

## Introduction To Quiet Time/Personal Devotion

**What Is Quiet Time/Personal Devotion:** Quiet Time or Personal Devotion is more than just reading the Bible, it's a time of fellowship and dating with God. It's a time to get to know God and His will more as well as to enjoy His presence. Since personal devotion is a process of communication, it involves both "listening" (Reading His Word, Meditating, and Reflecting) and "talking" (Praying, Responding, and Devoting) to Him.

**Time and Place:** Choose a quiet place and a set time. If possible, morning is most ideal. If you must choose another time, choose a time when you can be most serene and alert. Also make sure that you do your devotion before you spend time on the computer, TV, internet, or games so that your mind will not be filled with distractions that prevent you from meditating on God's words.

**Focus:** Ask God to quiet your heart and to open your eyes so that you can understand God's words. You can also praise God or sing a short hymn to Him.

**Read & Reread:** Read the Scripture carefully and meditate on what God is telling you. Usually, you may not be able to understand the meaning and essence of a passage when you first read it; only through repetition and meditation can one gain meaningful insights.

**Using the Devotional Booklet:** ①Please follow the steps in this booklet to first calm your heart with a short prayer and praise, then read and reread the given passage, and answer the questions accordingly. Then read the contributor's insights and see how you could apply what you have learned in your life. Finally, end your Quiet Time with prayer and ask God to help you live out His words. ②Besides the reflection questions, notes, and applications, this booklet also asks the reader to fill in the date and time of each daily devotion so that the reader can evaluate his/her devotional life more precisely. ③The Scriptures quoted in this booklet are from NIV (1984). We would encourage you not to use the Bible Apps in your cell phone to read the Scriptures lest you will be distracted by the notifications or incoming calls. ④This Devotion booklet is contributed by various staff of the Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese Church and is first written in either Chinese or English, and translated by other brothers and sisters. The contribution of the staff as well as of the translators is deeply appreciated. At times, some devotions are written in both languages by the contributor. ⑤Memory verses may be quoted for meditation and memorization depending on the context and as needed; thus, it may not be provided daily.

## The Prophet Who Ran Away

Passage: Jonah 1:1-16

August 1

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jonah 1:1-16 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** Nineveh - Israel's foreign enemy at that time, capital of the Assyrian Empire.

Tarshish – A seaport located in nowadays Spain, Europe. At that time, it was considered the farthest west one can travel to. God called Jonah to go from Israel to Nineveh in the East, but Jonah ran away to Tarshish which was farthest to the West.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jonah 1:1-16 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. Why did Jonah run away from God's clear calling?

2. Do you agree that it is a personal decision to obey? Why?

Jonah was aware that God gave him a special task, but he did not want to accept it and decided to go the opposite way. It could be that he knew the city of Nineveh was strong and evil and he was afraid of the cruelty of the Assyrians. Jonah did not describe the evil deeds of Nineveh in detail, but the book of Nahum's mention of Nineveh's sins included: plotting against the Lord (Nahum 1:9), exploiting the helpless (Nahum 2:12), showing brutality in war (Nahum 2:12-13), idolatry, prostitution and sorceries (Nahum 3:4). Jonah loathed their hearts and that led him to the unwillingness of sharing God's love and mercy with the Ninevites (Assyrians). Jonah was afraid and angry at God's magnanimous and compassionate heart. He was reluctant to see them receive God's grace and forgiveness. Therefore, Jonah decided to run away from God's clear calling.

Furthermore, because Jonah disobeyed God's will, he put the lives of the whole crew in danger. However, after he disclosed the truth to the crew, the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to Him. Therefore, our obeying or not is of great importance. Our personal sin and disobedience will have a profound impact on the people around us.

**APPLICATION:** Observe your life closely: In what ways you are the same as Jonah, knowing clearly God's teaching and requirement, yet still rebellious and would not obey wholeheartedly. How would you mend your rebellious heart?

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!" Hebrews 12:9

**Prayer:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## The Prophet Who Escaped Death

Passage: Jonah 1:17-2:10

August 2

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jonah 1:17-2:10 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** "The roots of the mountains" — deep to the bottom of the sea, reaching the origin of the mountain.

"The earth beneath" — The Hebrews believe that the sea is bounded and the earth segregates the sea.

Jonah's prayer is similar to David's Psalm. They both firmly took refuge in God when in times of trouble and they believed God heard their prayers (refer to Psalm 18:5-6).

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jonah 1:17-2:10 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. How did Jonah's prayer from inside of the fish reflect his attitude towards God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Through Jonah's three-day ordeal inside the fish, what have you observed about God's attributes?

This passage recorded Jonah's prayer to God while he was inside the fish. The prayer reflected his firm belief in God's faithfulness and salvation through crisis. Jonah was able to pour his heart out to God and that showed an intimate communication and relationship between him and God. It also showed us that prayer is not only asking for things but also includes telling God how we feel about Him. Having experienced salvation from God, Jonah expressed his sincere thankfulness to God and his willingness to take refuge in Him wholeheartedly. Jonah was also courageous enough to openly confess his sin before God. In addition to having an attitude of thankfulness, Jonah made vows to God. He said, "What I have vowed I will make good." Often times, when we were in a bind, we made vows to God and made many promises; but we would forget after He delivered us from difficulties. Again, through Jonah's three-day-and-three-night ordeal inside the fish, we can truly see that God is in control of everything. He used the belly of a fish to preserve Jonah's life. In due time, God commanded the fish to vomit Jonah onto dry land. Moreover, God did not despise Jonah, in spite of his avoidance to God's calling, God did not condemn him on the spot. Conversely, God used different ways to restore Jonah's heart! How great is God's faithfulness! He is willing to give us a "second chance."

**APPLICATION:** In our lives, we may have had similar experiences of failure like Jonah's; but, did we confess as honestly as Jonah? Were our eyes upon God when in despair? Did we make good of our vows immediately after being delivered? Write down some experiences of being restored and give thanks for these "second chances".

**MEMORY VERSE:** "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple."

Jonah 2:7

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## The Prophet Who Obeyed And Repented

Passage: Jonah 3

August 3

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jonah 3 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** “Fast,” “put on sackcloth” — “Fasting” represents letting go of one’s desires and needs in order to focus on repentance; “putting on sackcloth” symbolizes the feeling of remorse for the wrong one has done. It is an action to show one’s repentance and pain.

“Relent” — God told the prophet Jeremiah: “and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.” (Jer. 18:8) In this verse, the word “relent” means God is merciful to sinners who are willing to repent.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jonah 3 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. What results did Jonah’s obedience bring?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. After reading Jonah 3, how would you describe God’s attributes?

God called Jonah for the second time and this time Jonah finally changed. He was willing to go to the city of Nineveh to proclaim God's judgment. His obedience brought tremendous results! The entire city of Nineveh was willing to turn to God. They declared a fast and put on sackcloth to show their repentance. When the news reached the king of Nineveh and his nobles, a decree was issued that everyone and even the animals be covered with sackcloth and he declared a fast to pray to God. As a result, God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, He had compassion on them and did not bring upon the destruction that He had warned them. Of course, all these changes occurred, not because Jonah had any miraculous power, but God worked through Jonah as he proclaimed to the Ninevites and caused their hearts to change. From Jonah 3 we can see that God is full of patience and does not give up. With Jonah being rebellious, God could have called upon another prophet to replace him to proclaim His message. But God did not give up on Jonah; He gave Jonah a chance to get up from where he failed. At the same time, God wanted Jonah to realize that as long as he was willing to change, He would still use him. Through the message Jonah proclaimed, all the Ninevites' lives were changed. In addition, God has indescribable grace and love. Even though the Ninevites worshipped idols, committed acts of violence, and their evil ways enraged others, God was full of mercy. He did not bring destruction upon them. As long as man is willing to repent, God is willing to forgive and accept them. We must thank God for His immeasurable love!

**APPLICATION:** A heart of repentance measures up with the right action. God saw what the Ninevites did and how they turned from their evil ways. Then He did not bring destruction upon them. Do your actions and repentant heart measure up? Can others tell you are a Christian by your actions? Please list some aspects of behavior that you need to change.

**MEMORY VERSE:** <sup>8</sup>The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. <sup>9</sup>He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever." Psalms 103:8-9

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## The Prophet Who Did Not Die Thoroughly

Passage: Jonah 4

August 4

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jonah 4 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** "Vine" is a fast growing tropical plant that has big leaves. It could grow up to 4 meters long. It twines onto a trellis and could be used for shade.

"People who cannot tell their right hand from their left" could indicate children under 3 years of age because they could not discern right from left; but it could also mean that God considered the Ninevites as ignorant as very young children who do not know God.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jonah 4 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. Why was Jonah angry when the Ninevites were saved?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Are you an obedient person? Or do you act obediently but feel rather reluctant inside? Please list some of your experiences and share your feelings.



3. What important reminders did you get from reflecting on Jonah 4?

Jonah knew that God is abounding in love, compassionate and gracious; but his anger blinded his reasoning. It was all because of his ego that made him operate under his own views and judgment. In his view, the Ninevites were not worthy of God's grace and forgiveness. Therefore, when Jonah saw that God did not destroy the Ninevites because of their repentance, he became angry with God. He even talked back to God. Of course, God was very creative. He used a vine that grew and died overnight to teach Jonah a lesson. He wanted Jonah to know that God not only loved the Israelites but also all the lives that He created. God is willing to forgive all who repent. How often are we like Jonah? When God does not follow our wishes and has His own plan, do we complain and become angry with God? "Obey is better than sacrifice" is a lesson that all believers need to learn every day.

**APPLICATION:** In what ways are you like Jonah? Do you identify with him in a positive or negative light? How could you handle the negative feelings?

**MEMORY VERSE:** "8The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. 9He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever;" Psalms 103:8-9

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## You Reap What You Sow

Passage: Amos 3:1-15

August 5

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Amos 3:1-15 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** Amos was neither born in the priestly household nor descended from a prophet. He was a shepherd and also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But he was called to prophesy to the northern kingdom of Israel. At that time Israel's economy flourished. However, their spiritual condition was in a shambles. Idol worshiping was rampant everywhere in the kingdom, and it was particularly unbearable at Bethel, the center of religious activities. Amos bravely rebuked the evil deeds of the kingdom and pronounced the judgment of God. Eventually, priest Amaziah was jealous of Amos, so he persecuted and falsely accused him.

The book of Amos can be divided into three parts: eight judgments, five messages and five visions.

Decades after the proclamation from Amos, the prophecy was fulfilled when the Assyrians invaded Israel in 722 BC.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Amos 3:1-15 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. Find the special meanings of the 7 questions asked in 3:3-6.

## 2. What is God's message for us in this passage?

In 3:3-6, Amos rolled out seven rhetorical questions, demonstrating the causal relationship between two things: after one thing happens, the other will follow subsequently. Meaning that God's revelation to him is true, signaling that the judgment will come. This passage points out that it was God Himself who afflicted Israel. What God says to occur, will surely occur.

However, even in fierce wrath, God is still full of mercy: often before the judgment occurs, God will warn His people. Through prophecy and rebuke pronounced by prophets, God wakened the Israelites in the past. Today, God reminds and warns His children through the truth in the Bible, teachings of His servants, even through favorable or unfavorable circumstances. God had warned the Israelites, yet they refused to turn around; therefore, when God convicted the Israelites, they were not able to complain or reason against God. Similarly, God warns us through different channels today, so when the affliction finally occurs, we will be without excuse. Therefore, do not disregard warnings from God, apprehend God's message for us and learn the lessons He has for us.

**APPLICATION:** Try to recall and write down God's message for you in this month. What does He want you to face?

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."  
Galatians 6:7

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## You Have Not Returned To Me

Passage: Amos 4:1-13

August 6

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Amos 4:1-13 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** Cows of Bashan — Bashan is a place known for its high quality breed of cattle and sheep. It is used here as a metaphor for rich women of Israel who oppress the poor.

Taken away with hooks — This is related to the brutal punishment of the Assyrians. They used hooks to take defeated captives back to their country. The prophet used the cruel treatment of a subjugated country as a warning for Israel to repent early; otherwise Israel would be in torment.

Harmon — The place cannot be determined but it should refer to a place of suffering.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Amos 4:1-13 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. The phrase "You have not returned to me" was used five times by the prophet in 4:6-11. What is the meaning behind this?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did it signify for Israelites to burn leavened bread as a thank offering (4:5, also refer to Levites 7:11-12)?

Five times, the prophet used the phrase “You have not returned to me” to show that Israel deserved God’s disciplinary actions. God’s will is for His people to return to Him. The way God makes people return to Him is not by intimidation or force. God patiently showed mercy to His people, yet they were still ungrateful, went astray, ignored God’s calling and rejected the warnings from prophets. Finally, God had to gradually add to their punishment, with the hope of them returning to God.

God further confronted the Israelites about their repeated unjust ways. They showed outward godliness but were corrupted inside: bragging about the “freewill offering” but actually offering self-centeredness by presenting leavened bread with questionable motivation (4:5, a thank offering was to be offered with unleavened bread, cf. Lev. 7:11-12). This tells us that piety can be hypocritical if we run our lives only in accordance with how we feel, instead of pleasing God.

**APPLICATION:** Please write down areas of your life that you need to return to God...

Church life:

Family life:

Inter-personal relationships:

Personal character:

**MEMORY VERSE:** “because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”  
Amos 4:12b

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## Ignorant When Facing Death

Passage: Amos 6:1-14

August 7

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Amos 6:1-14 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** “you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph” (6:6) – meaning Israelites only sought pleasure, despite God’s warning about their impending captivity.

Karnaim (6:13) — refers to a small and insignificant town on the northeastern side of Israel; especially when comparing to the size of Assyria which they were facing. Strangely, the Israelites were boasting about taking the small town.

“Lebo Hamath,” “Arabah” (6:14) — Lebo Hamath was in the north and Arabah was in the south. Together, it means the whole country would be in the hands of the Assyrians.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Amos 6:1-14 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. According to prophet Amos, what issue was Israel facing?

2. What is the meaning of the verse “Hush! We must not mention the name of the Lord” in 6:10?

Amos clearly pointed out that the Israelites sought only pleasure during the country's economic boom time. They feasted and built beautiful houses to show off their achievements. They sought satisfaction in extreme extravagance but pay no attention to God's warning about subjugation. They were so arrogant that they thought they were stronger than the nations and far away from the day of disaster. For that, God punished them and they were taken captive to a foreign country. Only then, they realized their ignorance. Similarly, today we live in an affluent society, enjoying many options of entertainment and diet. Will we also seek only enjoyment and become ineffective and unproductive?

Furthermore, in verse 10, Amos vividly depicted the terrible trial from God: even in times of misery, the people dared not mention the name of the Lord, lest it should provoke His wrath and bring on another judgment. Do we really have to hit rock bottom in order to suddenly wake up to our own foolishness? Unfortunately, it will be all too late!

**APPLICATION:** Inspect your life to find out what is hindering your relationship with God and making your spiritual life stagnant? Write down your findings and then through prayer, ask God to show you how to confront them. (Also write these down)

**MEMORY VERSE:** <sup>23</sup>This is what the Lord says: 'Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, <sup>24</sup>but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,' declares the Lord." Jeremiah 9:23-24

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## Worship After God's Own Heart

Passage: Isaiah 1:1-20

August 8

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Isaiah 1:1-20 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** Historical background while Isaiah served as a prophet — Isaiah, Hebrew word meaning “God is salvation.” He was an aristocrat, grew up in Jerusalem, served as prophet while Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah were kings. When Isaiah was the prophet of Judah, the original kingdom of Israel had long been divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah in the south. The northern kingdom had forsaken the Lord and committed great sin. The southern kingdom followed the footsteps of the north. They distorted justice, oppressed the poor, abandoned God and worshiped idols. They preferred to seek military assistance from the pagan country, not from God. Isaiah was from the southern kingdom of Judah but his message was meant for the northern kingdom.

“New Moons” and “Sabbaths” refer to the monthly offering (cf. Numbers 28:11-14) and the weekly Sabbath, as well as the special Sabbath occurring every year on the Day of Atonement and the Day of Pentecost. During all these festivals, people have not perceived their own sin and yet continued to bring offerings for forgiveness.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Isaiah 1:1-20 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. From the passage, list down all the unfavorable descriptions of the Israelites (e.g. rebel, do not know...). Have you committed the same offenses? Circle the ones you have.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How did God want the Israelites to change (1:10, 16-17)? How does God want you to change?



The unfavorable descriptions of Israelites in the passage includes: rebel, do not know, do not understand, sinful, loaded with guilt, evildoers, corruption, forsake (God), spurn (God), turn their back on (God) and so on. The prophet Isaiah associated the Israelites as the rulers of Sodom and the people of Gomorrah. The Israelites heard the word of God, but did not listen carefully, nor concentrate on compliance. The Lord did not accept their worship because the worshippers had only the look of godliness but not the faithfulness deep within. They were evildoers, stubborn and rebellious. Their worship was routine and superficial. Even though the worship was conducted perfectly to the details, but their inner life lacked the fear and love of the Lord. Worship is meant to be the external manifestation of our inner obedience to God. Therefore, when inner sincerity is missing, everything done outwardly is a mere façade, deceitful to self and others, and detestable to God. There are times when you and I are close to God only in form but not in substance.

The worship that is accepted by God is recorded in Psalm 51:17, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” What God desires is a broken spirit and the heart of firm repentance. Regardless of the good deeds we have done, if we lack the good mindset inside, we cannot please God with good deeds or religious rituals. God will be pleased with us when we humble ourselves, be saddened by our sins, and flee from evil and desire good. The passage emphasizes for the Israelites to: wash, make clean, take evil deeds out, stop doing wrong, learn to do right, seek justice, encourage the oppressed, defend the cause of the fatherless, and plead the case of the widow. May we plead with God to cleanse our minds and live a life worthy of the calling we have received.

**APPLICATION:** From the above lists of favorable and unfavorable behaviors, choose at least one from each list and act on it within the next month. Be pragmatic and change (for example: “turn your back on God” can be changed to “having devotion each day”).

**MEMORY VERSE:** “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”  
1 Samuel 15:22b

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

Send Me!
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Passage: Isaiah 6:1-13

August 9

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD’S WORD:** Read Isaiah 6:1-13 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** King Uzziah - The year that King Uzziah died, it was about 740B.C. He had leprosy until the day he died because he wanted to take over the duties of the high priest (cf. 2 Chronicles 26:18-21). Uzziah was considered a good king. The kingdom was prosperous during his long reign; however, many people left God.

**RE-READING GOD’S WORD:** Read Isaiah 6:1-13 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. How did Isaiah react under the fullness of God’s glory? How did his reaction prepare him for things yet to come?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Isaiah learned that God wanted to send him, and knew that the prospect of his preaching would be deplorable. How did he respond to God?

When Isaiah saw the Lord and heard the angels' praising, he realized his uncleanness in the presence of God. There was no hope that he would match up with the godly standard of holiness. He immediately confessed his sin and sins of his people. When the live coal touched Isaiah's lips, he heard the proclamation from God that his guilt was taken away and his sin atoned for. God wants us to first confess our sins, to be forgiven, to be cleansed and to be obedient before we can be sent for His work. That is the process of how the Lord equips us. In this process, we develop a deep understanding about God's holiness, glory, power and mercy. This understanding will become the inspiration and sustaining power in the days ahead.

When God entrusted Isaiah to proclaim His message, He also told Isaiah that his preaching would not be well received. The people would reject his message because their hearts were hardened and corrupt. The prophet Isaiah might have been stunned and heavyhearted, knowing that the ministry of his life would be fruitless. From a human point of view, that result would be considered a failure, but Isaiah was willing to be obedient under the sovereignty of God, and he faithfully carried out the will of God. He was clear about his position as God's spokesperson. His task was to serve God faithfully and God would take care of the result. The attitude and character of how prophet Isaiah served the Lord truly is the model of how we should serve today!

**APPLICATION:** God has a unique calling for each one of us. What is His calling to you? How do you respond to His calling?

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"  
Isaiah 6:8

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## The Call Of A Prophet

Passage: Jeremiah 1:1-19

August 10

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jeremiah 1:1-19 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** "Jeremiah" — The exact meaning of Jeremiah's name is uncertain. It probably means "The Lord establishes," or "the Lord exalts." When Jeremiah became a prophet, the Northern Kingdom already perished; yet the Southern Kingdom had not come to understand the truth and had forsaken the Lord. Therefore, they were rapidly heading toward destruction. At that time Jeremiah was the only one who tried to turn the tide. God's reproach is the main theme of this book. Jeremiah dedicated his whole life to his fellow country citizens in the kingdom of Judah, yet he was awarded with hatred and persecutions. He was devastated, heartbroken and often in tears. Thus he was also called the "Weeping Prophet".

"Almond tree" — its name comes from the Hebrew word meaning "keep watch". It has the same root word as "watching" in 1:12. It was a native plant in Palestine and was the first tree to bud, so it is also called an "awakening tree." Here it is used to illustrate that God is wakeful, watching over His word, and will make it happen.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jeremiah 1:1-19 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. How would you describe the prophet Jeremiah's relationship with God?
2. What do you think was the greatest difficulty for Jeremiah when he was called by God?

3. Jeremiah saw two visions. What did each vision represent?

God knew Jeremiah deeply and tailor made a plan for his life. God already knew Jeremiah while he was in his mother's womb. Even before he was born, God set him apart to appoint him to be a prophet to the nations. God knew clearly that Jeremiah's whole life would be full of fierce oppositions from all the kings, leaders, priests and fellow citizens. No one even listened to his proclamation of God's words, but God promised Jeremiah that He would rescue him and walk with him.

The two visions that Jeremiah saw clearly explained that God was watching His prophecies and their fulfillment. The power from the north would be rolling down and Judah was destined to perish. Even so, all the people in the nation would not take heed. Instead they would rise up to oppose and fight against Jeremiah. On the surface his service seemed ineffective, but he was always faithful to the end. Although he was often in tears and his heart full of sadness, he never wavered in his service. In comparison to our generation, we are efficiency oriented, easily discouraged, not committed and undedicated. We can truly learn from Jeremiah on how to be dedicated, submissive and faithful.

**APPLICATION:** The message in Jeremiah is "to uproot and tear down, to destroy and over-throw, to build and plant!" What do you need to be uprooted and torn down in your life? And what needs to be built and planted? Please make a list.

**MEMORY VERSE:** "They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the Lord."  
Jeremiah 1:19

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## A Fearful Prophet

Passage: Habakkuk 1:1-11

August 11

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Habakkuk 1:1-11 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** Prophet Habakkuk lived in the kingdom of Judah during the reign of King Jehoiakim (cf. 2 Kings 23:36-24:5). The last four kings of Judah all rejected God and oppressed the people. As the Assyrian military power weakened, Babylon gradually became a strong country. Babylon invaded Judah twice and it was a tumultuous time of fear, oppression, brutality, lawlessness and immorality. In 612 B.C. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria fell and in 589 B.C. Judah was invaded by Babylon. It was during this time that Habakkuk delivered God's words.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Habakkuk 1:1-11 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. In 1:1-4, what did the prophet Habakkuk's complaint indicate?
2. What did God mean when He said that He would do something utterly amazing?
3. From the direct and frank conversation between the prophet Habakkuk and God, what insight did you get regarding your relationship with God?

The book of Habakkuk records the conversations the prophet had with God. The content surrounds a series of questions the prophet had: “Why does it seem that God turned a blind eye to sin? Why do those who sinned not seem to be punished?” Habakkuk did not understand why God remained silent and did not intend to save them! It is often that we grow impatient in thinking why God doesn’t answer our prayers. Most of the books of the prophets tell us what God wants to say to us, but the book of Habakkuk brings man’s questions to God.

In addition, God said that He was going to do something utterly amazing, which was to raise up the Chaldeans (Babylonians). They would rise up rapidly to become a powerful nation. God would actually use the Chaldeans to punish Judah. However, they were ruthless and impetuous people. They were arrogant and proud of their strong military power; they conquered other nations, seized their treasures, and made slaves from the captives.

God’s plans and thoughts are unfathomable! However, when things happen we can learn to not complain right away. Try to ask: “Does this have anything to do with God’s Kingdom?” or “What does God want to teach me through this? What do I need to change inside?” Very often God delays in answering us because He wants us to face the selfishness in our lives or to improve our character. We can learn to rely on God with an unwavering heart because His custom made plan for each of us is the best.

**APPLICATION:** Please quietly evaluate your prayer life. In what areas are you disappointed with? And what areas are you excited about? How could you adjust your mindset so that your prayer could match God’s thoughts?

**MEMORY VERSE:** “<sup>33</sup>But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.<sup>34</sup>Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Matthew 6:33-34

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## A Prophet Who Waited Upon the Lord

Passage: Habakkuk 1:12-2:1

August 12

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Habakkuk 1:12-2:1 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Habakkuk 1:12-2:1 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. What was Habakkuk's second complaint to God (1:12-2:1)?

2. How did Habakkuk face and deal with God's answer?



Habakkuk was so surprised with God's answer that he even questioned God's righteousness and the reason for letting the ruthless Chaldeans punish the kingdom of Judah. On one hand he understood that the Holy God loathes sin, but he saw the wicked swallowing up those more righteous than themselves and yet God remained silent! Perhaps the prophet's fellow citizens were corrupt, but the Chaldeans were extremely vicious. How could God allow them to treat His people so?

Actually there are no answers to the questions that Habakkuk raised. The way he handled it was to bring the matter to God. He knew that the only thing he could do was to wait upon God. Similarly, when we encounter difficulties, we not only tell God through prayers, but also lay all our burdens at His feet and wait upon God for His answer. Often times when God answers our prayers, His answers might be more unfathomable than His silence! Let us think deeper, could our amazing and creative God not use unusual ways to correct us? Would we magnify ourselves many times, yet shrink God; and then unintentionally demand God to answer our prayers according to our wishes?

**APPLICATION:** Recall some prayers that God did not answer according to your wish. How does it seem to you now? How could you experience God's thoughts and plan? Make a list.

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. <sup>7</sup>Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." 1 Peter 5:6-7

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

As The Curtain Fell
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Passage: 2 Chronicles 36:15-21

August 13

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read 2 Chronicles 36:15-21 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** 2 Chronicles recorded mainly the lives of other kings in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. It rarely mentioned the Northern Kingdom of Israel because the book was written for the people of Judah who returned from the captivity of Babylon.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read 2 Chronicles 36:15-21 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. What lessons could you learned from Judah's road to destruction?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What can you learn from the ending of 2 Chronicles (36:22-23)?

It was not without signs that Judah would eventually perish. God constantly reminded the people of Judah through prophets that as long as they turned away from sin, God would continue to show kindness to His people. However, Judah was obstinate and the repeated dissuasion was of no avail to the point where there was no more remedy. The time of God's discipline had finally arrived! Therefore, we should learn not to disregard God's patience and kindness, and whenever we are conscious of our sin, we need to repent immediately, for our Lord is a great and awesome God.

The last chapter of 2 Chronicles recorded the most painful blow to the Israelites. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, destroyed the Holy Temple, there were no longer kings, and the people were taken to foreign land in captivity. However, the book did not end in hopeless despair. At the end, it mentioned that in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus, King of Persia, to make a proclamation throughout his realm — that the Lord, the God of heaven, had appointed King Cyrus to build a temple for God at Jerusalem in Judah, and anyone of God's people might go up to Jerusalem to rebuild the Holy Temple. What a wonderful plan that is, and it allows us to realize the uninterrupted love and mercy of God. He will revive us as long as we are willing to return to Him.

**APPLICATION:** In your relationship with God, point out areas where you overly regard yourself to the point that you disregard God's instructions. How can you rectify it?

**MEMORY VERSE:** “if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”  
2 Chronicles 7:14

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## Rainbow after the Rain

Passage: Jeremiah 24:1-10

August 14

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jeremiah 24:1-10 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** 24:1 — In 597 B.C., Jehoiachin, king of Judah was carried into exile to Babylon and Zedekiah became the puppet king. Under normal circumstances, the royal staff and military leaders were carried into exile and became prisoners. This would prevent them from accumulating power and planning for uprisings. Since the talented craftsmen and artisans were skillful in constructions in Babylon, they were also carried into exile. In 22:24-28 Jeremiah prophesied this would happen.

24:6 — The exiles from Judah that were carried to Babylon were watched over by God. Although they were captives in a foreign land, they did not become slaves. They could open up businesses and own their own houses. Some of them even held important posts in the Babylonian government; Daniel was one of them (c.f. Daniel 2:48).

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jeremiah 24:1-10 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. What did the two baskets of figs represent?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What can we learn from the metaphor of the figs?

“Good figs” signifies the exiles from Judah to Babylon. This did not mean they were good citizens. It only meant that God would give them a heart to know Him. Therefore, God would watch over them and bring them back to their homeland. “Poor figs” signifies Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the survivors from Jerusalem, whether they remain in Judah or live in Egypt. They were conceited in thinking that since they were not captured, they must have been blessed; but unexpectedly, they became a reproach and a byword, an object of ridicule and cursing to wherever God banished them.

The spiritual lessons are: Do not be boastful. Do not rely on man’s wisdom to surmise God’s action because He is a God who transcends all understanding! Back then, God wanted to train His people through the process of captivity so that they would no longer live an idle life that bore no fruit. Meanwhile, trials could become blessings in disguise from God — the rainbows after the rain. Very often when life is smooth, we tend to become conceited and our hearts are far away from the Lord! Conversely, adversities can compel us to be strong and rely on the Lord every step of the way!

**APPLICATION:** Reflect upon the most recent difficulty or challenge that you faced with a rainbow after the rain. What life lessons did you learn from that?

**MEMORY VERSE:** “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

1 Corinthians 10:13

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## The Prophet Without An Audience

Passage: Jeremiah 25:1-14

August 15

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jeremiah 25:1-14 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** This message was preached on the year 605 BC, which is the year when Nebuchadnezzar began his reign as Persian King; this means the prophet Jeremiah had already begun preaching this message twenty years before the captivity of Judah (586 BC). Starting from verse 3, Jeremiah's prophetic mission began in 627 BC. Unfortunately, the people of Judah were unwilling to repent throughout the forty plus years of admonition, eventually leading to the scourge of subjugation.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jeremiah 25:1-14 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. Why does God use such a long period of time to admonish the Israelites before letting them experience seventy years of living in captivity?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. For twenty three years Jeremiah never once stopped preaching the message of the Lord, yet not a single person was changed! Would God see him as a failed prophet? Why?

The Lord God is a righteous God. As such, He never leaves the guilty unpunished. When He saw the despicable acts of His people and the ongoing sinfulness, His discipline had to come. At the same time, He is the merciful God who repeatedly granted His people opportunities; through the admonishing of the prophets, He clearly told His people that He would deliver them if they were willing to repent. Unfortunately, the Jews had no remorse, they remained in their stubbornness, though they knew that God was willing to bless and what they had to do to bring about blessings, they were not willing to turn around; rather they continued to indulge in sin! It was only because of God's deep love and immense patience, He was unwilling to punish but instead wanted to restore His people; thus He waited for such a long time for them to turn around. Oh God, we are not worthy, but thank you for loving us with an everlasting love!

In addition, it is difficult to imagine that the prophet Jeremiah used twenty-three years to preach the same message, and was constantly rejected. Not a single person changed. This experience must have been terribly difficult to live with! His entire life of serving God and His people was without applause or acclaim. In the eyes of the world, he was an ineffective prophet. In the eyes of God, however, he was a servant who was loyal to his mission and a servant whose obedience never ceased. No matter how harsh the situation, Jeremiah did not fear oppositions from many sides; rather he preached the one and only message he was given to preach faithfully and courageously: "Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices, and you can stay in the land the LORD gave to you and your ancestors for ever and ever." (25:5). May the unceasing faithfulness of Jeremiah inspire us to love the Lord and to take God's unique calling for each and every one of us seriously!

**APPLICATION:** In which areas did God show you His lasting and patient love? Thank God for the grace He has shown you; ask God to grant you strength, to enable you to have the faithfulness of prophet Jeremiah, and to become the witness of God's grace.

**MEMORY VERSES:** "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

2 Peter 3:9

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.





the created will rejoice in the Lord: No lion will be there, nor will there be any ferocious beast; eyes of the blind will be opened, ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame will leap and the mute will shout for joy; water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams will appear in the desert. What is painted here is a life in unity, in goodness and in peace. Isaiah shared with God's people the promised vision, urged them to repent, and assured them that God would definitely have mercy on them.

Besides, verse 4 offered even more encouragement. The unjust things will no longer exist because God will remove oppression. There will be no more persecution because God will come with vengeance. Especially for those who are in misery, let them be assured that all hardship will end and all feeble arms will be strengthened. How great is this comfort!

**APPLICATION:** How would the promise of eternal bliss and the reappearing of paradise help you when you are at the low point in your life? Jot down your thoughts:

**MEMORY VERSES:** "Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Psalm 23:6

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## Renew your strength

Passage: Isaiah 40:27-31

August 17

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart, open your eyes, so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Isaiah 40:27-31 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Isaiah 40:27-31 again with careful observation, and answer the following questions:

1. What is the main point of this passage?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does it mean by "hope in the Lord" (NASB & ESV: "wait for the Lord"). Try to list examples and explain.

The prophet Isaiah used comforting words to encourage the countrymen who were waiting in captive. He let them know that God would never forsake them and the eyes of the Lord were always on His people. Isaiah stressed that the Lord was the everlasting God and would not change. His power would not wane, nor would He grow tired, unlike the false gods. Whenever we feel unable to handle the troubles we face, be still and keep our eyes on the Lord, He will renew our strength.

Having hope in the Lord means that we no longer use our own ways to solve problems, just as Psalm 46:10 teaches us that "Be still, and know that I am God". When we acknowledge that the Lord is the great and awesome God, in charge of all things, we can then release our control and return it to God. We only need to pour out our soul to Him, set before Him our struggles, be still and wait upon Him to act. We need to acknowledge that He has the best plan for our lives. He never misses a step or loses His timing! May God help us to learn how to "have hope in the Lord." Though it is not an easy lesson, it is an essential training for our spiritual growth.

**APPLICATION:** In your current situation, which areas of your life make you feel tired, weak and weary? List them and write down your feelings about them. Then, entrust them to the Lord, be still and wait upon Him to act.

**MEMORY VERSE:** "but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." Isaiah 40:31

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.



In Isaiah 43:1-7, God offered comforting words to the Israelites through the prophet. God encouraged them not to fear because He created and redeemed them (43:1-2) and loved them (43:3-4). Also He was with them and would gather them (43:5-7). God did not promise His loved ones that there would not be any hardships, troubles, diseases or trials; but He has promised us that when we have to go through fire and water, He will be with us (43:2)! What a great promise and encouragement it is! Furthermore, God has repeatedly said, “I am the Lord, your God”, “the Holy One of Israel, your Savior” and “Do not be afraid, for I am with you”. From how God repeatedly provides constant encouragement and affirmation to His people, we become aware of His unfailing love!

In addition, In Isaiah 43:8-13 God called forth His people to be His witnesses (43:10, 12). The Israelites were once considered as having “their ears dull, their eyes closed” (6:9-10); but now were delivered by God (43:8) and chosen as His witnesses. How vast is God’s grace and how precious is His promise! Similarly, once we were deaf and blind, but now we found favor in the Lord. Do we not become witnesses for the Lord to “lead out those who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf?”

**APPLICATION:** Consider the people around you. Who have “eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf”? Write down a few names that God put in your heart and pray for their salvation; also pray that God will give you an opportunity to be His witness.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “‘You are my witnesses,’ declares the Lord, ‘and my servant whom I have chosen,’”  
Isaiah 43:10a

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

No Longer Self-Reliant
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Passage: Isaiah 55:1-13

August 19

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Isaiah 55:1-13 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Isaiah 55:1-13 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. What is the author's main focus in verses 1 and 2?
2. What is your understanding of verses 8 and 9? Is it teaching us not to have any plans?

An invitation was sent from God to all, hoping that everyone would believe and trust Him and receive His salvation. God's salvation is free and is for all mankind. God urges us not to focus on the pursuit of lesser things because those things are corruptible, transient, and have no eternal value. We can only find the ultimate satisfaction in our relationship with God.

We often use our own wisdom and intelligence to plan our lives and then we expect God to help us achieve our perfect plans; but God once again reminds us not to put the cart before the horse, His knowledge and wisdom are far more superior to our narrow thoughts. Of course, we can plan our lives, but more importantly, we should first acknowledge God's sovereignty. When we pray, we are not to ask God to fulfill our wishes; instead, we are to ask for a heart of obedience to fulfill His plan in our lives.

**APPLICATION:** Quiet down before God, inspect your own life. In which areas are you trying hard to work with God's plan? In which areas are you trying to have God work with your plan? List them separately and hand over your struggles to the Lord. Ask Him to give you a heart of obedience and may His will be done.

**MEMORY VERSE:** "'<sup>8</sup>For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord. '<sup>9</sup>As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.'" Isaiah 55:8-9

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## Adhering To Principle Despite Adversity

Passage: Daniel 1:1-21

August 20

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Daniel 1:1-21 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** In order to assimilate Daniel and his three companions into the Babylonian society, the king of Nebuchadnezzar changed their name. Originally, the name Daniel means “God is my judge”. After the change, it means “Bel protects his life” (Bel is the head of the Babylonian gods). Hananiah means “The Lord manifests grace”, his new name means “under Aku’s command” (Aku is the moon God of the Babylonian). Mishael means “who is like God?”, his new name means “who is like Aku?” Azariah is “the Lord helps me,” his new name means “servant of Nebo” (Nebo is the God of learning and writing).

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Daniel 1:1-21 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. Why does Daniel insist on not taking the food and wine from the King? Why does consuming the food and wine from the King defile him?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. It is clear to see Daniel adheres to his position from chapter 1, but could you see God's hand in the midst as well? How can you tell?



King Nebuchadnezzar wanted to change and assimilate Daniel and his companions through education, name change, and common diet changes. In the uncompromising premise, Daniel thought of a way that could allow him to live according to God's standard in an environment that was against God. Daniel and his companions had the courage to adhere to the biblical principles; in order to maintain their innocence, they refused to use the delicacies of the gentile king. Rather, they requested a vegetarian diet and simply drank water, because the king's food included many unclean things, and they were well aware of the laws of Moses — what was eatable and what was to be avoided (see Leviticus chapter 11). Furthermore, many of the food of the gentiles were used for idol worship, but God did not permit the Jews to worship the idols or to participate in any of the related activities: for this Daniel determined not to allow these foods to defile him and his companions. This reflected their faithfulness to God, their determination to adhere to the principle of their faith, their desire to keep themselves clean before God and not yield to the surrounding pressure.

In addition, we can clearly see God's hand in the midst in 1:9. For this reason God allowed Daniel to have favor and obtained mercy in the eyes of the eunuchs. It is mentioned in 1:17, God gave them intelligence and knowledge; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams. Their appearance and wisdom were above all the people in the land. From here, we can learn that no matter how bad the circumstances or how big the challenges are, we must continue to trust in God, and that He is absolutely in control. He is an extremely creative God, able to turn a crisis into an opportunity, and even into a blessing.

**APPLICATION:** In the era of rigor being regarded as stubborn, relaxed as being flexible, adhering to holiness is not an easy thing. How does the example of Daniel's adherence to his "faith-based-principle" remind and challenge you today? List some worldly pressures and challenges that you face, and think of some practical ways that enable you to handle them.

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained."  
1 Sam 2:30b

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## Loyal Even Till Death

Passage: Daniel 3:1-30

August 21

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Daniel 3:1-30 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** “Golden image, sixty cubits high, six cubits wide” — About ninety foot tall (approximately an eight or nine stories tall building), nine foot wide.

“Satraps, prefects, magistrate” — Respectively, the governor of a province, administrative officer and minister of justice.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Daniel 3:1-30 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. What did Nebuchadnezzar do to ensure a tragic death for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?
2. In verse 18, what does the phrase “But even if he does not” mean and what mentality does it reflect?

Nebuchadnezzar was furious when he learned that these three youths had transgressed his will. As the supreme ruler of Babylon, he demanded absolute obedience. Arrogance and self-esteem had driven him reckless, issuing unreasonable demands coupled with

uncontrolled reactions. He even told the servants to heat the already blazing furnace seven times hotter than usual (3:19); to the point that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who carried the men (3:22). They were bound and were thrown into the blazing furnace, to end in a tragic death. Rather, the unthinkable happened, a servant of God came in their midst in the furnace to protect them. Not only were their bodies, hair, and clothes not touched by the flame, there was not even the smell of fire on them. Nebuchadnezzar praised God once he saw what transpired, he also issued a decree to forbid anyone from slandering God; and he promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Thus, we learn that God's grace and power are magnified on those who trust in Him even when facing daunting circumstances! May our determination to follow God be strengthened by their testimonies!

Let us pay special attention — When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were forced to deny God, they believed that God would rescue them, but the fact that they affirmed “But even if He does not,” demonstrated that they chose to remain loyal to God to the very end without regret! Even if they were not rescued from the blazing furnace, they were prepared to die and never to compromise for God's sake. They were not afraid of intimidation or beating, nor were they seeking an excuse to save their own lives; they were simply obeying God's teaching, giving God the ultimate honor. How admirable is this mindset and sentiment! Are we also prepared to be like them, remaining loyal to God in any circumstances, and even unto death?

**APPLICATION:** In the role you play at work or at home, what areas do you face challenges because of your faith? In the coming week, pray that God will give you victory in these challenging areas!

**MEMORY VERSE:** <sup>17</sup>“If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. <sup>18</sup>But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”  
Daniel 3:17-18

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## Fear God, Not Man

Passage: Daniel 6:1-28

August 22

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Daniel 6:1-28 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** When Babylon was defeated by Persia, Daniel was over eighty; he became one of the three highest power administrators under the rule of Persian King Darius.

“Lion’s den” — a place for the punishment of criminals on death row from time pass. The place where they were eaten alive by hungry lions, it is a punishment of extreme cruelty.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Daniel 6:1-28 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. From 6:1-3, observe how Daniel affect those around him.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. If you were Daniel, after knowing about the royal decree, would you still continue to pray three times a day? Why or why not? How have you been inspired by the manner that Daniel lived?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How did Daniel's experience of not being harmed in the lion's den bring great influence?

At this point Daniel's age was over eighty; his position was one of the administrators under the rule of Darius, the Persian King. He assisted in ruling the kingdom with colleagues who did not believe in God; yet because of his superior performance, he was noticed and respected by the pagan King, Darius. Likewise, when we work hard and be responsible at our work place, our testimony and good performance would have an impact on our non-Christian colleagues and employer. As they see our difference, they may develop an interest to know the God whom we rely on and believe.

Daniel feel at ease with the royal decree, he recognized that obedience to God was far more important than obeying men. As such, three times a day he opened the window and prayed to God as usual, and did not try to cover up or do it secretly. From his youth to his senior years, Daniel served God with fear and loyalty. From the fact that he rather died than giving up prayer, we could see that the discipline of prayer is of great importance in building up our spiritual life. Aside from this, Daniel was the living witness in the lion's den; his testimony made King Darius recognize the mighty power of God, even to the point that King Darius told the people of his whole country to fear the God of Daniel, proclaiming that He was the everlasting God. As a captive Jew in a foreign land, the loyalty that Daniel demonstrated to God, even became a blessing for everyone in Babylon! May Daniel's life inspire and encourage us as we learn not to fear men, but to fear and to honor God; also, let us strive to build our spiritual life on prayer!

**APPLICATION:** Take a moment to quiet down and reflect upon your prayer life. What are your strength areas? What are your growth areas?

**MEMORY VERSE:** "16Be joyful always; 17pray continually; 18give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."  
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

A One Of A Kind Marriage
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Passage: Hosea 1:1-2:1

August 23

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Hosea 1:1-2:1 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** The name "Hosea" means "salvation". Hosea was a prophet in the northern kingdom of Israel from 753 B.C. to 715 B.C. During the reign of Jeroboam II, the people were rich materialistically, yet were corrupted both morally and spiritually. They followed the Canaanites in idol worship. The rich enjoyed prosperity but oppressed the poor.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Hosea 1:1-2:1 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. Why did God command Hosea to take an adulterous wife?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did the names of each of Hosea's children mean and represent?

The Israelites worshipped idols, followed other gods, and broke away from the covenant established between them and God. God raised the prophet Hosea, commanded him to marry a woman who was unfaithful, and also take children of unfaithfulness because God wanted to illustrate His love for the Israelites through Hosea's love for his wife. The Israelites were not faithful to God, just like an unfaithful wife who betrayed her husband, but God still loved His people to the end.

Hosea married Gomer and had 3 children. Their names symbolized the judgment God would deliver to the idol worshipping Israelites:

1. Jezreel: Its significance does not lie in the literal meaning of the word: "God sows." Instead it means that God recalled how king Jehu of Israel massacred the house of Ahaz at Jezreel (cf. 1:4 and 2 Kings 9-10); also, looked toward to what would happen to the Israelites by prophesying that God would uproot and disperse His people (1:5).
2. Lo-Ruhamah: means not loved. "Lo" means "not." Refer to and compare "Lo-Ruhamah" with "my loved one" (cf. 2:1 Ruhamah) and "Lo-Ammi" with "my people" (cf. 2:1 Ammi).
3. Lo-Ammi: means not my people.

As we can see that even though God is full of mercy, when He is determined to discipline His children, His rod is strict and stern because God cannot be mocked. However, the main message from the book of Hosea and this passage (1:10-2:1) is this: in the end Judah and Israel would be forgiven and their honor of being God's chosen people would be restored.

**APPLICATION:** God cannot be mocked. He will not leave the guilty unpunished. Take 5 minutes to quiet down before God. Ask the Lord to reveal to you your pride, self-righteousness and all the hidden sins. Confess your sins truthfully and ask Him to forgive.

**MEMORY VERSE:** "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

1 John 1:9

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## A Restored Life

Passage: Hosea 14

August 24

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Hosea 14 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** “Offer the fruit of our lips” — our praises and thanksgiving to God.

“Not mount war-horses” — meant neither relying on strength from the Egyptians, nor seeking help from them.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Hosea 14 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. What was the ultimate message that Hosea delivered to the Israelites?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. After reading Hosea 1 and 14, what important reminders did you get from these two chapters? What new insights did you receive about God?



The ultimate message from Hosea was that the Israelites must not rely on other powers and false gods, but repent and return to God (14:1-3), it also explains that God's love never changed. God already made the promise to restore Israel (14:4-8), and all the people could reconcile with Him by asking for forgiveness. However, God desires true repentance that comes from the heart, instead of just offering the fruit of the lips! Although God must discipline His people, He truly hopes to restore Israel and make her prosper and strong.

After reading the book of Hosea, we saw again God's unstoppable love. His love toward us is limitless and the depth and intensity of His love is beyond our understanding! Therefore, we have no excuse to say, "My sins are too great; they cannot be forgiven". It is all because of our pride that deters us from returning to God to ask for forgiveness!

**APPLICATION:** If God wants to restore your life to make you become a blameless servant, what adjustment needs to be made?

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God." Psalms 20:7

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## To Walk with God

Passage: Micah 6:1-8

August 25

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Micah 6:1-8 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** Both the prophets Micah and Isaiah lived in the same period around 750 B.C.-680 B.C. The book of Micah is similar to a litigation letter. It was written with beautiful rhetoric and sarcasm to mock the accused. In this case God was the plaintiff, the prophet was the chief prosecutor, God's people were the accused and God Himself was the judge. Micah focused on two kinds of sin in his message: the abuse of worship and injustice toward others.

“Shittim” — a place on the east of the Jordan River, where the Israelites encamped before they entered the Promised Land.

“Gilgal” — the first place where the Israelites camped after they crossed the Jordan River.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Micah 6:1-8 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. Why did God mention the historical facts in 6:4-5?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does it mean to live a life that is pleasing to God? Please explain.

As God presented His case by mentioning the historical facts, He wanted the Israelites to remember the blessings that He had bestowed upon them. God reminded them how He brought them out of slavery in Egypt. Also while they were in the desert, God turned the curses that Balak asked Balaam to cast on Israel into blessings (cf. Numbers 22-24). “Shittim” was a place on the east of the Jordan River where the Israelites encamped before they entered the Promised Land. It was there that the people received many instructions on how to live accordingly. “Gilgal” was the first place where the Israelites camped after they crossed the Jordan River. It was there that God renewed His covenant with His people. These two places represented God’s loving care for His people. “From Shittim to Gilgal” was the journey when they experienced the miracle of crossing the Jordan River, and erected stone memorials. God wanted them to remember the past, and to count their blessings and God’s righteous acts, so that they would be reminded not to forget God’s grace but to discontinue in their sinful ways.

In addition, the passage tells us that God is pleased with those who act justly, love mercy, are humble, and walk with Him. What God desires is more than religious rituals, He demands sincerity and integrity in our whole life, as we set our life goal to please Him.

**APPLICATION:** God wants us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him. Of the three qualities, which do you lack? Why? How would you improve yourself?

**MEMORY VERSE:** “To act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”  
Micah 6:8b

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## A Prophet Who Had God's Things In Mind

Passage: Habakkuk 3

August 26

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Habakkuk 3 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Habakkuk 3 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. Compare and contrast chapter 1 and 3. What was the greatest change in the prophet Habakkuk?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Reread 3:17-19. What do these verses teach you and remind you of?

In chapter 1, Habakkuk was a prophet who worried about his country and dared to express his feelings. He frankly expressed his struggles and questioned God why He tolerated the sinful ways of Judah and allowed the Babylonians' savage acts. He was impatient and full of questions. However, in chapter 3 he actually wrote a prayer praising God. Most important of all, the change in Habakkuk was not due to God's deliverance. On the contrary, nothing has changed in the harsh environment. Habakkuk recalled what God had done in the past: how God protected the Israelites from the 10 plagues and how He led the Israelites across the Red Sea, etc. When Habakkuk became aware of God's righteousness and holiness, he was filled with a deep sense of awe.

God's power is irresistible. Once His judgment is given, no one can obstruct. When the prophet focused on God's attributes, his faith was not the "because" kind of faith (I follow God "because" He blesses me), nor was it the "if" kind of faith ("if" God blesses me, then I will follow Him). Instead, his faith was based on total submission under God's sovereignty and His best plan. The attitudes of Habakkuk changed from doubtful, complaining and fearful in chapter 1, to trusting, reliant, and relieved in chapter 3. May this short book help us know how not to focus on difficulties but on God instead.

**APPLICATION:** When you encounter difficulties, or feel lonely and scared, try to pray about the matter. Ask God to help you focus on His omniscience and omnipotence. In the following chart, write down some of the difficulties and challenges that you faced. Then list what some of God's acts and attributes that relate to the difficulties. Compare and contrast.

<b><u>My difficulties &amp; challenges</u></b>	<b><u>God's acts and attributes</u></b>
e.g.: Can't find a job...	He is abounding, He watches over sparrows

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights."  
Habakkuk 3:18-19

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## Resurrection Of The Dry Bones

Passage: Ezekiel 37:1-14

August 27

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Ezekiel 37:1-14 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Ezekiel 37:1-14 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

**NOTE:** Ezekiel's name means "God strengthens" or "the strength of God". Ezekiel was born and raised in Judah. In 597 BC, as he prepared to take on the duty of a priest, the Babylonians came to attack Jerusalem, and took away ten thousand of its inhabitants, and Ezekiel himself was among them. (ref. 1 King 24:10-14).

When Ezekiel turned thirty, God called him to be the prophet of Judah. As he faced the destruction of the whole nation, Ezekiel preached God's word to the people, foretelling the siege and destruction that would come to Jerusalem, and requested their departure from evil; finally Ezekiel preached on the faithfulness of God, and foretold the blessing that God would bestow upon His people, then ended his book with a message of hope.

1. What do the dry bones represent?

2. What is the meaning of the resurrection of the dry bones?

Even though both Israel and Judah were subjugated — with a portion of the people being taken away and their land became desolated — Ezekiel boldly prophesied the restoration of the nation of Israel after receiving the vision from God. The withered bone represented the brokenness of the nation and its inhabitants, as there seemed to be no hope for their restoration; but when God promised the restoration of Israel, it would certainly happen. In a vision, Ezekiel saw the withered bone growing tendons, flesh and skin, along with the infusion of God's breath, that lead to the formation of a mighty army. What this biblical chapter prophesied was amazing, and absolutely unthinkable. These prophecies were preached in 586 B.C., on the eve of the subjugation of the nation. Finally, after over 2,500 years, in 1948, the nation was miraculously restored to what is now known as “the State of Israel.” The prophecy of Ezekiel, has ultimately become a reality in history. Without any doubt, God is the Lord over yesterday, today and forever.

**APPLICATION:** Examine your own spiritual life, has it been dry like the withered bone that you no longer sensitive to or lack the appetite for spiritual things? Make a list of the reasons why you are spiritually dry. Ask God to help you grow tendon, flesh, skin, and to breathe new life into you; so you can once again live the abundant life that God has prepared for you!

**MEMORY VERSE:** “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”  
Ezekiel 36:26

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## A Bitter-Before-Sweet Kingdom

Passage: Zephaniah 3:8-20

August 28

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Zephaniah 3:8-20 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**NOTE:** During the reign of Josiah King of Judah, the word of the Lord came to Zephaniah. The name Zephaniah means "God has guarded" or "God has concealed". The prophet warned the Israelites that if they refuse to repent, the entire nation including their beloved city of Jerusalem would be destroyed. The people knew that God would bless them ultimately, but Zephaniah pointed out clearly that judgment would come before blessings.

The phrase "the day of the Lord" appears most often in the book of Zephaniah. Even though the central theme is mainly about God bringing judgment upon the rebellious Israelites, the prophet clearly pointed out that God would still fulfill His promises to His people, guard and restore the remnant of Israel. The key verse of the book is in 1:7a: "Be silent before the Sovereign Lord, for the day of the Lord is near."

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Zephaniah 3:8-20 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. What did God promise the remnant of Israel?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How do these promises encourage and compel you to act?



Although the main point of the book of Zephaniah was about the day of the Lord, it was not just about judgment, it also involved the return and restoration of the remnant of Israel. The goal of God's disciplining His people was about the purification and reconciliation of relationship; and to affirm God's love and promises once again to these Israelites who would be facing judgment.

For the remnant of Israel, God's promises included: judging against all nations, bringing home all the captives, removing all their shame, letting them rely on God, commanding them to live a godly life, guarding them so they could live without fear, taking away their punishment, turning back their enemy, being in their midst so they would not be afraid of any harm, rescuing and healing them, gathering them, giving them praise and honor, etc. God is the King of Kings, the Almighty who brings salvation and the greatest blessing in life is to have God with us!

Is it not true that God's love and promises are still with His children today? On one hand, we should never despise God's discipline and disregard His patience and kindness. On the other hand, we should realize why God takes the trouble to discipline us. His quiet manner of love and His mighty power are enough to assure us that we do not need to be afraid, our hands will not hang limp because His promises will always be in our midst to protect us.

**APPLICATION:** Meditate on the promises that God gave to the remnant of Israel. Reflect and write down how you can apply these promises in your current circumstances. Please remember: He will quiet you with His love and be with you, do not let your hands hang limp and do not be afraid.

**MEMORY VERSES:** "16On that day they will say to Jerusalem, 'Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. 17The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.'" Zephaniah 3:16-17

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## Be A Prayer Warrior

Passage: Jeremiah 29:1-14

August 29

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER:** Ask God to calm your heart and open your eyes so that you can understand His Word.

**ADORATION:** Be still before God, praise Him in your heart, or sing a praise song or hymn.

**READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jeremiah 29:1-14 and think about what God is trying to say to you.

**RE-READING GOD'S WORD:** Read Jeremiah 29:1-14 again with careful observation and answer the following questions:

1. What does Jeremiah ask of the people in captivity (29:7)? Is this a reasonable request? Why or why not?

2. What did the Lord God promised to the people in captivity?

Jeremiah wrote to the Jews in Babylon, teaching them to continue to live a useful life, to pray for the peace of their captors and for the city of Babylon. At first glance, this seems to be an unduly request, asking the Jews to bless their enemies, to pray for the people who destroyed their nation! However, was this not the purpose of God in calling His chosen people to become a "Priestly Kingdom" (Ex

19:6)? Likewise, as God's children, we also process the role of a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet 2:9), to be a lampstand to shine on those around us. Even though we may be pilgrims, living in a foreign land, we must not be apathetic and care only for ourselves. We still have the responsibility to care about the cities and communities that we live in! Even though we may be surrounded by evil, moral corruption, and oppressions that make us frustrated and disappointed, let us not forget our role and calling in whatever situation we face. Let us continue to glow brightly for our Lord even when we are amidst depressing situation!

In addition, the Lord God clearly promised His people in captivity, instructing them to live a well lived life, to settled down and to wait for the day of the Lord; then seventy years later, God would bring them back to their homeland. This promise is of uttermost importance, because for the Jews in captivity, even though they experienced times of displacement, they could still have motivation and hope to live a well lived life by relying on God's promise until the day of deliverance from captivity! Similarly, even though we may face adversity or challenges in our lives, nevertheless does the hope of eternity not give us power to carry on? Let us live a well lived life for our Lord!

**APPLICATION:** List some matters that you could pray about for the city and the community that you live in. Remember these matters in the coming week as you come to the Lord in your daily prayer.

**MEMORY VERSES:** "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" Jeremiah 29:11

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.



God needed to establish a new covenant with his people because they refused to obey His word and instead followed the desire of their own hardened hearts. As a result of abandoning the Old Covenant, the subjugation of both Israel and Judah followed. God could have given up and destroyed His people, but because of His abounding love and mercy, God continued to give His people opportunities to return to Him.

When God issued the Ten Commandments, He Himself etched the law on the stone tablets; In contrast, the New Covenant is no longer written on stone tablets, but is written in the heart of every person instead, making the way for mankind to establish a unique and intimate relationship with God. God's spirit was not indwelled within each believer through the Old Covenant (in the Old Testament time); but through the New Covenant (in the New Testament time), the Holy Spirit indwells in the heart of each and every believer, and the Holy Spirit becomes our strength and prompts us to walk in His will. Furthermore, in the Old Covenant, man relied on his own efforts to walk in accordance with the requirements of the Law, and the consequence of violation was God's punishment. On the contrary, the New Covenant was established based on the salvation offered by Jesus Christ, sinners are forgiven based on the redemption of Jesus — thus, the Old Testament is also known as the Dispensation of Law, and the New Testament the Dispensation of Grace. Indeed, this is an immensely huge and shocking change that we get to share the blessings of the New Covenant because of the blood of Jesus Christ. By God's grace and through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are saved and are able to build a personal relationship with God throughout eternity.

**APPLICATION:** Make a list of the blessings and privileges that you can enjoy in this Dispensation of Grace. Give thanks for the blessings that you can enjoy under the grace that He has given!

**MEMORY VERSES:** "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Jeremiah 31:33b

**PRAYER:** Reflect upon what you have learned today and ask God to help you live out His will.

## Monthly Reflection

Passage: Lamentations 3:22-23

July 31

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**QUIET DOWN:** Use one to two minutes to quiet down yourself, try not to think about anything. If light music (without lyrics) helps, you could play some light music to help you focus.

**PRAYER AND MEDITATION:** Ask God to calm your heart, then read aloud Lamentations 3:22-23, slowly and repeatedly (you may repeat it three to five times or more, but avoid rushing through it). As you read, try to pay attention to specific words, moods or feelings, or any particular thoughts that speak to you between the lines. Use this Bible passage or your respective insight as a beginning prayer of today's reflection.

*“<sup>22</sup>Because of the LORD's great love  
we are not consumed,  
for his compassions never fail.  
<sup>23</sup>They are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.”*

Lamentations 3:22-23

**YOUR FEELINGS:**

**REFLECTION:** Please meditate quietly and answer the following questions and prompts.

1. Please count and write down the various situations that you experienced God's grace in your life in the past month.

2. List down areas that you need to improve on.

3. Other reflections:

**PRAYER:** Ask the Lord to grant you strength to live out what you have learned today.

## Overall Insights In August

*Write down the overall spiritual insights that you have learned in your daily devotion this month:*

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### Acknowledgments

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