

21 DAY
2022
FAST

**DAILY
DEVOTIONS**

DAY 1

Going through the motions

By Pastor Vaughn Fahrenbruck

Scripture: Hosea 6:6 – 6 I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings.

Devotion: I remember when I started dating my wife Jill and some of the things that I did to show my affection for her, even things that would seem silly and cringey today – and no I am not going to tell you! Now being married for over ten years, I must admit some of these lovey-dovey acts have faded. It seems like the more time I am married, the more it is tempting to just go through the motions of being married. After all she knows I love her and that should be enough, right? Wrong. Marriages fail all the time because of this one issue. The love that first brought about the relationship turns into muscle memory and becomes passionless actions. Relationship experts say to combat this issue in marriages, the couple must find ways to keep the passion alive and recommend things like going on routine dates, taking walks together, having face-to-face conversations where they can have authentic dialogue. In short – they need to spend intentional time with one another. It is hard to do this with four kids and a demanding job, but there are times through the week where Jill and I have these special moments. Mainly it happens during evening drives around town when the kids are sleeping in the back or short phone calls through the day to see how each other are doing. This has cultivated our relationship into something healthy and desirable for the both of us. More passion, less of the going through the motions.

Israel had this issue of going through the motions in their relationship with God too. They had instructions from God to do certain practices, but these practices were to draw them closer to Him. However, overtime, the passion in these practices waned and Israel found themselves in the place of going through the motions with God and this eventually led to a separation between Israel and God. God even wrote somewhat of a love letter to them in Hosea telling the nation that he could care less about their sacrifices and offerings, He just wanted to be with them. To have an intentional place in their hearts to reside in. Simply put – God was tired of them going through the motions, He wanted the real passion-filled relationship.

Do you feel as though your relationship with God feels like the same thing? It seems like we just go to church, do a daily devotional, maybe serve or give to the church here and there and at the end of the day your relationship with God is more like just going through the motions, but no real connection. Let me encourage you to commit this one thing in your relationship to God for 2022. Carve out intentional time to be with Jesus. Make time to ponder about Him, share your hopes and dreams with Him, express your concerns and doubts, and simply be with Him. Sure, read some scripture and put on some worship music, but create space every single day whether its five minutes in your car before you go into work or fifteen minutes as you lay in bed for the night – have that intentional time with Jesus and see how your relationship changes!

Prayer / Mediation:

“Lord, thank you for wanting to be with me. I want to be with you as well. As I carve out intentional time to be with you, help me become more aware for your presence, your love, and your will for my life. – Amen”

DAY 1

Going through the motions

By Pastor Vaughn Fahrenbruck

My Thoughts

Handwriting practice lines for "My Thoughts". The page contains 22 horizontal dashed lines.

DAY 2

Longing for home.

By Jill Fahrenbruck

Scripture

Philippians 3:20 But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.

John 14:1-4 "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. 2 There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? 3 When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. 4 And you know the way to where I am going."

John 14:6 "Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

Devotion

2021 was a tough year. It was full of confusion, division, tension, and loss, so much loss. As each year passes, and the more heartbreak I encounter the more I long for home. As an introvert, I do love being in my cozy sweats with a warm blanket and good book curled up on the couch in MY house, but this longing is for something more. Philippians states that we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives, meaning, this place is not our home. We have an innate desire for heaven because we were created for it. God's original design was never for us to experience the heartache we do. He created the perfect place for us to dwell with Him, free from pain and suffering, and in our own selfish and foolish ways, we messed it up. The wonderful news is that we serve an amazing God who is all about redemption and second chances. As a gift to us, He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to live a blameless life, to die on our behalf, and to be raised again so that we once again have the opportunity to dwell with Him forever. Jesus is in heaven right now preparing a place for us and when everything is ready He will come back to get us and take us home. This place is not our home; we were created for so much more and the closer we draw to Jesus, the more evident that becomes. Heaven is our home! But just as Jesus asked His disciples, I will leave you with a similar question. Do you know your way home? As much as every soul longs for heaven, not everyone will arrive because there is only one way to get there and that's through Jesus. John 14:6 says "Jesus told him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me." So today look around you and realize that this place is not your home. There is a place in heaven being prepared just for you. All you have to do is say Yes to Jesus and live for Him until He returns one day soon to take you home.

Prayer / Meditation

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the hope of heaven in this dark and sad world. Remind me often that this is not my home and that you are preparing a place for me where I can forever be in Your presence. Even though my heart longs for heaven, help me live for You here on earth and always point others to you and your goodness as I eagerly wait for your return.

In Jesus Name, Amen!

DAY 2

Longing for home

By Jill Fahrenbruck

My Thoughts

Lined writing area for thoughts.

DAY 3

Come closer

By Autumn Cole

Scripture:

James 4:8 (NLT) - "Come close to God, and God will come close to you..."

Devotion:

If you know much about children, you know there's a time in the evening known as the witching hour. The witching hour at our house begins somewhere around 5 o'clock. The witching hour, for those unfamiliar, is the time in the day when the wheels fall off the train and a marathon of insanity ensues until the sweet release of bedtime. (This sounds dramatic and I assure you it is!) By the time we have attempted to feed all of our children, bathe them, read a story, pray over them, use the bathroom, and put each of them in their beds and watch their cute, little heads hit the pillow, we're exhausted! We slump down the stairs and plop on the couch with loud sighs. I recently noticed that my husband and I often end up on opposite ends of the couch, having a difficult time engaging in conversation simply from the exhaustion of it all. And even though I'm aware of his presence, I often feel very isolated from him all the way over on the other end. But something else I've noticed is that when I simply scoot a bit closer to my husband, he will almost always wrap an arm around my shoulders or pull me close to his side. In an instant, I feel closer to him, even if we don't say a word.

I can't help but wonder if this is true in my spiritual life as well. I can't help but think I'm often sitting on the opposite end of the "couch" from God. I'm aware He exists, that He's present, but I still feel isolated and far from Him. God's presence is promised to us, but what would happen if I take a moment to not only acknowledge His presence, but move a little closer to Him? Scripture tells us that when we draw near to God (move closer to Him), He draws near (moves closer) to us. What steps can I take today to move closer to Him? What disciplines could I practice that would help me to draw near to Him? Come close to God and He will come close to you.

Prayer / Meditation:

Dear Jesus, thank you for the gift not only of your presence, but your nearness to us. Show me specific ways I might practice drawing near to you and help me to be aware of you drawing nearer to me. Use this nearness to make me more like you. Amen.

DAY 4

Dog lessons

Scripture:

By Angie Kerr

Joshua 24: 14-15 – So fear the Lord and serve Him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord alone.¹⁵ But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you know live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.

Devotion:

When I first got my second dog, Mabel, I was shocked at how different she was to my first dog, Walter. Walter was brave to the point of ridiculous – running up to giant dogs at the dog park, loving on any person who gave him the slightest attention. Mabel, in contrast, immediately became Walter's shadow. Whatever Walter did, Mabel did. The good habits I had taught him and the naughty things he did were repeated with equal measure by Mabel. Once, I decided to take Mabel to the dog park by herself, because Walter was having a time out. She was completely bereft. She had no idea what to do with herself. She didn't interact with other dogs or people. She wandered around looking for her best friend.

I find that, often, when I try to strike out on my own, doing what I want to do, what I think is best for me, I end up feeling bereft as well. God has a plan and purpose for my life. If I am not following His lead, I am actively defying it. It may be as simple as what to do from day to day, or as complicated as career, family, and home. In ALL THINGS, God wants to be the one you follow. Because without Him, what good can we do?

Prayer / Mediation:

Heavenly Father, I pray today that you would find subtle and strong ways to remind me that I do not have to go through life alone. That you are my Father, my King, and my best friend. That your ways are higher than mine. Let me choose each day who I will serve. Because if am not serving you, I am still serving someone.

DAY 5

Recipe of life

By Pastor Phyllis Powell

Scripture:

1John 4:16 NKJ - "And we have known and believed the love that God has for us, God is Love, and he who abides in Love abides in God, and God in Him."

Devotion:

We need to be in God's Family

I love to bake and cook. I have lots of cookbooks. I followed my grandmother in the life style of cooking and baking. And greater still she taught me the recipe of life was to put Jesus first, others second and myself last. This brings JOY. When Jesus is first in the recipe of life and you add others and then yourself you will have the greatest gift. Open your heart...not the oven and let Jesus in today.

Prayer / Mediation:

"Dear Lord, help me today to put your first in my life. To lay down all the things that try to come between me and you. Help me to seek your face and your word and show love to others. Amen"

DAY 6

Offense

By Jill Fahrenbruck

Scripture:

Psalm 139:23-24 – “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.”

Devotion:

As you all know, we live in a world of offense. Everything someone says (or doesn't say) and everything someone does (or doesn't do) is somehow in some way offensive. Our feelings get hurt when someone disagrees with our thoughts and opinions and we are certainly quick to shout “how dare you” when we think we've been wronged or overlooked. We get so defensive and angry with our indignant attitude, but boy do we sure love to point our finger and spout some terrible, malicious things right back.

The thing is– we don't like being called out. Even if we are in the wrong, we will stand by our side til death and claim whatever is opposing us as “offensive”. We will do or say anything to justify ourselves without first seeking out the TRUTH and taking responsibility for our own actions.

What if before we get offended, we ask Jesus to search our own hearts and point out what OFFENDS HIM? What if before we start to attack, we silence ourselves with His love?

When we take the time to make it about Jesus and not about us, we will realize that we need to worry a lot less about being offended and trying to justify “our side” and instead start caring a whole lot more about THE ONE we are offending.

Prayer / Mediation:

“Jesus, search my heart. Point out EVERYTHING in me that offends You! You alone are who I aim to please. Humble me. Forgive me. And give me a daily desire to always seek more of you!” – Amen

DAY 7

Change of plans

By Autumn Cole

Scripture:

Psalm 143:10 (NLT) - "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. May your gracious Spirit lead me forward on firm footing."

Devotion:

My kids recently had an extended holiday break from school. As the planner and organizer of the family, I quickly rearranged my schedule so I could make the most of their time home. I had carefully planned our first day together to maximize productivity and relaxation...and then we woke up. Sick kids, messy projects, requests from friends, and general life disruptions blew up my carefully laid plans. The entire day I kept waiting for someone to jump out from behind a camera and yell, "Gotcha!" (Nobody ever did.) It was so tempting to give into frustration/anger/tension. (If you asked my kids, they would probably tell you I did... more than once.) I just wanted to do what I wanted to do and couldn't figure out why everything and everyone was standing in my way!

Sometime around mid-afternoon I gave in and let the day just take us where it would, but it was actually a great reminder that sometimes I must lay aside my own plans/desires in order to yield to His Spirit. And that really is the kind of life I want to live. I want to live a life led by the Holy Spirit, doing and going where God has called, what he has planned because I know He has my best in mind. As frustrating or heartbreaking as it can be to sometimes lay aside the carefully laid plans for my life, allowing God's Spirit to guide my life has never failed. He leads me to a deeper, richer, more meaningful life every single time. It doesn't stop me from trying to occasionally take back control, but I can make the choice to lay down my plans and yield to His. What will you choose today? What area of your life do you struggle to take back from His control? In what area of your life can you make a conscious decision to put your own will aside and ask what God may have planned for you instead?

Prayer / Mediation:

Lord Jesus, thank you that you are patient with us. Thank you that you always have our best in mind. Father, help me to lay down my own will, my carefully made plans, and be willing to ask for Your will to be done in my life--today and every day. Amen.

DAY 8

Self-sabotage

By Angie Kerr

Scripture:

1 John 5: 18-21 - 18 We know that God's children do not make a practice of sinning, for God's Son holds them securely, and the evil one cannot touch them. 19 We know that we are children of God and that the world around us is under the control of the evil one. 20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life. 21 Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts.

Devotion:

God's children choose not to sin, not because of their own strength and righteousness, but because they have put their trust in the one who knows no sin. Satan has his hand on the world, but Jesus holds us tightly, protecting us from evil and giving us eyes to see what it means to let the Holy Spirit guide our life.

One thing that I find myself often struggling with is self-sabotage. I know what I am supposed to do, but I choose not to do it. One way I have found to reverse this is to focus on who God is, and who we are as His children. Scripture says that the evil one cannot touch us, and we are held securely by Jesus. But it also says that we are human and will stumble. It is in those times that we must hang on most to our relationship with the Lord, and allow the Holy Spirit to create the change we seek. Sometimes getting out of our own way means relinquishing what we want and just letting the Spirit guide. Then, when it isn't about me at all, I have nothing to sabotage. It is both incredibly freeing and incredibly humbling.

Prayer / Meditation:

Jesus, you hold me safe in your hand. Spirit, you speak to me through the Word, through my quiet time and my prayer. There is nothing that I need to do to avoid the pitfalls the world has to offer, because I am not alone. Today, I put my trust in You, to take me down the path you have for me. - Amen

DAY 8

Self-sabotage

By Angie Kerr

My Thoughts

Handwriting practice area consisting of 25 horizontal dashed lines.

DAY 9

Beauty of creation

By Pastor Phyllis Powell

Scripture:

Genesis 1:27 NKJ – “So God created man in His image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Devotion:

We are made in the image of God

I was thinking of the song last week “How Great Thou Art”. Sometimes when we look around to all the beauty of God’s creation, the clouds, the trees in the fall. A water fall, the sun and beautiful sunsets. I stand in wonder and awe of the beautiful colors. But more than this, I love to look into the face of a baby and a little child and see them smile. I see how great God is in this little ones. How wonderful it is to hold a new born baby! Made in the image of God.

Prayer / Mediation:

“Dear Lord, I give you thanks for life, health and the beauty that surrounds us. Let us stop each day and count our blessings for the things we see around us that shows your love to us. I am thankful we are made in your image...body, soul and spirit. Speak to us through your words. Amen”

DAY 9

Beauty of creation

By Pastor Phyllis Powell

My Thoughts

Lined area for writing thoughts, consisting of 20 horizontal dashed lines.

DAY 10

Rest and Recovery

By Pastor Vaughn Fahrenbruck

Scripture:

Mark 2:27 - 27 Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath."

Devotion:

2021 was the year of trying to get into the gym and working out as much as possible. Mission accomplished! Nearly 4-5 days out of the week, I would spend about an hour and half in the gym working out. Each workout was rigorous. It began with a fast-paced walk for ten minutes, an hour of mixed strength training, and then 20-30 minutes "hiking" on the treadmill. The results? Exhaustion. I physically tired to the point where it would become difficult to do the easiest of things – like walking up a set of stairs. After sharing this experience with my trainer, he asked what my recovery was. To honest I was so focused on working out, I never thought about recover. My trainer suggested that I would take one day to recover where I would not go to the gym but do an activity that I would enjoy. To my surprise, he agreed that my odd jobs of DIY projects would be a great way of recovery as he explained recover is not just laying around not doing anything but doing an activity that brought joy into my physical activity. Along with that, he added recovery protein shakes an amino acids – two additions that would allow my muscles to recover and become stronger. In short – rest and recovery is just as essential as the weight room.

In Mark, Jesus makes it very clear that humans cannot live life well and flourish without the day of sabbath. Most treat Sabbath as a concept that one should not "overdo it" and make sure you take a vacation every now and then. While this can be a part Sabbath, its does not paint the entirety of Sabbath does. Sabbath is a day where we step back from work and recognize the work that Jesus has done through us and find the joy and pleasure that he has given us. Sabbath causes us to stop for a day and praise Jesus through enjoying the life he has given us. For us personally, we do things like having a delicious supper with the family and eating ice cream while watching a movie. We may even add a family walk to the day's schedule or go the local children's museum. All of these things give us joy as our family comes together and in return it brings God joy as well. The results? Our family recovers after a busy week, our family becomes stronger because we spend time with one another, and our family comes closer to Jesus because we make sure to communicate clearly that we have fun because Jesus asked us to and he desires us to do so. After all, Sabbath was created for you and I and not for us to make a religious mundane day of the week. So this week – find a day, or at the very least, a few hours where you can enjoy Sabbath, rejoice in what Jesus has done through you, and simply have some fun with the life He has blessed you with. Sabbath is essential to your walk with Jesus.

Prayer / Mediation:

Jesus – help me observe perhaps one of the most important commandments that you gave Moses. Help me to give myself permission to step back from the work and hurry of life and rejoice in the work that you are doing through me and the life you have blessed me with. – Amen.

DAY 11

I trust you...

By Jill Fahrenbruck

Scripture:

Psalms 56:3-4 NLT - "But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you. I praise God for what he has promised. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?"

Devotion:

I don't know about you, but for me it is easy to say "I love you, God" but it's a whole other thing to say "I trust you" especially in difficult circumstances that are out of my control.

However, we all know that TRUST is a key in all healthy relationships and should be no different when it comes to our relationship with God.

Your life may be spinning out of control and seem dark, scary, or hopeless. You may be confused, upset, grieving... but even in the middle of the pain we need to TRUST Him, the One who holds the future in His hands. The One who wants the best for you. And when you do, despite all the evidence to the contrary, you will have a breakthrough. You will encounter a new intimacy with Him and feel His presence amidst your hurting. You will TRUST His character even when you don't understand your circumstance. No matter what happened/is happening, you WILL get through it by TRUSTING He knows what's best. Your love for Him will show by your trust IN Him!

Prayer / Mediation:

"Dear Jesus, Help me trust in you. Remind me of your goodness and your faithfulness amidst my trials and circumstances. You do know best and I pray that I learn to fully trust you and surrender my life completely to you no matter what. Thank you for loving me and leading me. In Jesus name, Amen"

DAY 12

Wrestling match

By Autumn Cole

Scripture:

Galatians 5:16 (NLT) – “So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves.”

Devotion:

When I was a kid, my cousins and I would spend hours doing something we called “leg wrestling”. Leg wrestling to us involved laying on the floor, wrapping a leg around your opponent’s, counting to three, and struggling to flip the other person over using only your twisted leg. If you were matched up well, the constant pushing and pulling could last quite a while and was physically draining. (I am now beginning to see why our parents permitted the ridiculousness of this game.) It was a strenuous battle of constant back and forth. Eventually you either won or you lost, but either way, there was a degree of relief that the battle was finally over.

This strenuous back and forth battle is sometimes how it feels with our flesh and our spirit, our human desires versus the Holy Spirit’s desire within us. It can feel as though we were transported to a cartoon with a devil on one shoulder and an angel on the other. It’s so obvious what we should choose and yet there’s a part of us that wants to do the other thing. It feels like that back and forth of wrestling and it’s equally exhausting. In my life, I want the Spirit to win out in those moments more frequently, so I have to ask, “What can I do to strengthen the Spirit in me?” (Or at least, my awareness and desire to obey the Spirit.) Perhaps church attendance needs to be more of a priority. Maybe starting the day in worship and prayer would help me acknowledge God’s presence before I’m in a pinch. Or maybe I need some accountability from a friend in an area temptation often wins out. What could you do today to strengthen your “Spirit muscle” so more of these battles result in victory in your life?

Prayer / Mediation:

Lord, thank you for the gift of your Spirit. I pray you would reveal specific ways I can strengthen my relationship with you so that I can experience victory with you in moments of struggle. Give me a heart of obedience to follow through. Amen.

DAY 13

#Goals

By Angie Kerr

Scripture:

Acts 20: 22-27 – 22 “And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don’t know what awaits me, 23 except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. 24 But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God. 25 “And now I know that none of you to whom I have preached the Kingdom will ever see me again. 26 I declare today that I have been faithful. If anyone suffers eternal death, it’s not my fault, 27 for I didn’t shrink from declaring all that God wants you to know.

Devotion:

The Apostle Luke doesn’t know what lies ahead for him, but he’s pretty sure it will involve jail and suffering. And yet he goes where the Spirit leads him to go, for that is what he has been given to do. It isn’t about him or his goals, dreams or ambitions. Even knowing he has a “rough year” ahead, he goes forward with joy. He says, “I have done what God gave me to do here, and now I go to continue my mission, whatever the cost.” Don’t you ever wish you had that kind of surety in what you are here to do?

At the beginning of the year, we are inundated with ads, news stories, and editorials about “New Year’s Resolutions.” There is an entire industry (or several) that rely on people who make new plans for January 1st, buy lots of stuff to execute those plans, and give up before the 15th of the month. But God has a better way. It isn’t about losing 10 pounds, making more money, or taking that dream vacation. Even if you do attain those goals, the satisfaction they bring is fleeting. You go on to make new goals, to strive for more “things.” Or, you don’t reach those goals, and you feel like a failure. God has a bigger plan for your life. And it may not involve success as the world defines it. But it WILL involve the most satisfying feeling a person can have in this life. Knowing you are doing the work that the Lord has for you. And bringing others closer to Him.

Prayer / Mediation:

As this new year begins, let me focus on drawing closer to you, Lord. Let me tune my eyes, my ears, my spirit, to what you have for me in 2022. Give me discernment to understand the next step in the journey, even if I cannot see the end result. Let me make my resolution to do Your will, in all aspects of my life. – Amen

DAY 14

My plans or God's plans

By Pastor Phyllis Powell

Scripture:

Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

Devotion:

Do you want a great future?

My plans or God's plans, do you ever question that? Do you seek His face to ask him what he has in store for you? He tells us in His word that he has a plan for our lives. He has a road and a path way he wants us to follow. As we read His word and listen to his voice and trust in Him, He will reveal His great plans for us and we need to follow Him. He said He was the way, the truth and the life. Just follow one day at a time.

Prayer / Mediation:

Dear Lord, Help us to seek your face and follow the road you have laid before us. One day at a time. Give us strength in our weakness, Joy in the journey, and peace and rest in the night. In Jesus name, Amen"

DAY 15

No other name

By Pastor Vaughn Fahrenbruck

Scripture:

I Corinthians 1: 30-31 – 30 God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin. 31 Therefore, as the Scriptures say, “If you want to boast, boast only about the Lord.”

Devotion:

The ride of 2021 is over, but just like today’s movies – the ride is expected to continue for another 2-3 films, or in our case for years to come. For us, this year been a continuation of the pandemic, forest fires, hurricanes, tornadoes, political and social division, mandates, more riots, and more conspiracies. You ask anyone in conversation about what they think of this political climate, you will get a sense of what is moving in the hearts of the American people. I asked this question to a few of my close friends and each one gave an interesting answer. They varied from their opinions on how our president is doing, which mandate they support or are against, and their fear for the church and ultimately the division this is all creating. Each conversation usually ends with this statement, “I can’t wait till this is all over...” and to a degree I agree with that comment. 2021 has been a weary year.

As I write this, I am reminded of First Corinthians chapter one. Paul is writing a letter to the church of Corinth addressing the division that is taking place. The first thing he addresses the factions within the church all claiming to follow a different apostle and using that platform as an argument as to why they are “more Christian”. Paul, in his blatant fashion, writes a strongly worded letter reminding them once again why they are Christians in the first place. He states that He along with the other apostles are merely men preaching the gospel. Paul, Apollos, and Peter were not crucified for their sake and no one in the church was baptized in any other name than the name of Jesus. If they were to do any of this “...the cross would be emptied of its power” (v.17). He finishes this letter saying, “And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who came to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that as it is written, “let the one who boasts, boasts in the Lord.””.

I believe it is good for us during this time to remind ourselves who we belong to and who’s name we ought to cling to. At the end of the day, and at the end of this election season, there is still only one name greater than the rest – Jesus. There is only one person whose policies are true and right – Jesus. There is only one person who truly loves you, is concerned for you, and wants the best for you – Jesus. There is only one person who died to save you, rose from the dead to prove to you, gave you His blood to justify you, and is coming back again to get you – and that’s Jesus. Let us boast this name louder than any other name that comes from our lips.

Prayer / Mediation:

Lord, as we begin a new year, help me to cling to your name and boast about you more than any other name. Your name is greater and more powerful than any political name, social justice name, and names that claim to the solution to our problems. Let your name – Jesus – be the name that people see inscribed upon my heart. – Amen

DAY 16

Friendly Fire

By Pastor Vaughn Fahrenbruck

Scripture:

John 13:34 - 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Devotion:

Jesus is about to fulfill what His Father has called Him to do and before Jesus goes to the garden and prays, He gives a last bit of wisdom to His disciples. In fact, this new bit of wisdom is not just sound advice for the disciples, but it's a new commandment from Jesus. What Jesus was about to say was His last piece of instruction before He endured the cross: "Love one another just as I have loved you, by this the world will know that you are my disciples...". Love one another. This doesn't seem much, but if you read on to John chapters 14-17, Jesus unpacks this new commandment and why it is so important. In fact, Jesus' prayer request to God the Father right before his betrayal was that the disciples would be one just as Jesus and the Father are one. He was asking that they would be unified in their love for each other and their love for God. Why? Because this will be the greatest testimony to the world that we as Christians and as the church belong to Jesus.

Today we are experiencing one of the most interesting and turbulent times in our lifetime, and because of this people feeling many different emotions. Some are feeling hope and confidence despite what they see, but many are feeling despair, anger, confusion, and even offense. With John 13 in mind, that last word seems to be more evident in our culture than ever - offense. Our world is caught in a whirlwind of offense and it leaves a trail of destruction and hurt. But sadly, this whirlwind of offense seems to find itself within the body of Christ. As a pastor it breaks my heart to see the body of Christ caught up in the trap of offense and there is little evidence of love for another. Just by a few words spoken to someone or posted on social media is returned with a canon fire of misunderstanding and assumption tainted with anger and offense and after the smoke clears we see the casualties who were caught up in friendly fire are severely wounded and pitted against each other.

Why is this a problem? Because our role in this world is to be a witness to our community, and one of our best tools of witnessing is not our anger or offense, but it is our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is by this the world will know who we are and our Jesus that we serve. When the world looks at the church, what do they see? Or better yet, when the world sees a Christian's social media post and then proceeds to read the comment section, what do they read? Does it reflect the love that Jesus commands us to have for one another, or does it look like a battlefield of God's children fighting each other. Jesus's prayer request in John 17 was that His church would be unified in a way that would reflect the unity that Jesus has with His Father. The enemy knows this and he also knows that one of the greatest weapons of destruction he has is to bait us with offense and lure us in a trap that is full of pain and hurt. When we feel triggered to say something or to post something out of offense, let's look beyond our words and see where they are rooted in. Are they rooted in love? If they are, they bring life and not destruction. They bring unity and not division. And what is being said brings a testimony to the world that Jesus's church is who we say we are. We do love people and we do love Jesus.

Prayer / Mediation:

Lord, in the midst of offense, help me to come to a place of love. Help me to watch out for my own friendly fire and allow me to intentional on building up and uniting the body of the Christ in the coming new year. - Amen.

DAY 17

Growing pains

By Autumn Cole

Scripture:

Romans 8:28 (NLT) - "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."

Devotion:

Pregnancy and childbirth are a miracle, but it's no secret that it can be miserable as well. Pregnancy always brought about such mixed emotions for me because I knew what an honor it was to be growing new life inside of me and yet I was one of the lucky women who not only experienced "morning sickness" but was bestowed the honor of all day and night extreme sickness. (I had a very intimate relationship with all of the bathrooms within a 10-mile radius of our home.) It was physically draining and all I wanted was any amount of relief from the relentless discomfort, even for a few moments. But in those first few weeks home with our new precious baby, the one I'd been nurturing (and suffering) for, all of the discomfort and unease of growing that precious new life was worth every moment.

There are moments in our lives that are wrought with discomfort, unease, even pain. Our first response is often to find whatever solution will relieve us of it as quickly as humanly possible. But what if, just as in pregnancy, God is using this discomfort to bring about new life in us? Perhaps He is using this time to speak to you in ways He wouldn't be able to otherwise. Maybe there are parts of your life that are being revealed in this pain that would otherwise remain hidden and maybe in this unwanted discomfort God is meeting you in ways He couldn't meet you before. What if instead of racing to find relief from this discomfort, you looked for the new life God is bringing about inside of you? Just as in those few weeks after giving birth, you may soon look back and find that all of the discomfort and unease you experience in this season was worth every moment for the new life He brought forth in you.

Prayer / Meditation:

Jesus, help me to turn to you in my discomfort. Help me to search for you, to allow you to work, and to give you permission to bring about something new in me that I wouldn't otherwise be able to experience. Show me how you use hard things to bring about healing and new life. Amen.

DAY 18

Heavenly realities

By Angie Kerr

Scripture:

I Corinthians 1: 26-31 – 26 Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. 27 Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. 28 God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. 29 As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God. 30 God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin. 31 Therefore, as the Scriptures say, "If you want to boast, boast only about the Lord."

Devotion:

God has chosen imperfect people to carry His message. His ways are greater than our ways. We would choose the wealthy, the powerful, the influential every time. God chooses the humble, the powerless, the broken. Because of this, we KNOW that all that is happening in God's church is HIS doing and not OURS. We cannot proclaim our own greatness, for we can do nothing without HIM.

As we pray for the church to follow God's leading in the new year, it would be easy to focus on what we think success looks like. Maybe that means becoming more influential in the community, building financial stability, or simply having more people in the chairs on Sunday. While all those things may happen, that is not what God is calling us to pray for. He doesn't need our money, our influence, or our butts (can I say that?) in the pews. He wants only that we submit our own agendas to Him and follow where He leads. Many churches are struggling, disconnected and "dying." It would be easy to be discouraged by what the world tells us about God's church. But the church is the Bride of Christ! She is not dying, she is not in decline. Her best days are ahead! God's reality is not our reality. His ways are not our ways, and the Church is powerful and eternal...because God says she is. And our prayers should reflect that.

Prayer / Mediation:

As I lift up my hands and pray for your leading over The Rock Church and the community of North Platte in 2022, remind me of Your power. Remind me that You have a glorious future planned for your bride. Help me to see the church as you see her, and to focus my gaze on how we, as imperfect people serving a perfect God, can do your will each day of the new year.

DAY 19

God's faithfulness

By Pastor Phyllis Powell

Scripture:

Hebrews 13:8 NKJ "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever."

Devotion:

Sometimes we need to stop and look back before going forward. I thought of the Old Testament. The stories we read about are to encourage our faith in the God who was, who is and who is to come. I thought of Abraham, the father of many nations. He heard the voice and God and he answered His call. Moses, and the burning bush. God spoke to him to lead the children of Israel out of bondage. He was faithful in the past. He still speaks today. He speaks through His word. He speaks in a still small voice. He speaks in dreams and visions. We need to be open to hear Him. He is faithful in His promises.

Prayer / Mediation:

Dear Lord, Forgive me of not opening my heart and my mind to hear your voice today and you are still speaking to us today. You were faithful in the past and we know you are faithful now and you will faithful in the New Year 2022 in your promises. We love your Lord. Amen"

DAY 20

Not with that attitude

By Pastor Vaughn Fahrenbruck

Scripture:

Number 14:23-24 - 23 They will never even see the land I swore to give their ancestors. None of those who have treated me with contempt will ever see it. 24 But my servant Caleb has a different attitude than the others have. He has remained loyal to me, so I will bring him into the land he explored. His descendants will possess their full share of that land.

Devotion:

I remember growing up, my parents said a phrase that I now repeat to my own kids: "not with that attitude!" It is a phrase that was said after I would complain about not being able to do something or get my way and it was a phrase that would annoy me until the meaning was naturally revealed to me as I experienced life and what God had for me. The meaning of the saying? It means that my attitude has a determining factor on the problems and issue I face and whether I overcame them or failed. Attitude in this life has more play in our victories and failures than we realize. I remember being on sports teams where we were losing and during half time the coaches talked (more like yelled) about changing our attitude in the game and that would help put points on the board – and they were right! I remember getting ready for some of my first job interviews and was told to have a good and positive attitude when being interviewed and that would help me being hired – and they were right! I remember going through some of the toughest seasons of life and being kindly reminded of the attitude that I ought to have and that would help me get through whatever I was coming against – and they were right!

Our attitude even has a determining factor of what God does in our life as well! In Number chapter 14, it was the Israelite's attitude that kept them from entering the promise land and the consequence was to wander the desert for 40 years and to die and allow the next generation to try again. However, one Israelite by the name of Caleb had a different attitude and his reward? While others could not enter the promise land, Caleb was promised that he wouldn't die in the desert and would be allowed to enter the land that he scouted. You talk about an attitude adjustment!

How's your attitude as you begin a new year? I can't help but to hear God's voice every time I have an absurd level of skepticism or doubt, or I just want to sit in my pity and anger complaining about all the wrong in my life – that says "not with that attitude!" Our attitude is a playing factor on how 2022 will go, what Jesus does in your life, in your church, and in your community. Let's go ahead and adjust our attitudes now before we get to the precipice of something new and good from God.

Prayer / Mediation:

Lord, help me to have an attitude like Caleb. While everyone was negative and complaining, he saw the good things you were trying to bring. By your spirit, adjust my attitude to how you would like it to bring about the best of you in me. – Amen

DAY 20

Not with that attitude

By Pastor Vaughn Fahrenbruck

My Thoughts

Detailed description: A series of horizontal dashed lines for writing thoughts.

DAY 21

The good life

By Angie Kerr

Scripture:

Matthew 6: 19-27: 19 "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. 21 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. 22 "Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. 23 But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is! 24 "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money. 25 "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? 27 Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

Devotion: The world around us is constantly reminding us of what we don't have. We spend so much time worrying about looking "right," acting "right," and supporting our family that it is easy for God's agenda to be pushed aside by our own. But God says there is more to life. He will always provide if we put our faith in Him. If our desires are for social influence, money, and respect from the world, then we are serving the wrong master. We are loved by our Father. He will provide, if we cast our cares on Him.

There has been a lot of scientific study on the idea of gratitude in the secular world lately. "Scientific research supports a connection between gratitude, mindfulness, and mental health. For instance, psychologists Dr. Robert A. Emmons and Dr. Michael E. McCullough studied gratitude and found that people who wrote about the things that they were grateful for are people who are more optimistic and who feel better about their lives...ADAA Past President Karen Cassiday, PhD, ACT confirms that over "fifteen thousand studies have proved the power" of gratitude in improving "mental and physical health." In short, gratitude can lead to better overall health." - ADAA (Anxiety and Depression Association of America)

DAY 21

The good life

By Angie Kerr

Devotion Cont'd:

Not surprisingly, God has created our minds so that what we dwell on is what we see. If you look for things to go wrong, you see things going wrong. If you get out of bed thinking you will have a bad day, you probably will. Your brain looks for what you tell it to look for. If you are thinking of buying a new car, suddenly you see that particular make and model all over the road. If you see an ad for the latest new pizza at Dominos, suddenly your craving pizza. Advertisers have been using our own brains against us for years. But, no matter what the catch phrase of the day may be (Gratitude, Mindfulness, etc) God has summed it all up thousands of years ago in His Word – Don't worry. Look for the good in life. Focus on what God has given you. He has created your brain to take these simple truths and build life-giving pathways through our minds. If we look for His blessings we find them, everywhere.

Prayer / Mediation:

Father, help me to look for your blessings all around me. In my prayer time, let me give praise to you for the good things you have brought into my life. As I look ahead to the future, let me not forget what you have done for me. Give me eyes to see as you see, and to cast all cares on You.

My Thoughts
