to God. This is where true rest is found. As servants of God we choose our priesthood. Don't do the things that brought the curse on Abiathar. Learn to minister to God. Ask Him what He is doing and how He is doing it. Then do only those things that way. Jesus taught us this in John 5:19.

Read John 5:16 and write the answer to these questions. Have you ever asked God "how" He wants things done? How have you fallen into the trap of doing things the way you were taught? How can you begin to change the way you minister?

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you His throne room and how you can minister to Him.

Day 12

Cain and Abel

Read Genesis 4:1-12

We don't get very far in the Bible before we have our first murder. This story is much more than a tale of jealous anger. It represents an early principle of Scripture. The flesh persecutes the spirit. Those that do right are persecuted by those that don't. Look at the names of the brothers for a little more insight.

Abel = breathe – Spirit

Cain = possession – stuff – mammon

Cain – the flesh persecutes Abel – the spirit, and kills him once he sees the result of his sacrifice being accepted by God. Cain's sacrifice contained no life blood and did not cost him emotionally. It was the fruit of the cursed ground. Abel's was alive and he would have emotionally invested in raising it. Abel's sacrifice required blood to be spilled and life to be given up.

When you begin to walk in the Spirit and produce fruit for the Lord you can expect those in slavery under Hagar to persecute you. That is what the flesh produces. Slavery and persecution. It takes great faith to walk free from Hagar. This might be why Jesus warned His disciples in John 15.

Read John 15:20. Write down your thoughts from today. Have you ever faced persecution from other Christians? How?

Prayer for today – Ask God to give you the courage to walk through persecution and stay faithful.

Day 13

Understanding Our Purpose

Read Acts 1:8

God gave us the Holy Spirit so we could be witnesses. Instead of going in the power of the Holy Spirit we have become gatherers in the institution. Here is the result. Let me start you with some sobering statistics

- Kenya 80% Christian - 7% go to church
- Republic of South Africa 80% Christian - 16% go to church
- USA 65% Christian - 26% go to church
- UK - only 9.4% go to church

We are reaching fewer people in each passing generation.

65% of Builders

35% of Boomers

15 % of Busters

4% of Bridgers

88% of all people under the age of 26 do not attend church

- 350,000 births each day
- 150,000 deaths each day
- 200,000 people added to earth each day - 72,800,000 each year
- Most optimistic church growth figures - 74,000 saved each day
- 126,000 born and not reached each day
- We are losing souls at the rate of 45,790,000 per year

Why are we experiencing this problem? We have the money and the resources to reach the world.

1. George Barna reports that in the last decade US churches have spent \$500 *billion* on domestic expenses “with no growth to show for it.” (Average budget = \$292,790)
2. 90% of all US churches spend 89% of their budgets on two things: (1) salaries, and (2) facilities.
3. Barret and Johnson calculate that it costs the US institutional church **\$1,551,466** to baptize each new member it brings in!
4. It takes 85 US church members 1 year to reach 1 person for Christ.

Our lack of results is not from a lack of resource. God did not design the current church system that dominates the American landscape. You can't find it in Scripture. It is a man designed religious system. It does a very poor job of reaching the lost. It is only by returning to the Spirit and learning to rest and abide in Christ that we can be effective witnesses. We don't need a better program, sermon, building, music or event. We need more sons of Zadok walking in the restful power of the Holy Spirit.

Write in your journal how these statistics make you feel. Have you ever considered why Christianity is fading in America? What are some of the reasons you have heard cited?

Prayer for today – Ask God to give you a zeal to reach the lost.

Day 14

Discipline Yourself

Read 1 Timothy 4:7

Spiritual disciplines are designed to promote spiritual awareness by strengthening the spirit of man (Galatians 5:16-17).

Man's spirit is renewed as he masters spiritual disciplines and feeds on the Word of God (2 Corinthians 4:16; Colossians 3:10).

Godliness = (a) to be devout, (b) a God-ward attitude doing what is well-pleasing to God, (c) God-fearing. Godliness is the fruit of *spiritual formation*, the goal of discipleship.

The Nature and Operation of Spiritual Disciplines

- 1 - They are patterns and habits.
- 2 - They must be done regularly.
- 3 - They must be developed or improved upon in our lives.
- 4 - They are deliberate choices we make.
- 5 - They involve the discipline (or control) of our wills.
- 6 - They strengthen our spirits by denying our fleshly desires.
- 7 - They produce character and spiritual formation.

Three Categories of Spiritual Disciplines

- Inward disciplines
The "First Works"
- Outward Disciplines
The "Growth Works"
- Corporate disciplines
Things you do with others

There are at least ten individual spiritual disciplines instructed or displayed by example in the Bible.

- 1 - Prayer - communicating with God.
- 2 - Bible Study - understanding the Word of God.
- 3 - Fasting - deliberately choosing to abstain from food.
- 4 - Meditation - going deeply into passages of Scripture.
- 5 - Journaling - recording your thoughts and events in a book.
- 6 - Living by Faith - walking in the Spirit.
- 7 - Evangelism - sharing your faith with another person or group.
- 8 - Stewardship - surrendering your possessions to the Lord.
- 9 - Giving - intentionally giving tithes and offerings.
- 10 - Serving - having a ministry.

We must become spiritually disciplined if we want to abide in the rest Christ offers.

How many of the ten disciplines are a regular part of your life? What things have you placed a higher priority on than these disciplines?

Prayer for today – Ask God to give you a hunger for spiritual disciplines.

Day 15

Capacity and Function

Read Luke 16:10

Christians are born again to a new life. This life is one of growing responsibility to steward the things of God. We can see from stories like the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-23) that we will give an account of what we did with what we were given.

For many Christians this is where the problem starts. We feel pressure to do something. We start to seek “ministry” and “fruitfulness” in our own efforts. For many Christians they never stop to examine their capacity to do ministry. It’s as if they assume it is a natural thing to be able to do ministry. It is natural if we are doing what God is doing the way God is doing it. That is not always the case.

Becoming fruitful and finding rest go hand in hand. When we learn to abide, we grow our capacity for ministry. Only through the Spirit can we handle more ministry, bear more fruit and still find rest.

Read Luke 12:42

How many servants can you be put in charge over today? Are you working to expand your capacity to handle more? Write in your journal some ways you think you can grow your capacity for ministry while still entering into rest.

Prayer for today – Ask God to grow your capacity to steward spiritual things.

Day 16

Personal Capacity and Function

Read Ephesians 2:8-10

In order to find rest in ministry we must understand the relationship between our capacity and function. Our capacity is our ability to bring freedom to others through the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Spirit. It allows us to endure hardship, persecution and suffering for Christ.

Keep in mind that God has prepared the works for you to do. God has also told you how to bear fruit. You bear fruit when you abide in Him and obey His commands. No amount of human effort can bear spiritual fruit. Only the Spirit of God can do that. Increasing our capacity for ministry is a spiritual work.

Building Personal Capacity

- Consecration - hate your sin and repent of it daily
- Forgive others daily until you feel the forgiveness for them. Bitterness and anger will turn to sympathy and compassion.
- Forgive specifically for each offense and to the depth of the emotion
- Explore your pain, don't ignore it. Your pain is a tool Satan will use against you and Jesus will heal it if you let Him.
- Loving the world makes you an enemy of God - James 4:4
- Until you have this process working in you do not expect to have fruitful ministry or real community. Your consecration is your responsibility. No one can keep you from it unless you let them. No one can do it for you.

Write in your journal your thoughts about capacity and function. Which have you focused more on? How would you rate your Capacity? How about your functioning?

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you what is needed in order to increase your capacity to steward His spiritual things.

Day 17

Learning to Function

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Once you are building your capacity you will become fruitful by functioning in your God designed spiritual gift. Doing things that sound good will lead to fruitless labor. Functioning in your spiritual gift under the leading of the Holy Spirit will lead to restful and fruitful ministry.

Discovering Your Personal Function

- All ministry is rooted in the spiritual gifting that God has given us. We can engage in tasks but without using our gifts we can do nothing of eternal value.
- We have a responsibility to understand our mission and to engage in being good stewards of spiritual things.
- Stewardship begins with becoming a bond-servant. Have you been to the doorpost? (Exodus 21:6) All the stuff that prevents our rest is surrendered at the doorpost.
- Without consecration and spiritual gifting, we cannot find our place in the body. Both of these things are our responsibility and under our control to do or use.
- Understand the process I just outlined. We will repeat it over and over for others. It is just that hard and simple.

Write in your journal your spiritual gifts. If you don't know them you should seek help in understanding them and finding them. List some ways they have functioned in your life.

Prayer for today – Ask God to anoint your spiritual gifts and allow you opportunity to use them.

Day 18

Corporate Capacity and Function

Read Ephesians 4:16

Just as with the individual, the church to must grow capacity and function to enter the rest. For the individual, capacity comes first. For the church, our functioning comes first. If we as individuals try to engage in ministry before we have capacity we will be stressed out and unfruitful.

For the church we see a different rule in place. As the individuals function together our capacity for ministry and rest increases. It is only as each member functions in their special God given gift that the body can grow and rest.

Corporate Function

- The body functions properly as the individual members do the things I just outlined in Days 16 + 17.
- Growth is the natural result of a properly functioning body of believers.
- Together they take on responsibility to be fruitful, multiply, steward and rule.
- Pastoring the community flows out of our consecration, freedom, abiding and growth.
- If you are not intentional you should not expect God to bless you with fruitfulness and rest.

A functioning church body has the capacity to grow without destroying the rest provided by the Holy Spirit.

Corporate Capacity

- Our growth is limited by our capacity to handle the growth both personally and corporately.
- Each aspect of ministry requires people to oversee and steward. What is your capacity right now?
- The capacity of the ministry is the cumulative capacity of the people. We are always at capacity. God only gives us what we can handle.
- Increasing our individual capacity will increase our corporate capacity. What is your part in this?

Write in your journal what you think is your biggest need to increase your church's capacity. Are the majority of the members functioning in their God given spiritual gift or are they busy doing tasks?

Prayer for today – Ask God to give you unity in the church as found in the Holy Spirit.

Day 19

Understanding Law and Grace

Read 1 Timothy 1:3-11

1 Timothy 1:3-7 is about fruitless religious discussions. There are those who want to discuss every possible nuance of the Bible. They want to know what's missing. What was Jesus' childhood like. Why does he disappear at 12 and reappear at nearly 30. Then there is my least favorite discussion of Calvinism vs. Arminianism.

All of these give rise to mere speculation and do not lead to the stewardship of God which is only by faith. Many times this is presented as pondering the "deep things of God". What it really does is set up a false idea of spirituality that is based on knowledge and not practice. In order for us to steward for God it requires active practice.

1 Timothy 1:8-11 the Law is designed for a purpose and is good if it is used according to the purpose of its design. What is the purpose of its design? Gal. 3:24 - Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

The Law is designed to show us our depravity, our weakness, our sinfulness. It is designed to oppose false teaching. It condemns thoughts. It destroys speculations.

The Law is designed to proclaim the truth of God. The truth of God will lead us to recognize our sinfulness. This recognition will lead us to the need for Christ. The Spirit will lead us to walk in harmony with the Word.

1Cor. 15:56 says the power of sin is in the Law.

When we use the Law properly it will oppose false teaching and tear down speculations. When we apply it incorrectly it will lead the righteous back into death and keep them from the stewardship of God. It will leave those we speak truth to in a worse condition than we found them. They will be aware of their sin and left without a solution.

The Law is good when we use it to oppose those things raised up against the knowledge of God or to lead people to Christ. If we don't move on to walking in the Spirit we will never enter the rest.

Read Hebrews 5:14. Have you moved from learning to practice? Are you stuck in a cycle of learning that is preventing you from becoming powerful in the Spirit. This is where rest is found.

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you how to walk in the rest of your position in Christ and free from the condemnation of the Law.

Day 20

Moving on to Spiritual Power

Read Philippians 3:7-15

Before Christ we are in a condition and after we put on Christ and receive the new nature we are in a different condition.

Our first condition is hopeless, a slave to sin and death. We are under the Law which means there is no escape from it. It rules over us and condemns us and will ultimately be our judge at the final day. No man can keep the Law so all who are under the Law will be found guilty.

Our new nature puts us under grace. In Christ there is no condemnation. (Romans 8:1) Sin and death have no power over us because we are under grace. We are under grace if we walk in the Spirit and not the flesh. We defeat death because Christ promises us a resurrection and a new body. Grace insures that we will be found blameless on judgment day.

So how do we minister properly and use the Law for its design and grace for its design? We must first become doers of the Word. according to James 1:25. When we look to the Law for what's wrong with us then sin takes power in it. When we happily agree with the Law and do what it says then we find no condemnation in it. When we become doers of the word we walk free from the Law.

When we minister to others we must keep in mind the power of sin is in the Law. We can use the Law or truth to point out error but if we do not offer the solution then we have only heaped condemnation on them. Speaking truth is designed to bring people to a place of recognizing their need for Christ - the perfect Law. If you are talking to someone that proclaims Christ but walks in sin, then the Law is designed to teach them they are in sin and sin is death and slavery. If they are left there then they have no life in them and there is only one way to get free from that sin - repent.

Many who profess Christ are stuck in habitual sin. That means they have not yet discovered the freedom that Christ offers. Those who walk in the Spirit gladly accept the words of the Law - and become doers of it. Those who walk according to the flesh walk away from the Law - and are not changed by it.

How do we minister the Law correctly and steward grace? We must be careful to only declare the Law when we are ready to declare the solution. To tell someone they are in corruption but to come short of telling them how to get out is not a proper use of the Law. To give grace to a stubborn and unrepentant heart does not mean to continue fellowship with such a person. God does not do this with us. Our sinfulness can hinder our relationship with God and God is the author of grace.

Prayer for today – Ask God to reveal to you any Scripture that you have refused to obey. Thank Him for His grace and seek to obey the Word of God. Obedience is required to enter the rest.

Day 21

Ministering in Law and Grace

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

The man of flesh is ruled by the natural senses and the mind, will and emotions.

We are stewards of Grace - 1 Peter 4:10. We are to employ our gift as stewards of the manifold grace of God.

In order to minister in Law and Grace we must be able to discern the power behind the stronghold. Strongholds are created by believing lies. Lies are instilled in us through wrong teaching, traditions or experiences. Once lies are in our mind they are held there by one of 2 things - will or emotion. When dealing with lies we must understand what is the power behind the lie.

Lies held in place by will resist the truth. They are not open to it. They hold to their thoughts as an intellectual tool of protection.

In a similar way the emotions can hold us in lies and bad behavior. Pain is a powerful tool of the enemy.

As we minister, we place people in situations that press against their flesh. God has gifted us with a life that requires the Spirit! When we press against the flesh, we find strongholds. We must be able to discern the power behind the stronghold in order to effectively tear it down.

In all cases - the Word of God is used to renew the mind so it can be free from the stronghold. For many people this is the only way they know how to minister. It is a ministry of Law. Apply the correct teaching and walk away. The rest is on them. But we are to be ministers of Grace and preachers of the Gospel.

When a stronghold is rooted in emotions, we must minister grace. When a stronghold is rooted in the mind, we must minister Law.

When faced with a stronghold rooted in the will, we must apply the Law and make the path to Repentance clear - Grace in this context is postponing judgment.

In the case of strongholds rooted in emotions, we must apply the Law and minister to the area of pain making it clear to the victim what has caused their wrong thinking. Grace in this context is caring for the wounded.

Learning how to minister Law and Grace can help us find rest in ministry. Write your thoughts from today's lesson.

Prayer for today – Ask God to give you understanding of each of these ministry contexts.

Day 22

Expectations – the Enemy of Unconditional Love

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-7

God is Love. 1 John 4:8

Love is the greatest commandment. Mark 22:37-39

Love is how we abide in Christ. John 15:9-10

What prevents us from loving others as God loves us? God loved us while we were sinners. (Romans 5:8) I have learned that many of us approach ministry with expectations. We expect people to change, embrace Jesus, get free, flee sin, and many other things. When these expectations are not met, we feel it. It builds frustration in us. Other times, people in ministry place expectations on us.

This frustration can be with the person or with God. The truth is that our expectations don't come from God. They are a hindrance to restful and fruitful ministry. When we learn to minister to God in the inner court of Zadok we must do it without expectations. We minister on behalf of God. We do what He wants done. His model for what He wants done is in Jesus. Jesus prayed for His persecutors. He healed freely. He healed ten and only one returned.

Learning to rest in ministry requires us to give up our expectations. Let God be responsible for the results. We are responsible to love and steward spiritual things. This is measured by our willingness to lay down our life for another. (John 15:13) It is also measured by our obedience. (John 14:15) It is never measured by the results we get when ministering to others.

Write in your journal some ways you have let expectations bring you frustration.

Prayer for today – Ask God to show how to love unconditionally.

Day 23

Faith vs. Sight

Read 2 Corinthians 5:7

This passage is often quoted in times of trouble or uncertainty. There is a comfort in understanding our God ordained limited understanding in confusing situations. But what about the rest of the time? Does this apply to us every day? Are we truly expected to walk by faith?

There are two ways we tend to view Christianity today.

1. Theological View – We see the Christianity from the standpoint of our theology (our doctrine of the Church). The prevailing theological view of most of Christianity is that the church is composed of all believers in the Lord Jesus who have been vitally united by faith to Christ and to one another. For most of Christianity, the Church is not seen theologically as an institution or building, but as a spiritual “body” of believers with Christ as the Head (Ephesians 1:22; 2:19-22).

2. Experiential View – We see the Church from the perspective of our experience with or in the Church. While this view tends to be somewhat more diverse among different groups of Christians, it still has a prevailing or dominate theme centered on participation in a local church. Since this means involvement in the activities, programs, and services of the local church, our experiential view of the Church will be dominated by our experience in the programs of the local church of which we are a part. This experience may or may not necessarily agree with or endorse our theological view.

The practical implications of this cannot be understated. As Christians it is expected that our theology will be our experience. If that were so, we would be personally and corporately experiencing what we read in the Bible.

The early church expected this and communicated this idea. (1John 1:1-3)

The reality is, however, that our experience falls far short of our theology, especially regarding the Church. Instead of *being* the Church we *go* to church and *that* experience dominates our thinking and behavior rather than our theological views concerning the nature of the Church. A goal of every Christian should be to align their experience with their theology – to live what they say they believe!

Which view of the church is dominant for you? Write your thoughts in your journal. Does your view of the church match the description of the church found in Scripture. Give examples.

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you how He sees the Church around the world.

Day 24

Faith Vs. Sight – Practice is Required

Read Hebrews Chapters 5 + 6

According to Hebrews 5 + 6 – the only way to move on to maturity as a Christian is through constant use of what we have been taught and given.

Jesus expected us to obey His teachings through our actions. Intellectual agreement is not the goal of Christianity. Obedience to God and the transformation that follows is the goal.

Luke 6:46 Jesus asks - "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

That is a great question. Why do we call him Lord and then ignore the application of His teaching into our lives? The word Lord here means the owner who is in control.

John 14:15 - "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments
The word keep indicates action not knowledge.

There is a growing awareness among evangelical leaders that we are facing a crisis of credibility and relevancy.

Those outside the church see that many do not act on the teachings of Jesus and that destroys the credibility of the teaching.

The power of the Gospel is that it transforms those who obey it (Romans 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 1:18).

Those who learn it but don't obey it are left unchanged by it. James 2 says even the demons believe and tremble.

We must be very clear about the nature of ministry and the nature of *how God works*. God doesn't seek to merely influence our intellect; He transforms us!

This transformational power of Christ is not in our institutional structures or systems; it is in our *living grace testimonies empowered by the Holy Spirit*. Transformation is not the result of better management or programming; it is a work of the Spirit in the human heart. All true Spirit-led ministry facilitates this work of the Spirit.

List the Christian activities in your life each week. Do they seek knowledge, fellowship or obedient action? What can you change to add more "practicing" to your life?

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you His mission.

Day 25

Faith Vs. Sight – Course Correction

Read Ephesians 2:1 - 7

Two Errors in Modern Christianity

1. We no longer teach or preach our theology (what we believe) with clarity and conviction to the average person sitting in the pew.
2. We do not live what we profess to believe.

We must challenge Christians to live what they say they believe!

I am challenging you to live what you profess you believe!

The Christian worldview originates from three things:

- 1 - Our existential awareness (or life experience)
- 2 - Our understanding of Scripture
- 3 - Our own self-interest

The institutional Church places a greater emphasis on #2 (understanding Scripture) and #3 (self-interest), than it does on #1 (personal experience).

A Christian Worldview must practice and experience what the Bible teaches. Failing to experience the supernatural aspects of our faith will lead us to a secular lifestyle and worldview.

The result of this shift in emphasis is that Scripture becomes something I am expected to know and believe but not something I am expected to live or experience. The result is a worldview that in practice denies the primacy of the Holy Spirit and the Godly supernatural realities of the Christian faith, Paul refers to it as “*holding to a form of godliness*” (or religion), but denying its power (2 Timothy 3:5).

The Consequences of Failing to Practice What We Believe

The major consequence of failing to live what we believe is we will have disconnected our theology from our experience. Our worldviews are shaped at least in part by our experiences (i.e., I cannot convince you fire does not burn because you have *experienced* its burning quality).

If we have a godly supernatural theology but not a godly supernatural experience our worldview will be defined and dominated by our non-supernatural experience and we will no longer be authentically Christian in either. If my theology fails to penetrate my experience it will become nothing more than a passionless list of irrelevant opinions. Our worldview will be, in practice and belief, the humanistic worldview.

Write down a list of supernatural occurrences in Scripture. How many have you experienced.? Do you believe you can experience these things? What prevents you from experiencing them?

Prayer for today – Ask God to allow you to experience the supernatural.

Day 26

Disconnected from our Theology

Consider this thought: “How long can our theology survive intact when it is practically disconnected from the life experience of those who profess to believe it?”

When we surrender our theology to a secular life experience:

- Pragmatism and expedience will replace truth.
- The natural will take priority over the spiritual.
- Disciples will become believers.
- Followers of Christ will become church attendees
- Christians will live by preferences rather than convictions.
- Church Membership will replace transformation.
- Spiritual warfare and demonization will be dealt with through psychology and counseling.
- Sacrificial service will give way to acts of kindness that are scheduled and convenient.
- Morality will be ruled by politics.
- Ministry will follow and be defined by structures and money.
- Spiritual leadership will be reduced to a series of management tasks.
- The Church (organism) will become churches (organizations).

We are already here in American Christianity.

How often do you experience the supernatural aspects of the faith? Do they happen more often at a church service or out in the world?

Write in your journal examples of how you have become disconnected from your theology.

Day 27

Getting Reconnected

Read Galatians 3:1-3

Examples of theology that is disconnected from practice

- No evangelical leader holds to a theology that the Church is a building, or a meeting in a building, which takes place on a set day at a set time. Yet, that is exactly what we practice and promote in our behavior, language (we “go to church”), we invite people to church, we reference the location as the church.
- Reducing the Church in this way makes it virtually impossible for Christians to *experience* this thing we call “the Church” outside of the building or meetings and, perhaps even worse (if that is possible), it communicates to the world an unbiblical view of the Church. Christians should be experiencing all of the positive and supernatural aspects of their faith every day of the week and in all places.
- Most Christians hold to a theology that there is a spiritual (invisible) realm inhabited by spiritual beings and forces, which affect the natural (visible) realm. Yet, especially in America, we do not live with nor teach our members to develop an awareness of the spiritual realities we say we believe exist around us and affect us.
- There are two terrible results from this: (1) Christians do not experience the supernatural aspect of their faith, and (2) lacking an experience and knowledge of spiritual things, they often redefine them as natural (carnal) realities (i.e., spiritual gifts are defined as natural talents, inclinations, or abilities).
- We believe people who die without Christ go to Hell for eternity, yet it is estimated that less than 5% of all Christians are regular soul winners and the average church has no accountability and little teaching for members to share their faith.
- We believe prayer can change the world, but prayer remains the most neglected part of Christian life – even in our prayer meetings!
- Despite a theology that believes the Church is the universal, mystical body of Christ (i.e., Spirit-filled disciples), our worldview is really defined by our institutional church experience and defies (violates) our theology.

What are some practical steps you can take to reconnect your theology to your practice?

Prayer for today – Ask God to forgive you for neglecting to practice what you professed to believe.

Day 28

Faith without Works is Dead

Read James 2:14-26

Read Galatians 3:3-5

Read Romans 3:21-31

I hope these passages have conflicted you. At first glance they appear to be in conflict but in fact they are not. The principal is clear. We do not receive the Spirit by works. We are not saved by works. Our works are produced as a response to possessing the Spirit.

When we abide in Christ through the Holy Spirit it will produce in us action. This action is not burdensome but restful. The works that are opposed in these passages are works of the Law. They are religious duties. If our works are limited to religious duties then they are dead works.

Jesus lived a life of active service to those around Him. He did not serve the religious system of His day. He served the broken and hurting people all around Him. This is the pattern for us. Our restful relationship with Jesus will compel us to serve others in love. Abiding in Christ will give us a hunger to be witnesses. Our witnessing flows best from serving others.

Write in your journal some of the works you have participated in. Did they produce fruit? Did you do them from religious duty or passion to serve others? Was the Gospel shared in the process? Do you consider these dead works or being a witness? Did they produce rest in you?

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you the difference between dead works and ministry.

Day 29

Working in God's Design

Read John 6:63

God designed all of creation. He gave Noah a pattern for the Ark. He gave Moses a pattern for the tabernacle. He designs things. He has patterns, design and purpose in the things He does. In the same way, He designs the function and operation of His people and the church.

We can only find rest in God's pattern or design for our lives and ministry. Failing to follow God's design will bring us struggle. How do we walk in God's design? The first step is to recognize that the spiritual must rule over the physical realities of our lives.

Far too many people think that the physical is the most important. It is the most visible. It presses on us. It grabs our attention. God's design is for us to see spiritually. The return of the Holy Spirit enables us to see spiritual things. We must learn to see all of reality through spiritual eyes again. We have the equipment. We were designed by God to do this. Many have never learned how.

How have you been able to see spiritual things in spite of physical realities? Write an example in your journal. Read Romans 11:8 and ask God for eyes to see.

Prayer for today – Ask God to give you eyes to see and ears to hear spiritual things.

Day 30

Pastoring the Community

Read Genesis 22:17-18

Read Galatians 3:29

Part of God's design is for the seed of Abraham to be a blessing to all the nations. If you are in Christ then you are that seed. It is a natural and restful act to bless those around you. It's easy. Try it. How many ways can we bless our neighbors? Clean up, care for, provide, protect, and so many other ways.

We call this pastoring the community. When our attention is turned from building a church to pastoring our community, our ministry finds rest. Not only do we find rest but we also bless the nations. This is God's design.

Man has complicated ministry for us. Programs, gatherings, buildings, staff and so many other things. God's design is for His Spirit-filled witnesses to be a blessing to their community. When we all do this, together we bless the nations.

Write down some ideas that come to mind for blessing your community.

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you ways to be a blessing to the nations.

Day 31

Understanding Stewardship

Read 1 Corinthians 9:16-17

The biblical concept of stewardship is much different than that of the world today. Look at the definition of the Greek word translated as stewardship*.

*the management of a household or of household affairs

1. specifically, the management, oversight, administration, of other's property
2. the office of a manager or overseer, stewardship
3. administration, dispensation

Let's make this clear. You cannot steward your own stuff in a biblical sense. Stewardship in the Bible is all about caring for someone else stuff. When we start by claiming to steward our own stuff for God we start in the wrong place.

When we grasp this concept, we can start to better understand the surrender required to enter the promised rest of Christ. We must surrender everything. All we have been entrusted with is only in our care to expand the Kingdom of God.

Do you view your possessions and money this way? Many people struggle over how much to give or withhold for themselves. This is not stewardship. This creates conflict. Entering rest requires us to view everything in its proper stewardship context. God is letting me care for His stuff in order to grow His kingdom.

Prayer for today – Ask God to give you understanding of how He views stewardship.

Day 32

Stewarding the Spiritual Things

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1

Read Colossians 1:27

We have been entrusted with great spiritual riches. Are you stewarding them well? God has entrusted you with the Gospel of the Kingdom. He has given you His Holy Spirit. He has equipped you with powerful spiritual weapons and gifts. We will each give an account for our use of these things.

I often wonder why people fail to use what they have been given to rely on man-made systems and structures to do ministry. I think it may be because it is easier to follow and understand man-made systems. Easy should not be our goal. Abiding in Christ, resting in God's finished work and bearing fruit in His Kingdom should be our goal. This can only be done through these spiritual things.

All of our ministry will have a physical reality to it. The spiritual realities are far more important. They bring rest because we cannot make them happen. When we work in the spiritual, we must rely on God, not us.

Take an inventory of your spiritual weapons, gifts and riches that Christ has entrusted to your stewardship. Write down how you think you are doing in your stewardship. What can you change to be a better steward for God?

Prayer for today – Ask God to empower you in spiritual things.

Day 33

Stewarding the Grace and Mysteries of God

1 Peter 4:10 – in order to be good stewards we must employ our gifts in serving others

Grace is an amazing thing. It was brought to us through Jesus Christ. The Bible says it was grace that allowed Christ to die for us. Stop and think about that for a minute. Do you know Jesus? Are you living to be more like Him? He left us an example of how to live and one of the greatest examples is found in His death. It was grace that allowed Him to do it. Grace will allow you to sacrifice for Him.

If we understand grace it will affect our lives. It is what establishes us in God. Many pursue knowledge as a way to be grounded in their faith. Knowledge of God will multiply grace to us according to 2 Peter. Knowledge alone does not establish us in Christ. Understanding the grace given to us is what allows us to persevere and steward grace to others. Grace destroys pride. In fact, God gives grace to the humble.

If you want to experience the grace of God more fully, you must follow God to the place where you need His grace the most. Jesus did this as an example for us and it allows us to participate in stewarding God's grace to others. Even in His most desperate hour Jesus found grace that was sufficient. Of that moment when He cried in desperation the scripture says of God's response to Him. - For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

Grace is best found when we run to serve those that others avoid.

Our gifts vary according to the grace given us – Romans 12:6

God can make His grace abound towards us so we can do every good work – 2 Cor 9:8

Grace is associated with the power of Christ – 2 Cor 12:9

We are called by God's grace – Galatians 1:15

Grace helps us in the time of need – Heb 4:16

We minister grace through our words – Eph 4:29

Grace establishes us in the Lord – Hebrews 13:9

Have you ever put yourself in a position where you needed God's grace to make it through? Write your thoughts about that experience.

Prayer for today – Ask God to pour out His grace on you.

Day 34

Spiritual vs. Carnal

It is clear from the teachings of Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament that not all Christians are functioning equally well in the spiritual realm. Several passages of Scripture deal with this issue and shed light on the struggle inherent in walking in the Spirit (Romans 6-8; 1 Corinthians 2-3; 12-14; 2 Corinthians 3-5; Galatians; Hebrews 4-5).

Paul's words to the Corinthians are especially applicable to this discussion: "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:1) The Corinthians had received the Holy Spirit but were behaving carnally, dominated by their natural senses and abilities, and using spiritual things (the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts) in carnal ways. Paul describes their inability to function spiritually by handling spiritual or invisible things properly (Romans 8:5-8) as being spiritually immature. The epistle to the Hebrews also speaks to this as well (Hebrews 5:11-14).

Our rest comes from stewarding spiritual things well. When we use spiritual things carnally or focus on the physical, we feed the conflict between the spirit and the flesh.

That is what Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians 4:18. If I only look at those things, which are naturally appraised, the things of the flesh, I will embrace a reality that is dominated by them. That reality is "hostile toward God" because it is "not subject to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so [be subject to God's law], and those who are in the flesh cannot please God." (Romans 8:5-8)

What are some ways we can fuel the conflict between the spirit and the flesh? How does that prevent us from entering the rest of Christ?

Day 35

Flesh vs. Spirit

There is no easy middle ground in this discussion between the flesh and the Spirit. The two are incompatible: “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another...” (Galatians 5:17).

We, as Christians, are called to be equipped in the things of the Spirit. If we fail to do so, then we will be consigned to a reality in which we are living in hostility to God and His law (His ways). But, as we go deeply into the things of the Spirit, we will experience a reality for which we were created, even the glory of the invisible God.

All of this begins with what we see. That is what faith is, the “assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). We “see” the spiritual realm and the things of the Spirit *by faith*. This *seeing* faith comes by hearing the voice of the Spirit through the Word of God: “So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

To live as children of God we must learn to live in both the natural and the spiritual realms. The spiritual realm is as much a part of creation as the natural – it is as real as the natural.

Resting in Christ is an active pursuit of the Christian *spiritual* life. It begins with a decision and surrender to a lifestyle of obedience, spiritual growth, and sacrificial living. It is not a casual choice made out of self-interest, but a denial of self, the taking up of a cross, and a dying to this world. It is a life-transforming decision, which requires complete and total surrender.

Have you surrendered everything to Christ? Write your thoughts on this topic in your journal.

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you the spirit realm.

Day 36

Understanding Task or Function

Read Matthew 11:25-30

The yoke of the Lord is = to the spirit, Grace, the heavenly Jerusalem

If your yoke is from God then there is a work to be done. God's work! Not just a task to perform, although tasks are involved. A task is simple. A work is much bigger and more complex. In a work there is function by design and eternal purpose. In a task there is duty. Function is ongoing - task is temporary. Function is spiritual - task is physical. Our yoke involves function over task. A task puts the focus on completion and performance. Function puts the focus on being and abiding, not doing. The completion of a task has to do with performance. Our function has to do with design and rest.

Example – In a gas engine there are many parts. Let's consider the spark plug. It has been designed to perform a function. It cannot do the work of the engine. It can only perform its function as it was designed to do. It provides the spark to fire the engine. It cannot perform many of the functions that the other engine parts perform. It cannot cool like a radiator or adjust the timing. For a spark plug to attempt another function would be futile and disruptive. If all the parts perform their function then the driver can take the car to its destination. Travel is the task. When there is no task (driving) to perform, the spark plug does not lose its function. It is still a spark plug by design.

We have been given the privilege to join God in His work. His work is to redeem all of creation. He has chosen to do this through the church. He gives us the ability to function in the church through the gift that He bestowed on us. He gives us tasks which are always secondary to function. Tasks are important but they will not endure for eternity. The things accomplished by task are needed but not primary. We can and will perform many tasks. We have been designed for a function. We are to be fruitful, multiply, steward and rule through the Spirit. If we focus only on stewarding, we will see many tasks. When we look at the whole picture, we can begin to see our function within God's work.

Do you know what your God designed function is?

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you your function in His mission.

Day 37

Our Function in the Church

Read 1 Corinthians 12:22-25

There is only one - body, spirit, faith, baptism, Lord. When we are divided, we are performing tasks. When we are united, we function. We can only unite and function properly when we work in our design and in God's design for us. This can only happen through the Spirit. Flesh just gets in the way. In our flesh we have been raised to perform tasks. We are valued according to the task we perform. The garbage collector task is not as highly esteemed as the doctor task. In the church the preaching task is more highly esteemed than the janitor task. This is not God's design for us. This is task or flesh.

The work requires the proper function of the parts. They must do what they are designed to do. When the spark plug fails to fire it does not prevent the engine from running. It makes it run poorly. When you fail to function as designed you do not prevent the body from functioning - you make it function poorly. The same can be said if you focus on task and not function. The task is a physical thing. The function is spiritual. My value is not determined by my task. My value is determined by God who made me and gifted me to perform a function within His kingdom and church. I have no less value when I am taking out trash and no more value when I preach.

When we value task over function we are walking as the gentiles did in the futility of our minds. The resting in God comes from walking in our function through the Spirit and using the spiritual gift that He has placed in us. The use of the spiritual gift is essential to both the proper function and the work. Without the gift we have nothing to offer to others but the completion of tasks.

So we are to live in a new way. What is that way? Our Christian culture makes it all about what we do or don't do. That is task and leads to death. If your whole focus of life is about whether you sin or don't sin then your focus is on death which is the result of sin. If your focus is on the function you were designed to perform through your spiritual gift then your focus is on the Spirit which is life and rest.

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you your function in the church body.

Day 38

Unmet and Over Met Needs

An unmet need is a need that was never filled by humans. This can be love, touch, companionship, etc. An over met need is one where our behavior changed in order to get more of what we craved. Examples are modifying behavior to get praise or attention. Both can lead us into transactional relationships.

Transactional relationships cripple love. Unmet and over met needs shape our bondage. Unmet needs shape our relationships. We are lured into transactions with those we love when we don't get our needs met by them. For example - we have a felt need for our loved ones to accept Christ and be saved. We then act towards them in a certain way that is in some way directed by that desire. Instead of showing them unconditional love, which is what we are called to do, we try to direct them to Jesus. No one can direct anyone to Jesus. Only those that God calls can get to Jesus – John 6:65.

Identifying our unmet needs and our over met needs can help us to identify where Satan has us bound. Jesus can and will heal of us our emotional hurt in order to free us from our flesh. Remember that all our needs are met in Christ (Phil. 4:19). When we try to get our needs met by humans, it feeds our flesh. When we respond to the behavioral conditioning of over met needs, we walk in the flesh. When we participate in transactional relationships, we attempt to control outcomes. Only by turning to Jesus for our needs and allowing Him to have His proper role as Savior and sanctifier can we join with Him in stewarding His kingdom.

How were your needs met as a child? Do you have examples of unmet and over met needs in your life? Write them down. Did these needs modify your behavior?

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you how this teaching applies to your life.

Day 39

Understanding Ministry

Below is an outline of my current understanding of ministry in the restful Christian life.

Consecrate myself and become spiritually disciplined.

Understand, preach and live the Gospel of the Kingdom -

Repent – Believe – Be Baptized

Follow – Obey – Be a humble servant

Deny Yourself – Take up your cross – Follow Jesus

Sell Your Possession – Give up your life – Suffer for Jesus

Walk in the Spirit – Use Spiritual Gifts – Enter Spiritual Warfare

Love – Abide – Bear Fruit

Fulfill the Great Commission – Make disciples

A Disciple is one who embraces the Gospel that Jesus preached and dedicates all that they have to live a life dedicated to living by God's design.

Gather the disciples = the church - God's design includes the body of Christ living together and fulfilling God's purpose of being fruitful, multiplying, subduing the earth, stewarding it and ruling over it. The assembly is made up of those who have accepted and chosen to live by God's design.

This is a simple and biblical outline of ministry. It will produce rest if followed. It is the light yoke Jesus spoke about. Have you entered into restful ministry?

Prayer for today – Ask God to show what you have added to His design for ministry.

Day 40

The Problem with Hypocrites

Hypocrite - a person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings

Only those who profess a belief can be a hypocrite. Jesus called the religious leaders of His day hypocrites.

In Matthew 23, we see Jesus outline eight things that made the leaders hypocrites

1. (13) Woe to those who shut up the kingdom.
2. (14) The religious leaders take advantage of the vulnerable.
3. (15) The religious leaders led their converts to be like them not God.
4. (16-22) The religious leaders made false and deceptive oaths.
5. (23-24) The religious leaders are obsessed with trivialities, and ignoring the weighty matters.
6. (25-26) The religious leaders are impure both inside and out.
7. (27-28) The religious leaders have the appearance of good, but without spiritual life in the inner man.
8. (29-36) The religious leaders honor dead prophets, but murder the living prophets.

The problem that Jesus found in the religious system of His day was that it was being run by hypocrites. These hypocrites had two main and common characteristics.

1. They made their own rules and elevated them to the same level of importance as God's rules. They even allowed their rules to void God's rules (oaths v.16-22) At the same time they ignored some of God's rules that Jesus considered more important.
2. They were disconnected from their theology. They professed things as true that they did not act upon.

Paul related this religious system to Hagar that makes slaves. Do you see any signs of these things at work in America today? Can a Hagar system still be working today? How do we avoid becoming slaves to Hagar today?

Write your answers in your journal.

Day 41

Avoiding Hypocrisy

1 Cor 1:18-19 Paul is setting the stage for a scathing letter to Corinth. In chapter one he is setting them up to show them how disconnected they are from what they profess to believe. In this preface he quotes from Isaiah and Jeremiah. He is using the foundations of their faith to show them how they have gone astray. As the letter progresses, he brings them correction on immorality, lawsuits, marriage, liberty, Christian order, spiritual gifts, communion, love, and how to operate the church.

Paul wants them to understand something. It is a very important message. In chapter 3, he warns them of a coming judgment. All your works will be laid on the alter and fire will be cast on them.

In Isaiah 29, we see God warning the people of their disconnection from Him. When we profess something and do not live it, we become hypocrites. In verses 13 + 14, we see a people that can talk the talk because they have been taught. They do what they do because they have been told to do it. They are really far from God but professing their doctrine, a tradition handed down to them by mere men. God promises to destroy their wisdom.

The message here is that what you are taught does not change your life. It is what you believe so deeply that you live it, that is what changes your life.

Theologically, most Christians would agree that at least one of the purposes of the Church is to make disciples, but in actuality very few make disciples.

So where are you in danger of hypocrisy? Is it in how you participate in unbiblical church activities? Is it in evangelism? Have you changed your appearance and not your heart? Are you proclaiming freedom to others while hiding your own chains? Are you afraid to love fully and passionately?

God seeks those who will worship Him in Spirit and Truth. Not by tradition learned by rote.

Write in your journal some of the theology you hold that has not affected your life. Can you change that?

Prayer for today – Ask God to free you from any hypocrisy.

Day 42

Work

Man was made to rule over all of creation – Psalm 8

Adam was given a job to do in Genesis 1:26-28

God sets a pattern for our work – 6 days of work 1 day of rest – Genesis 2:2

The creation needs man in order to be fruitful as designed – Genesis 2:5

Adam was given a job by God – Genesis 2:15

The curse makes work hard – Genesis 3:17

The story of Noah is a picture of Christ who will give us rest from our toil – Genesis 5:29

Work can be used to keep us from listening to God – Exodus 5:9

God gives wisdom and skill to those He chooses to do His work – Exodus 31:1-6, 35:35

There is a retirement mentioned in Numbers 8:25

There are numerous mentions of additional time off for holy convocations and feasts.

God will confirm the work of our hands – Psalm 90:17

Being skilled in our work puts us in a place to be exalted before kings – Proverbs 22:29

Prepare your work before you build your house – Proverbs 24:27

Being negligent in God's work can bring a curse upon you – Jeremiah 48:10

God calls at least some people to certain works – Acts 13:2

We should always abound in the work of the Lord – 1 Cor. 15:58

Certain gifts will equip others for the works of service – Ephesians 4:11-12

We should work as for the Lord – Col 3:23

We should make it our ambition to lead a quiet life, attend to our own business and **work** with our hands – 1 Thess 4:11

Work and discipline are connected and unwillingness to work is to be punished – 2 Thess 3

We play a part in becoming prepared for good works – 2 Tim 2

Proverbs 16 – Commit your works to the Lord and He will establish your plans. A little with righteousness is better than a lot with injustice. We plan our ways but God directs our steps.

Has this day impacted your understanding of work? Write what you learned in your journal.

Prayer for today – Ask God to put work in its proper place in your life.

Day 43

It's a Prepared Work

Read Ephesians 2:8-10

God has a wonderful plan for your life. If you have been involved in Christianity in America for any time, you have probably heard this saying. It is a true statement but very few find out what it is. There is no rest in knowing there is a plan, unless we know how to find it. Congratulations! Today I tell you how to find it.

Are you ready? Here it is.

Get out of the way.

That's right. The only thing between you and God's wonderful plan is – YOU! God designed the plan. He made it just for you. He did it before he made you. He wants you to find it. He is trying to bring it to pass but He needs you to rest. Follow His ways. Get disciplined. Prepare to make disciples. Walk in the Spirit. Become aware of God's ways. Watch, wait and pray. As you abide in Christ the plan will come to you.

Why has no one else told you this? Because rest and abiding doesn't fit in institutional Christianity. That system requires labor, striving, work, effort and is not designed by God to produce the plan. Your plan will be a part of the bigger plan that God is doing all over the world at this time.

Finding your plan comes from allowing God to indwell you, train you, love you and lead you. You won't miss it. He made it just for you.

Pray and ask God to show you what is in the way of you finding your prepared works. Write in your journal whatever He shows you.

Prayer for today – Ask God to lead you into the work He prepared for you.

Day 44

Duty vs. Privilege

[Num 18:7 NLT] But you and your sons, the priests, must personally handle all the priestly rituals associated with the altar and with everything behind the inner curtain. I am giving you the priesthood as your special privilege of service. Any unauthorized person who comes too near the sanctuary will be put to death."

[Psa 119:29 NLT] Keep me from lying to myself; give me the privilege of knowing your instructions.

[Act 11:18 NLT] When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, "We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life."

[Rom 5:2 NLT] Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory.

[Rom 9:4 NLT] They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's adopted children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them His law. He gave them the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises.

[2Cr 8:4 NLT] They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem.

[Eph 3:7 NLT] By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.

[Phl 1:29 NLT] For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him.

[1Pe 4:16 NLT] But it is no shame to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God for the privilege of being called by his name!

Changing the way we look at ministry is key to finding rest in it. When we look at our Christian service as duty, it becomes burdensome. When we recognize ministry as a privilege as a trusted steward, it becomes a reward for faithful service.

How have you viewed ministry in the past? Are disciplines and service a duty or privilege for you?

Prayer for today – Ask God to prepare you for privilege.

Day 45

Ability and Responsibility

Read Psalm 8

God has given us charge over everything he made. When you become a Christian and the Holy Spirit of God indwells you, you have the ability and responsibility to rule over God's creation.

This was God's original intent and design for man. Genesis 1:28

Being a Christian gives us a responsibility for our land, our Community, to release it from the control of Satan and bless it by the manifest presence of God through His consecrated people living out His design. Through the Holy Spirit we will be a visible representation of God to the lost. That means we will be in the world and not of it. Our lives will be very different than those around us. Our actions will be different not just our belief.

Titus 2:14 - He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us His very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.

What good deeds?

We are to walk in the deeds that God has prepared for us – this is where you find who God made you to be. You won't find who God made you to be by intellectual pursuit. You will find it when you live out what you profess to believe.

How do we make the change from hearer to doer? Here is your step by step instructions.

1. Master spiritual disciplines.
2. Seek consecration.
3. Break the enemy's strongholds over your life.
4. Seek to serve others.
5. Adopt a meager lifestyle.
6. Study to show yourself approved
7. Learn to make disciples by first becoming a disciple
8. Learn to submit to the Holy Spirit
9. Identify and learn about your spiritual gifting.
10. Abide in Christ by learning to rest in the Lord.

Day 46

Walking in the Promise

God is a God of promise!

He made promises through Moses and every one was fulfilled.

1 Kings 8:56 - "Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant.

He fulfilled His promise to David.

2 Chronicles 1:9 - "Now, O LORD God, Your promise to my father David is fulfilled, for You have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth.

He fulfilled His promise to David's descendants.

Nehemiah 9:8 - "You found his heart faithful before You, And made a covenant with him To give him the land of the Canaanite, Of the Hittite and the Amorite, Of the Perizzite, the Jebusite and the Girgashite— To give it to his descendants. And You have fulfilled Your promise, For You are righteous.

The Spirit insures we receive the promise.

Haggai 2:5 - 'As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!'

Luke 24:49 - "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

The Spirit is only part of the promise. It insures we receive the rest of the promise. We cannot obtain the promise any other way.

Paul's sermon in Acts 13 refers to the promise in a big picture way. The promise is every covenant God has made with His people since Abraham. It includes the Spirit, Jesus, the reproducing seed, and the land.

Romans 4 describes this promise and how Abraham walked in it even though he was as good as dead and did not see the fulfillment of it.

The world is ours and we can take it by faith through the Spirit. Anything else is flesh and a lack of faith. So let's go take back what is ours.

Prayer for today – Ask God to show the promises He has for you.

Day 47

God is a God of Covenants

To Adam - Be fruitful, multiply, steward and rule

To Abraham - a land and a seed

To Moses - to perform miracles and drive out the inhabitants

Exodus 34:10-14 – Then God said, “Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the LORD, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you. “Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim - for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

Who are we driving out? Look at the meanings of the names.

Amorite - the bitter rebels that babble

Canaanite - zealous Merchants

Hittite - broken and fearful

Perizzite - village dwellers

Hivite - wicked

Jebusites - those who falsely occupy Jerusalem (Zion)

To Phineas - Numbers 25:12 – a covenant of peace - the inner court priesthood

The covenant of blessings and curses for obedience and disobedience - Deut 28, a corporate covenant

The New covenant - Jeremiah 31 – The Holy Spirit

These covenants belong to you as well.

Prayer for today – Ask God to confirm His covenants with you.

Day 48

Finding Rest in Prayer

Jesus gives us access to the throne of God. We can learn to rest in our privilege of prayer.

God hears the righteous and is against those who do evil – 1 Peter 3:12

Prayer builds us up – Jude 1:20

How we treat our wife can affect our prayers – 1 Peter 3:7

Our prayers can stop or start rain – James 5:18

Our prayer can save the sick – James 5:15

Pray to avoid temptation – Matt 26:41

Pray for laborers – Luke 10:2

Pray the Lord's Prayer – Luke 11:2

Pray to interpret tongues – 1 Cor 14:13

Pray for love and knowledge – Phil 1:9

Pray for the Word to go forth unhindered – 2 Thess 3:1, Col 3:4

Pray for others to receive the Holy Spirit – Acts 8:15

Pray for prisoners – Acts 12:5

Pray for people to be saved – Romans 10:1

Pray to sanctify things – 1 Timothy 4:5

Pray for your enemies – Matt 5:44

Pray privately and without repetition – Matt 6:6-7

Pray for provision – Matt 21:22

Serve God through Prayer and fasting – Luke 2:37

Pray for others' faith to be strengthened – Luke 22:32

Pray to discern God's will – Acts 1:24

Pray against spiritual attack – James 5:13

Praise God for hearing your prayers.

Prayer for today – Ask God to show you how to rest in prayer.

Day 49

You Can Rest When You Die

This is something my dad used to say when we were working as a kid and complaining of being tired. In the Christian life it is very true. We find rest in Christ when we die to our self.

Taking up your cross. The term is used in the call to be a disciple – deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. The cross was a symbol of death. It represented punishment and suffering. Taking up our own cross is to take willingly our own death sentence and walk while carrying it to the place of our execution.

Taking up our cross is a public display of being associated with Jesus. It is something that can be seen by all. It is considered to be an undesirable condition

Our cross must be –

Taken up by us – a choice – the idea is to bear a burden – same word used when Jesus tells us to take His yoke. It is done so daily. If we do not take up our cross – We are not worthy of Him and we cannot be His disciple

Taking up our cross cannot mean – Enduring suffering that comes naturally upon us since that is not by our choice to take up. It cannot be a denial of ourselves since that is the prerequisite requirement to the take up our cross.

The idea here is to make a choice to carry something – a responsibility – that will bring on you some less desirable condition than what is perceived as desirable by most people. It is a public display of association with Christ. It is not suffering as many say but rather a condition of daily choosing to bear the yoke of Christ in service to God and not to self. This is why the prerequisite is to deny yourself. The denial of self cannot be the cross. The denial sets the stage for the act of willingly carrying the cross. Where do we carry the cross? Wherever Jesus leads us. So if the cross of Christ is the willing acceptance of our personal responsibility to serve God through His church then the call to discipleship is as follows.

Deny yourself – no longer living to fulfill your own desires – daily take up the responsibility to serve and guide the church of God – Jesus yoke - and do it wherever Jesus leads you to do it. This is where you find rest. It is under the weight of the cross.

Prayer for today – Ask God to give you the grace needed to forsake everything for the cross.

Day 50

Conclusions

We have covered so many things that prevent us from entering into the rest Christ provides. It is a wonder that anyone ever does. So today I simplify the process for you. The one thing needed to enter the rest is surrender.

The things that keep us from rest are the things we refuse to give up or pain we refuse to heal. Everything else is a choice. It takes our active opposition to Jesus in the way we live, the choices we make daily, to interrupt our rest.

So in the end, just give up. Quit striving. Quit following religious systems. Quit protecting your pain or seeking to please your flesh. Simply surrender. It is in surrender to Jesus that you will find rest. It is under His yoke with the cross on your back where you will find rest.

You can never find it in rules, systems, tasks, or human effort. It is only available through the Holy Spirit.

Rev 14:12-13 NASB – Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

Prayer for today – Ask God to lead you into the rest He provides.