



BEYOND

ME

ANSWERING THE CALL TO

GO BEYOND



TWENTY-ONE DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING BEYOND ME

Our theme for this year is, “Beyond Me.” What do you think about when you hear the word, “beyond?” When I think of that word several phrases immediately come into my mind. Beyond the horizon. Beyond reproach. Beyond measure. Beyond expectations. Beyond my reach. Thoughts or reasoning beyond my understanding and of course, going above and beyond the call of duty.

To define beyond, one dictionary says, “to a degree that is past understanding, reach or scope of.” As a preposition it might refer to something that is over or in the past. As a noun it can refer to the afterlife, eternity or immortality. Interesting!

Another phrase commonly associated with serving others and has also found its place among obtaining and achieving goals: “Go the extra mile.” Are you looking for a promotion at work? “Go the extra mile.” Are you training to get in shape to run a marathon? “Go the extra mile.” Has your spouse had a rough day at work and you notice some things need to be done around the house? Help out and “go the extra mile.”

When it comes to personal gain (job promotion, a raise, getting in shape, etc.) “going the extra mile” can be a lot less daunting. “It’s just an extra hour at work,” we might say. But we can actually see and feel the benefits of going the extra mile for our physical and emotional state. So why is going the extra mile for our spiritual self seem to be overwhelming or intrusive and inconvenient?

Jesus has called us to go beyond ourselves to love and serve others. Going beyond our selfish, physical and emotional desires in order to mature the inward spiritual man or woman isn’t just beneficial to others, it’s necessary to our individual growth.

We can’t expect the church to meet our needs if we don’t meet the needs of the church.

Being called to live a life beyond myself is defined by Jesus as “denying myself, taking up my cross and follow him.” This certainly communicates a life beyond my own. We understand and experience this in many relationships. For example, in marriage, it’s definitely not about me! We also know parenting children calls us to a life beyond our own. Living beyond myself helps remove and erase selfish desires. If I only live for myself, then all I will have at the end of the day is myself.

Selfish ambitions in life are distractions to our faith. They distract from the growth in our community, making disciples, and a true relationship with Jesus. The Holy Spirit has already given us what is necessary to make disciples and change hearts for Jesus, however, one thing that can stop us from doing it is ourselves.

As we enter into a time of prayer and fasting, the challenge for each of us is to think and pray about the needs of others, both in our church family and beyond. Even though I may have many needs of my own, kingdom living and kingdom building is about GOD’s business in the world—seeking and saving the lost.

“Go make disciples.”

THE LORD'S (DISCIPLE'S) PRAYER

"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.' (Matt. 6:9-13 NIV).

1. Begin with worship. Praise GOD through his hallowed names found in Scripture. GOD Most High. – Possessor (owns all) Creator of Heaven and earth. (Gen. 14:19) GOD will Provide. – Jehovah-Jireh. GOD will provide what I need (Gen. 22:14) GOD who Heals – Jehovah Rapha The LORD heals my hurts & bitterness (Ex. 15:26) LORD is my Banner – Jehovah –Nissi GOD is with me in battle, my sign (Ex.17:8-16) **SONG** – The Lord Reigns, He is a Mighty GOD, the LORD GOD Reigns...
2. Pray for GOD's will and purpose in the world (seeking & saving the lost, restoring)
 - a. Pray for Him to be your LORD and King, not just your Savior. One who forgives
 - b. Pray that He would rule your life & the lives of others as He rules in heaven
3. Ask GOD for His provisions in your life. "Ask & it will be given to you (Matt. 7:7-8)
4. Ask GOD to help you make amends with those you have sinned against and those who have sinned against you
 - a. Thank GOD for His forgiveness in your life
 - b. Forgive others because GOD has forgiven you, as GOD has forgiven you
5. Pray for GOD's protection from the evil one
 - a. Prepare yourself for spiritual battle (Eph. 6:12-18) Sword (Word/Spirit) & Prayer

Express your thankfulness to GOD. Lord, I thank you for _____

What do you believe GOD's purpose is for you? If you are uncertain, make this a part of your prayer. LORD, I surrender my life to Your Will & Word _____

What do you need GOD to provide for you? _____

Who do you need to forgive? _____

How is the evil one tempting you? How is he destroying your spiritual life and walk with GOD?

If you have chosen a particular fast, ask GOD to give you strength to fulfill that fast.

Scriptures: (Jer. 23:29; 33:3; Ps. 13:5-6; 18:1-3; 24:3-5,8; 34:12-18; 144:1-2; 145:13-20; Col. 1:13; I John 4:4)

21 Days of Fasting and Prayer

Dan. 10:2; Is. 58:1-12; Neh. 1:1-3; Matt. 6:16-18; 9:14-15; Acts 13:2-3; 27:27-38

The goal of fasting is to draw near to GOD. Biblical fasting always has to do with eliminating distractions for a spiritual purpose. Fasting helps to hit the "reset button" of our soul and renews us from the inside out. It also enables us to celebrate the goodness and mercy of GOD and prepares our hearts for a new direction spiritually. A fast seeks GOD in prayer and through His Word regarding a decision or situation you are facing. It is extremely important to follow what the Holy Spirit leads you to do. GOD desires to transform us into the image of His Son, Jesus, and does this through the sanctification process of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:16-18). GOD seeks to bless our lives with His power (Eph. 1:18-21) in order to live out His purpose in the world. He seeks to live in us through the presence of His Holy Spirit. The purpose of fasting is to reorder our lives and put spiritual matters first. "Seek first the kingdom of GOD and his righteousness..." (Matt. 6:33).

TYPES of FASTS

Your personal fast should present a level of challenge, but it is important to know your body. If you are taking medications or on a restrictive diet, follow the instruction of your physician. A fast is about seeking GOD, drawing close to Him through prayer and the Word. Follow the Holy Spirit's leading.

COMPLETE FAST

This type of fast is drinking liquids only. Typically water and some type of juice.

SELECTIVE FAST

This type of fast involves removing certain food from your diet. One example of a selective fast is sometimes called, The Daniel Fast. It involves removing meat, sweets and bread. Drinking water, juice and eating fruits and vegetables.

PARTIAL FAST

This fast is sometimes called the "Jewish Fast" and involves abstaining from eating any type of food in the morning and afternoon. It can either correlate to specific times of the day such as 6:00 am to 3:00 pm or from sunup to sundown.

SOUL FAST

This fast is a great option if you do not have much experience in fasting from food or if you have health issues that prevent you from fasting from food, or if you if you desire to refocus certain areas of your life that are out of balance. For example, you might choose to stop using social media or watching television for the duration of your fast. Carefully bring those elements back into your life at the end of your fast.

I will dedicate my prayer and fasting to _____

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My Family | <input type="checkbox"/> New Direction | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual Restoration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My Marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> My Church | <input type="checkbox"/> GOD's Purpose for my life |

DAY 1 by Mike Seale

Scripture: (Matt. 9:14-17) Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" **(v.15)** Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast. **(v.16)** "No-one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. **(v.17)** *Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins.* If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved." **(NIV)**

Mediation Thought: New power cannot be given to old ways.

The Struggle with Fasting. It's never easy to start something new and stay with it. Take working out at the gym or beginning a new diet. It sounds great at first, and perhaps the first few days I'm ok. But when my mind starts thinking, "This is my new life," the new and initial attraction begins to wear quickly. Perhaps for some, you may have experienced it when you first became a Christian. It's exciting and wonderful at first, but when the first crisis hits or the devil attacks, one can lose interest in a hurry and bail out.

The idea of fasting can be similar. If it is a food fast, the first few days can be really difficult. Just convincing myself of the sensibility of a fast can be its own battle. *"Is this really necessary?" "Is a fast truly biblical?" "Does a fast lead to greater spiritual maturity?"* The challenge of the first few days may lead you to quitting. Quite often the benefit of a fast for my mind, body, soul and spirit doesn't have an immediate positive effect. The withdrawals I have from a food fast (sweets, meats, soft drinks, etc.) or a technology fast (TV, social media) can distract me from my spiritual goal. It is in this moment I pray for strength outside of myself. God's strength. The strength Jesus experienced from the Holy Spirit when he fasted for forty days. In other words, a fast is **BEYOND ME!** It is also here that I realize **new power cannot be poured into old ways.** For me to encounter God requires me to set aside old routine ways of life and practice new habits described as spiritual disciplines.

PRAYER: Father in heaven, I want to begin this New Year by seeking You first in every way. I pray that my life will be **BEYOND ME.** Help remind me, Lord, that my life is more about You and Your kingdom not my own. I give to You the first of the year by seeking You during these 21 days of prayer. I will strive to give You the first of the day by spending time in prayer and devotion to You, O Lord. I will strive to give You the first of the week by worshiping with Your people. Pour into me Your Holy Spirit that I may finish what I start. In my fast I have chosen to give up _____ and commit that time to seek You. Today I will look for you, Father GOD, in my worship, in my work and in all my ways. In Jesus I pray, Amen.

DAY 2 by Mike Seale

Scripture: (Matthew 5:6) "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. **(NASB)**

Meditation Thought: My hunger and thirst reveal my life.

Changing our hunger in life often requires tasting something or trying something different. The more we experience in life the more our hunger changes. As children we enjoy swings and slides, but as we grow older those same swings and slides are not as exciting (unless it's a gigantic water slide).

Early in our spiritual lives we love making fun crafts and singing those animated songs at VBS. But as a teenager we are "too cool" for those songs and as an adult we are too dignified (or maybe just physically unable to march, stomp, clap and turn around). As we grow older, we naturally yearn for something more and spiritually speaking, for something deeper. It is here we can lose interest in God. We stop believing that he can quench our thirst and we turn to the world and look for what it has to offer.

I will never forget my first course in Christian Apologetics, I couldn't get enough. I remember my first door knocking campaign in St. Louis, and the first mission trip abroad. Each encounter with God and his people left me with a hunger for more. In every experience God revealed himself in extraordinary ways which left me with a thirst for something bigger.

When engaged in a spiritual discipline like fasting and meditating on Scripture, we begin to slow down and once again learn that God still reveals himself in unique ways we did not expect. That is my personal hope for every member at MoSt who is willing to take this 21-day journey. The writer of Hebrews speaks of those who have *“been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit and tasted the goodness of the word of God,”* (Heb. 5:4-5). A hunger and thirst for God is **BEYOND ME**.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, fill me with a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Your word promises if I seek You first and Your kingdom, You will provide and fill me with all my needs. I pray for the Holy Spirit to create in me a hunger for You, O God. I pray I will not be distracted from this journey by the daily demands of life, work and family. I pray I will create a special time with You, Father. Help me to recognize and see Satan’s tactics and temptations to pull me away from You. Bring to my mind Your word that I might defeat the enemy and be filled with Your righteousness. I desire a hunger for you, O God. In the name of Jesus, who gave his life for me, Amen.

DAY 3 by Glenn Parnell

Scripture: (1 John 5:11-12) “And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God’s Son does not have life.” (NLT)

Meditation Thought: Whoever? You mean this is available to anybody? What do I do to get in?

Yes! You're invited! There is only one requirement. You have to partner with Jesus. That's all. Jesus is the key that allows us in to be with our Heavenly Father! When we roll with Jesus, we have a life **BEYOND ME**! If we choose not to roll with Jesus, we will not have Life!

Prayer: Lord, make me an effective communicator. Give me the words and the enthusiasm to reach my family, friends, and my community, to share this invitation with them. Lord, prepare their minds and hearts to receive Your message, and to accept Your Son and to receive eternal life! I ask this in the powerful name of Jesus. Amen!

DAY 4 by Glenn Parnell

Scripture: (John 13:24-35) “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” (NLT)

Meditation Thought: How can we have an impact on the world? Love others!

We aren't always easy to love, but Jesus has never stopped loving us! Here, the Messiah tells us the best way that we can impact the rest of the world. He tells us to love each other like He loved us, and the world will know that we belong to Him! Let's be like Jesus! To love others goes **BEYOND ME**!

Prayer: Lord, fix our eyes on You, and not on us! When we focus on You, it gives us Your focus on loving those around us, even those who are difficult to love. Your word tells us that the world will know we belong to You by the way we love each other. Lord, teach us to love others in a way that leaves no doubt that we are Yours! It's in Jesus's name that we pray. Amen!

DAY 5 by Mike Seale

Scripture: John 14:20 “When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.” (NLT)

Scripture Readings: Jer. 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24-27; John 14:17-21; 15:4-8

Meditation Thought: “Christianity is the life of God in the soul of man.” (Quote unknown) **Read 5 times!**

Packing for a trip can be stressful, especially if you are going to be gone for an extended period of time. For me, I don’t want to leave anything out that I think I might need, so I typically over pack. When packing for a mission trip, I have been told numerous times by expert travelers to pack, unpack and then repack. The purpose behind that advice is to get rid of what I don’t need and to take only the essentials. Of course this goes against my Boy Scout training and motto, “Be Prepared.” But I still have this habit of packing far more than I need.

No one knows the journey of life we are on better than God the Father and his Son, Jesus. Making sure I have all the essentials for this journey can be stressful and confusing. I find myself trying to gather more than I need. Do I have enough money? Pack more anyway. Do I have enough food? Store more anyway. But the Word of God tells me everything I need, and what I need is Him. *My packing and planning for life tends to be more concerned with what I need physically than spiritually.* I am in constant need for the Spirit to remind me, *“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you,”* (Mt. 6:33). Trust God! He knows exactly what I need for the days ahead, and what I need is His power in me.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God spoke of *“putting His Word in our minds and writing his law on our hearts.”* Ezekiel speaks of a day when God would put his Spirit in his people. John writes the words of Jesus, *“I will not leave you as orphans...so I am going to give you a Counselor, the Spirit of truth...for He will live with you and will be in you.”* Few things, if any, can bring greater peace and encouragement than knowing God the Father and his Son, Jesus, abide in me through the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Think of the promises that are tied to His indwelling presence. He will abide in me. He will not leave me. He will teach me all things. He will remind me of everything Jesus said. He will grant my requests. He will produce fruit in me. If I remain in Him, I am able to bear spiritual fruit and become all that He created me to be thereby living a life **BEYOND ME**.

PRAYER: My Father, God of Heaven and earth, it is through Your Son, Jesus, and Your Holy Spirit, that I thank you for all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. I pray for Your Holy Spirit to show me what is true. Please Lord, transform my thinking. Lead me and teach me exactly how I need to live each day for You. Because You live in me, I am alive and live for You. I thank you for the life of Jesus who brought life to me. Please teach me everything I need to know to live this life for You. It is in the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.

DAY 6 by Jered Roberts

Scripture: (I Corinthians 10:13) “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted ***beyond what you are able***, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.” (NKJV)

Meditation Thought: There is NO temptation **BEYOND ME** because Christ lives in me.

Have you ever thought there some things that are beyond your ability to overcome? We live in a society plagued with addictions. Alcohol, pornography, drugs, even social media have gripped people in a haze of thought where there’s seemingly no way out once we’re entangled in it. Some of these are taboo topics in the church and oftentimes fuel gossip and slander. Many brothers and sisters become trapped in thinking they are too far gone and beyond recovery. Fear of being ostracized or cut off from others pushes people to keep these sins hidden, secret and in a dark place. The result for some is the thinking, “God can’t reach me.”

Jesus stated, “I tell you the truth, all sin and blasphemy can be forgiven...” (Matt.12:31) but too often we doubt the ability or maybe the willingness of God to truly forgive and overcome all our sin. Does He, or can He really provide a way out? The snare of the devil winds tighter on us and our loved ones and we can feel helpless, even powerless.

God will provide a way out, but we must believe that he is both willing and able! Our need is to give Him absolute control. He takes us beyond what we think is possible. His ability to overcome is greater than ours. It’s the answer to seeing ourselves and our loved ones healed. We can all be free from the bonds and shackles that keep us in darkness.

Paul writes these words not to make us feel as though our struggles are insignificant and the same as everyone else. These words are to help us to understand the struggle is universal to us all and in that we can find comfort and strength.

We are not alone! There is someone else out there right now with the same sin problem, fighting the same battle. Let us stand together with Christ as our commanding officer and fight in prayer.

Prayer:

Father, it can oftentimes feel like we are the only ones struggling with our particular sin problem. Even more so, it can seem like we are powerless to stop sinning. Times change, but our nature does not, and we need to lean on You and Your power to fight these things. If we wish to overcome these impossible battles, we must trust You, the only one who can do the impossible. Help us to go **beyond** what we believe or expect to be possible and trust in You, the God who goes **beyond** our expectations. In Jesus name, Amen.

Day 7 by Glenn Parnell

(John 6:40) “For it is my Father’s will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day.” **(NLT)**

Meditation Thought: What is the will of the Father? To give eternal salvation to ALL who see and believe in Jesus!

God has a desire to fill His kingdom with ANYONE and EVERYONE that will believe and follow Jesus. As sons and daughters, we need to go out into the world and share that message with everyone we meet! To tell others that our God wants to share salvation with them, and He desires to have them enter His kingdom. Kingdom building is **BEYOND ME!**

Prayer: Almighty Father,

You alone are powerful and can save us from despair and destruction. You are the source of hope and assurance that we long to have. Father, we thank You for rescuing us, and for inviting us to be joined with You for eternity. We ask that You fill us with courage and lead us to share You with others. It is in Jesus name that we pray, Amen.

DAY 8 by Mike Seale

Scripture: (Deuteronomy 6:6-9) “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. **(v.7)** Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. **(v.8)** Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. **(v.9)** Write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates.” **(NIV)**

Meditation Thought: Family. It’s not about me!

My family is a constant reminder that life here is not just about me, it’s **BEYOND ME**. Paul tells us in his first letter to Timothy the qualifications for leaders in the church, are those who “*manage his own family well...*” **(I Tim. 3:4,12)**. As parents, leaders in the family, we are to “manage” our homes. The word in the biblical language indicates that God has “*set us over to preside, to superintend, to protect, to guide and provide for, to give aid, to care for and give attention to.*” Family gets me out of my own world and into the world and lives of my spouse, children and at times my extended family.

Do the needs and demands of family ever change? If they do, the change is often more demanding and requires greater sacrifice. Parents, children and spouses can all become caretakers. This is an extraordinarily demanding role any one of us can find ourselves facing. Just about the time your children leave the nest, your parents need special care. When your parents are no longer in need, your spouse may become sick and in need of special care.

My extended family may also include my church family. As a follower of Jesus, God has called me to serve and minister to his kingdom family. We will talk more about kingdom building later. With all the demands of home, family and church family, one might ask, “What about time for me?” God has called us to live in his “upside-down” kingdom in order to set us “right-side-up.” The first will be last. Give to have more. Serve and you will be great in His kingdom. Forgive the one who has wronged you, do not seek revenge. Go the extra mile and turn the other cheek. Kingdom living is **BEYOND ME**.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I confess to You that I struggle to deny myself and to put others first. Teach me, O Lord, how to be a living sacrifice for my family and for Your kingdom. Some days I lack the desire, strength and ability to surrender my life to Your will. I pray to be the spiritual leader in my family and in Your church community. Teach me how to love my wife/husband and how to better love my children. I pray for our young families at MoSt that are facing so many new trends and constant cultural changes. I pray for our families to stay close to You through the Word. Help us to “write” Your commands on the hearts of our children. Protect all of our families from the attacks of the evil one who is seeking to steal, kill and destroy. Your desire is for our families to be strong, so fill us with the strength that comes from the Holy Spirit. In Jesus we pray, Amen.

DAY 9 by Dale Stewart

Scripture: Matthew 6:33 “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (NIV)

Meditation Thought: To seek is to be active. As Christians, our goal should be to always actively seek Christ.

We know the song “Seek Ye First”. Let’s sing it now. *“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness....and all these things shall be added unto you singing Hallelu, Hallelujah”*. I love that song. Every time I hear it my mind rushes back to Camp Tahkodah, Chapel at WMCS, Youth Trips and so many more spiritual moments. I can hear the voices of my friends singing that song. I see Lyndal leading the song and his eyes closed as if he was on a direct line with Christ. What great memories!

Losses can be hard. When we lose someone, we find references to them through pictures and thoughts. These pictures and thoughts stir up memories. Tears may be shed. Laughter may bellow out, but one thing for sure is that an emotion will be stirred up when we look back on those memories. Sometimes it even feels like everywhere we go we are surrounded by those memories. Maybe that is one of the lessons from grief. We miss our loved one so much that we want to seek every chance we can to bring back those great times and great memories. We want to hear their voice, touch their hand, or just look into their eyes....ONE MORE TIME.

Today, I challenge you to seek Christ the way you would seek one more chance to be with your loved ones who have passed. Seek Christ in every part of your life. Seek Him at work. At home. At Church. At Walmart (that one can be hard). In Traffic (even harder). In turmoil. In times of peace. In times of tears. Seek CHRIST First. Before you do anything else...SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND HIS RIGHTOUSNESS.

Prayer: God, my Heavenly Father, lead me to find YOU in all aspects of my life. Lead me to seek You in all seasons of my journey. Lead me to run to You when my legs are heavy, and my breath is gone. Lead me to rest in Your arms of sanctuary so that I know YOU are my father. In Your Son’s Name...AMEN.

DAY 10 by Mike Seale

Scripture: (Psalm 127:1,3,5) “Unless the LORD builds a house, the work of the builders is useless. Unless the LORD protects a city, guarding it with sentries will do no good. (v.3) Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him. (v.5) How happy is the man whose quiver is full of them! He will not be put to shame when he confronts his accusers at the city gates.”

Meditation Thought: What am I building? Am I building with God, a spiritual home, something **BEYOND ME**? Or, am I building something else on my own?

Being a kingdom builder starts at home. Throughout my time in ministry, I have often been asked and invited to pray over someone’s home. Angela and I have prayed with couples and families as they began building their houses. Some have written Bible verses on the concrete foundation and on the wooden frames of their house. We have also prayed for GOD to remove an evil presence when a couple believed a demonic spirit to be dwelling in their home. It is here I need spiritual power **BEYOND ME!**

The writer of Psalms reminds us that our children are a gift from God. Encouraging, teaching, loving, and growing them into spiritual beings and followers of Jesus Christ can be overwhelming at times. However, when I first build my own life on God’s Word, the foundation of truth, it becomes a much easier task of nurturing my family in that same direction.

Prayer: Lord God, you are the builder of all creation. You have not only made the vast universe, but You have created humans as a reflection of Your image.

We are all your children. Thank you for reminding me of Your love for children through the life and example of your Son, Jesus. Thank you for my children, they are a gift from You, and You have put them into my care. I pray that I will train them in the way they should go and not try to re-live my life through them. Give me the strength and wisdom to allow them to make mistakes. I pray I will be just as loving and forgiving to them as You have been with me. I need You, Lord, to teach me what it means to be a spiritual parent. Help me to know how to properly discipline my children as You properly discipline those who are Your children. I plead with you to help me raise godly children. In the Name of Your One True Son Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior, Amen.

DAY 11 by Mike Seale

Scripture: (Joshua 24:14-15) “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshipped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. **(v.15)** But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, **then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve**, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. **But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.**” (NIV)

Meditation Thought: The power of a single choice.

We choose and make decisions every day. Some decisions that seem insignificant can in fact be life changing. Take the couple who recently stopped at a service station to refuel and within moments were robbed, shot and had their automobile car jacked. Perhaps I am on my way to work and choose to go one way instead of another and have a life-altering car accident. There are decisions we make every day without realizing how life-altering they can be. A decision that is seemingly inconsequential can change the whole course of our life.

The most important decision we make every day is the decision of who we serve. Will I serve God or myself? For Joshua, as a leader of his family and the nation of Israel, knew the power of choice. He declared, “For me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” Who will you choose to serve this year?

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for providing a way for me to have a relationship with You through Jesus Christ. You have empowered us with free will and to choose how we will live every day. I pray for the courage of Joshua to make

the decision to follow You and serve You all the days of my life. I declare this for myself and for my family. I pray this prayer of declaration in Jesus’ name, Amen.

DAY 12 by Mike Seale

Scripture: (Exodus 18:21-22) “But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. **(v.22)** Have them serve as judges for the people at all times but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. **That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you.**” (NIV)

Meditation Thought: God never designed the kingdom to be a one man show, but rather a shared responsibility in its leadership and in its growth.

Kingdom building and kingdom work can be exhausting at times, both physically and emotionally. It is interesting to note from the very beginning God created man to share in His glory, His image and His likeness, and in the governing of His creation. **Psalms 115:16** “*The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to man.*” It wasn’t as if God needed help, but rather He created mankind with the desired intent to share in ruling creation. In **Psalms 8:6** the Scripture reads, “*You have made him (mankind) ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet.*” I can get tired just thinking about that kind of responsibility.

Moses needed Aaron, Joshua, Caleb and other leaders to help him rule over the people of God. David had a prophet and “mighty men” to assist him. Jesus invited the twelve to work along side him during his earthly ministry. Elders have deacons, teachers and ministry leaders to help them in leading and strengthening God’s people. Kingdom building is **BEYOND ME!**

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have created us to rule over Your creation and to be leaders and servants in Your kingdom, the church. We pray for Your wisdom to be with our shepherds who watch over our souls. We pray that we will recognize our need to come along beside them and serve with them as we build up Your kingdom. We pray for our shepherds and their wives as they serve in a leadership capacity. We lift up their names before You and ask You to bless Lyndal and Loretta, Rick and Kim, David and Winkie, Dennie and Lou, and Dexter and Teresa.

We thank You they have selected capable deacons, men who exhibit the gifts and talents You have blessed them with to serve our church family at MoSt. We pray for our deacons to serve faithfully and to stand beside our elders and support them as they lead us to “still waters and green pastures.” We pray Father God, that You will inspire our leaders and give them a vision for the future of our church in this community. Lord God, we confess this work is **BEYOND** them, so we pray they will continue to rely on You. We pray this prayer for them in the name of Jesus, Amen.

DAY 13 by Mike Seale

Scripture: (Acts 6:3-4) "Now look around among yourselves, brothers, and select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. We will put them in charge of this business. **(v.4)** Then we can spend our time in prayer and preaching and teaching the word."

Meditation Thought: Everyone has a place in the kingdom. What role do you fill?

The early church must have been one of the most exciting times to live in as a believer. Watching three thousand on a single day being baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit. Watching ordinary men like Peter and John curing a cripple in the name of Jesus and courageously standing up against the religious leaders of their day. When they prayed **(Acts 4:31)** the place was shaken. The Spirit was coming into the lives of men and women, young and old. Truly an extraordinary time. The kingdom of God had finally arrived!

But the church was not without problems. In Acts 6 the Grecian widows were being overlooked in the distribution of food. So men were selected to take care of this ministry, but not just any one was chosen. Godly men, men of respect and men who were “*full of the Holy Spirit.*” You might think distributing food would not require such a high standard of godliness, but the Scriptures don’t lie. Perhaps we have not viewed kingdom work as a high honor, but that was not so in the early church. They sought out those who were serious about kingdom living!

Prayer: Lord God, fill our hearts with a passion to be servants in Your kingdom, to seek first Your kingdom and Your righteousness. We are a church that cares for those who are in need. We confess that we have not been perfect in caring for those who are hurting, so we ask you to open our eyes to see those you put before us. Forgive us for not seeing the seriousness of kingdom living. You have called us to be holy, to be the righteousness of Christ in our world. We pray for our church family to be people who desire to be holy. As Peter wrote, “*Just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written, ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’*” **(I Peter 1:15-16)**. Help me as I surrender my life more and more to the shaping of the Holy Spirit as He creates me to be more like Jesus. It is through Christ Jesus I pray, Amen.

DAY 14 by Mike Seale

Scripture: (Daniel 9:3) “So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.”

Meditation Thought: How bad does it have to get before I get on my knees and pray? It’s time to stand in the gap for our nation!

We have all heard the phrase, “desperate times call for desperate measures.” It was a time of captivity for the people of God, the nation of Israel. Daniel had received from the Scriptures the word the Lord had spoken to Jeremiah about the length and time of their captivity in Babylon. Daniel did not passively wait for the fulfillment to happen, he knew the great importance of being involved in prayer. If you have not read the prayer Daniel prayed in chapter nine, please take a few minutes to read and reflect on the words of his prayer **(Daniel 9:4-19)**. There is confession of sin, not only for himself but for the nation of Israel and even their fathers who ignored the messages of the prophets. Daniel proclaims in his prayer that the Lord God is merciful even though they have not sought God’s favor.

There are times in Scripture that we can see almost an exact parallel to what was happening in a biblical time period and what is happening in our present time. While we may not be under the captivity of another nation, we are under the captivity of all kinds of sin, addictions and idolatry. As Daniel prayed, “our sins and iniquities of our fathers have made Jerusalem and your people the object of scorn to all those around us,” our prayer should be the same.

Our beloved nation, America, has become a nation filled with unrighteousness. We have moved far away from God. Even the people of God, who are called, “Christ followers,” have become the object of scorn. Hypocrisy characterizes many of God’s people. One foot in the world and one foot in the kingdom of God. Christians have been influenced by culture instead of being cultural influencers. What is the answer? Repentance. Prayer. Seeking God’s grace and forgiveness. Becoming kingdom builders and living kingdom lives.

Prayer: Holy Father, You alone are God. Today I pray as Daniel prayed. We too have “*sinned and rebelled*”. We have turned away from Your Holy Word and no longer think spiritual thoughts but are consumed by worldly and cultural thinking. The leaders of our nation have turned from following You. Greed and personal agendas have filled the hearts and minds of our leaders and in many ways, we have followed in their footsteps. We have relied on money, success and education rather than Your faithfulness and promise to care for all of our needs. We have trusted in the medical profession more than You to fix our hurts, pains and emotional needs instead of turning to Your Word to guide us and lead us to spiritual and emotional health. Today I confess my sins and repent. I turn away from trusting the world and I turn to trusting You. Today I confess my allegiance to the kingdom of God and to kingdom living. I ask, Father God, to give me Your Holy Spirit. Fill me with the Holy Spirit. Today I will listen to the Holy Spirit as he guides me with the truth of Your Holy Word. I thank You and praise You, O God, for being faithful, forgiving and merciful. Bless me Lord with a renewed heart. In the mighty name of Jesus I pray, Amen.

DAY 15 by Mike Seale

Scripture: (Nehemiah 1:4) When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.”

Meditation Thought: The first step in rebuilding is getting right with God.

We constantly hear terrible news in the media. I sometimes wonder if my heart has become hardened to hearing about these crimes. The evil of war, murder, theft, embezzlement and other horrific crimes have become such a common place in our world that we can get to a point where we are no longer moved to compassionate tears.

Nehemiah, a lowly cupbearer to the great king, Artaxerxes, wept when he heard the news of how the wall of Jerusalem had been broken down and its gates burned with fire. Not only did Nehemiah weep, but it moved him to spend “*days mourning, fasting and praying before the God of heaven.*” What moves you to tears? It is the sinful condition of our nation? Is it family member? Is it a spouse? A Child? Is it a friend whose life has been destroyed by divorce, or drugs or alcohol?

The reason the wall of Jerusalem has been destroyed and the gates burned with fire is because the people of God turned away from following his commands and his ways of righteousness. How much of our nation and people we love have been destroyed by the very same?

The wonderful news comes when Nehemiah seeks forgiveness and restoration from heaven and turns his attention to rebuilding what has been destroyed. God’s wonderful grace and favor came to rest on Nehemiah as he took on the task of rebuilding the walls and the gates of the city of Jerusalem. In fact, he did it in record time, in fifty-two days (**Neh. 5:15**). Nehemiah recognized this work was **BEYOND** him, so he committed himself to prayer and fasting and relied on the power and resources of God.

Prayer: (Read the prayer of Nehemiah 1:5-11) Heavenly Father, we want to build up Your kingdom in our city. Satan has been and is constantly tearing down the kingdom work in our city. Today, Father, we seek Your forgiveness and restoration for the great task before us. It is Your desire, Father God, that all people to come to repentance (**2 Peter 3:9**) and be saved (**I Tim. 2:4**). We acknowledge Your greatness and power, Heavenly Father, and we are thankful that You are not restricted by human limitations. As Nehemiah faced opposition in his work, we pray that we will trust and rely on You as we face opposition in our work for Your kingdom. This work is **BEYOND ME**. So, I will trust in You and Your provisions. In name of Jesus, we ask and pray, Amen.

DAY 16 by Caleb Seale

Scripture: Matthew 7:26 – “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.” (**NRSV**)

Meditation Thought: Sacrificing selfish gain results in selfless growth.

A few years ago, future Hall of Fame basketball legend LeBron James was asked by his oldest son to give a pre-game speech to his high school basketball team. Here is what LeBron said: *“Some of the best basketball players who ever played spent most of their time on the bench. Teams can’t win championships without guys who come off the bench. Does that mean they’re not good at basketball? They can’t be respected or seen as good basketball players because they come off the bench? No. They knew what role they needed to play. If you don’t want to put aside selfish reasons for the team and take a role, then go play tennis or golf. Then you can’t blame someone else.”*

We have all been called by God to do amazing things for His Kingdom here on earth. Everyone has been given a talent and gift to use. Some of the things we are called to do puts us in an uncomfortable position we aren’t accustomed to. We may feel slighted or overlooked when it comes to serving others. Learning to accept that the spotlight or attention may waver from us towards someone else can actually be a blessing. “Coming off the bench” doesn’t mean our role is less important or only there if someone needs it. It means what we do is best used in specific ways. If your gift is the gift of discernment, it is uncommon to find someone on stage using that gift in front of hundreds or thousands. Discernment is more one on one.

Selfish pursuits in life only advance us in the world and harms us in our faith. We lose track of what we should be doing, and end up doing what we want to do, not what we need to do. We can’t grow as a community, church family, or individually if we serve with a “want for something” in return attitude. We each have a role given by God to serve others in His name. Serving others is **BEYOND ME**.

Prayer: Father, I pray that my gifts and talents do not fall on selfish reasoning. I pray for an attitude of serving that puts aside all my selfish ambitions and opens my heart to seek only YOU. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

DAY 17 by Caleb Seale

Scripture: Luke 9:13 - But Jesus said, “You feed them.” “But we have only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered. “Or are you expecting us to go and buy enough food for this whole crowd?” **(NLT)**

Meditation thought: God can take what I have in front of me to do amazing things.

One of my favorite stories involving disciples is found in **John 21**. Several disciples go out in their boat to fish in the morning. They fished all morning but didn’t catch a single thing. Jesus, from the shore, called out and asked if they had caught anything. They replied with, “No.” Jesus then tells them to throw their net on the other side of the boat, and sure enough, so many fish were caught that they couldn’t haul the net into the boat.

What I love about this story is the two big things we can pull from it. The first being Jesus makes something out of nothing. Jesus took a full morning of catching nothing and turned it into so much being caught that the boat couldn’t handle it. It is the same as the five loaves and two fish! The second, how simple the action was that Jesus asked them to perform. Jesus didn’t use a grand spectacle or attention-grabbing wonder. He didn’t ask the disciples in the boat to do something they couldn’t do, or to do a million things. He only asked them to drop their nets on the other side.

Not getting results for something you need is brutal. The waiting, the anxiousness, and the desperate wishing for time to go by. It certainly doesn’t help when someone comes along and tells you to try it in a different way. I can only imagine this is how the disciples felt when an unknown man from a distance told them to try fishing in a different spot. But what happened was unmistakable. Scripture says in **John 21:7** that immediately, one of the disciples knew that the man on the shore was Jesus.

In our life, we are no different from the disciples. We struggle day in and day out trying to get things right in the most mundane situations. For some odd reason, it doesn’t always work out to our benefit. But in that frustration and doubt, Jesus is there telling us the same thing: “I’m not asking you to do everything. I’m not asking you to do something you can’t do. I’m asking you to trust me.” What we have in front of us can be used by God to do incredible things.

Prayer: Father God, I lift up what I have that it may only be used for Your Kingdom. I pray for an earnest and confident faith in what You can do with what I have to offer You. Take what I can give and multiply it in Your Name. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

DAY 18 by Caleb Seale

Scripture: Matthew 28:19 - Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Meditation Thought: I don't need to make plans for myself. God has called me to GO!

One of my favorite memories of high school happened in a football game. On a fourth down, the other team lined up to punt the ball. My best friend went right through all the blockers, right up the middle of the punt formation, and ended up blocking the punt that bounced off the ground and right into my hands. Easy touchdown to put us up 24-0.

After the game, my friend and I were joking about how I stole a touchdown that really belonged to him. I asked him how he got to the punter so quickly, and he replied, "When they snapped the ball, all the blockers went for someone else. It was wide open. All I thought was, GO!"

The idea of just "going" is ludicrous. To step out and go for things without any sort of real plan feels doomed from the start. "*Those who fail to prepare are only prepared to fail*" is how the saying goes. But with Jesus, and with everything else in life, it's just different. One of the commands given to us by Jesus was to "GO" and make disciples. That was His command: "GO." We can't come up with a plan that exceeds God's plan. We can't create a tactic or approach that is better than what God has given. We can't compete with God in any way. But we can trust Him.

As disciple makers of Jesus, our mission is to "GO." Paul immediately started to "GO" after his transformation to Damascus. The apostles began to "GO" after Jesus' ascension. When they knew what their mission was, they knew they had to "GO." We have been commanded to love God, love others, and to continue building the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Prayer: Father God, silence my doubts and fears about going where I am called. I pray for the urgency and the passion to continue to "GO" as the apostles did, and to further Your Kingdom on this earth. I pray for Your guidance to lead me where I am called to "GO," and to be the disciple that I am needed to be. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

DAY 19 by Mike Seale

Scripture: (Luke 10:1) "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and every place he was about to go." (NIV)

Meditation Thought: Discipleship is a shared ministry.

There are some sports that are designed to be played individually. Tennis, ping pong, golf, bowling and pickleball to name a few. But even those sports have coaches, caddies and others who support the player. So, we might say even those sports might be played individually there are others who help the player succeed. But most of our favorite sports are team sports where players rely not only on themselves but on others as well.

When we look at the 12 disciples, we notice they came from different walks of life and had different talents and abilities. Fishermen, a tax-collector and a zealot were among the disciples. Jesus knew the power of two and the power of a talented team. Paul writes of the many spiritual gifts the Corinthian church possessed. He says, "Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed," (I Cor. 1:7).

It is important for us to know and realize God never intended the church to be a "one-man show." It takes every single member to be a part of the discipleship team.

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for our wonderful church family at Missouri Street. You have blessed us with so many gifted and talented people. Help us to remember we are a team and that we can rely on one another. May your Holy Spirit create in us a spirit of unity as we go make disciples. In Jesus I pray, Amen.

DAY 20 by Phillip Cooley

Scripture: (Matt. 28:18-20) Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **(v.19)** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **(v.20)** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." **(NIV)**

Meditation Thought: Jesus doesn't just send us out, he trains us first to be disciples, and to be disciple-makers.

It's personal. When we first meet someone, getting to know them is extremely important. Getting to know someone in their life helps me to know how to teach them. Sometimes we must be vulnerable. It's not just about what we know! Being vulnerable means letting others know about our failures and our own struggles with sin. When we do this, it lets them see they are not alone in their walk in this life.

We are all familiar with the phrase, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." For me personally, its disciples showing up to visit me when it's inconvenient, because I know how busy most people are in their lives. It is also knowing that I or my wife Emily can call you in the middle of the night. To me, that shows who you really are as a disciple. To be a disciple-maker first means being a disciple myself.

Prayer: Lord, help me daily to submit to the discipling of your Son Jesus in my own life. Teach me how to teach others, because if I am unwilling to learn and listen, then others will not learn and listen to me. Send me to the people you want me to disciple. Let me see others through your eyes so that I may see what you see. Give me your heart, O God, and teach me to love others as you love. We ask this and receive this in your precious Son's name, Amen.

DAY 21 by Mike Seale

Scripture: (Matt. 9:36-38) When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. **(v.37)** Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. **(v.38)** Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Meditation Thought: God needs our prayers.

The meditation thought might sound unusual, especially coming from someone who has preached **Acts 17: 25** "*God is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything...*" So perhaps I should rephrase the meditation thought. But think of it this way, aren't we supposed to pray for "His kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven? **(Matt. 6:10)**. Didn't Jesus tell us to "ask" for our daily bread **(Matt. 6:11)** even though our Father knows our needs before we ask? And doesn't Jesus tell in **(Matt. 9:36-38)** to ask for laborers to be sent to gather the harvest, even though the Lord of harvest wants that more than we do? And didn't Paul say, "Pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified **(2 Thess. 3:1)**. Wasn't that what God was planning already to do? Paul asked the church at Colossae to pray for an open door to proclaim the mystery of Christ and pray for him to proclaim it clearly? **(Col. 4:2-4)**. **If these are all a part of God's will, why am I supposed to pray for them?**

Maybe we have forgotten or were not taught well about the partnership God has made with us in teaching the gospel to the whole world. When we look at this passage in Matthew 9, we are reminded of one of the great characteristics of God the Father and Jesus his Son. The way God sees people and the way we see people.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day saw these as ordinary men and women quite differently than Jesus did. They saw them as "chaff" to be destroyed and burned up. Jesus saw them as a harvest to be gathered in and saved. The religious leaders looked with pride and saw them as sinners to be destroyed. Jesus looked with love and saw them as helpless and died for their sins to save them. How do you see the lost in our world today?

Prayer: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your great and Holy Name. There is no other, You are the One True God. We join ourselves with Your desire to seek and save the lost. You have chosen us to be a part of Your plan to tell others about the good news that saves, Jesus Christ your Son. Help us to have eyes to see the "*fields are ripe for harvest,*" **(John 4:35)**. Thank you, God, for never giving up on me. Thank you for pursuing after me even when I was running away from You. I pray I will pursue the lost as You have pursued me. In Jesus I pray, Amen.