



Back to Christian Basics: A 40-Day Lent Devotional

Dr. Rickey McCray

Happy Lenten Season

Start: Wednesday, March 5th (Ash Wednesday)

End: Sunday, April 13th (Palm Sunday)

"Back to Christian Basics" is a 40-day devotional designed to help individuals reconnect with the fundamental principles of their faith. Through daily scripture readings and reflective insights, this guide explores core beliefs like grace, love, forgiveness, and prayer. Each day's focus deepens our understanding of God's character and God's desire for a relationship with us. Ideal for newcomers or those looking to refresh their spiritual journey, this devotional offers a pathway to rediscover the heart of Christianity.

What is Lent?

Lent, spanning six weeks leading to Easter, is a powerful time for reflection and preparation. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, it invites us to connect deeply with the essence of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Traditionally marked by fasting and sacrifice, Lent challenges us to forgo comforts like sugar, coffee, or even extra spending, symbolizing our desire to draw closer to God.

Beyond abstinence, this season encourages us to enrich our spiritual lives through prayer, meditation, and acts of service. By embracing these practices, we honor the self-denial of Jesus and prepare our hearts for the joy of resurrection on Easter Sunday. Let Lent be a transformative journey guiding us to spiritual renewal and a deeper connection with the divine.

Lenten Journey: A Call to Action

1. Repent and Seek Forgiveness: Pray for God's guidance in identifying areas for repentance. Embrace forgiveness and renewal.
2. Commit to Fasting: Decide what you will fast from during Lent to enhance your spiritual focus.

3. **Serve Others:** Identify specific ways to serve those in need, showing compassion and generosity.
4. **Enhance Spiritual Practices:** Choose additional spiritual disciplines to deepen your relationship with Christ, such as prayer or scripture study.
5. **Start Each Day with Intentional Prayer:** Pray for God to open your eyes, ears, mind, and heart. Read and reflect on the scriptures, seeking understanding and application throughout your day.
6. **Reflect and Engage:** Consider how God's view of you shapes your interactions with others. Let this insight guide your daily actions.

Embrace Lent as a time for growth, reflection, and service, drawing closer to Christ in all you do.

A Financial Framework for Freedom

by Aimee Laramore

As we embark upon the 3rd month of the year, the first quarter of 2025 is almost complete. The energy and excitement for the new year have been met with the increasing reality of an unknown world. For many of us, new goals and a vision for the future have included ideas about earning power and a desire to increase savings, reduce debt, or plan for a major purchase or need in the future. Lent provides a renewed opportunity to align our financial matters with God's word before the year gets far from reach. God's promises reign in the world we live in.

Research shows consumer confidence fell sharply in February, marking the most significant decline since August 2021. In our day-to-day lives, you may have experienced the increase in the cost of eggs or the uncertainty of the job market, or you may be observing the daily discourse about proposed tariffs, massive layoffs, and the daily assault on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The federal government's actions and the reduction of the federal workforce inevitably have lingering implications for the working and middle class, in addition to every at-risk population. The Lenten season offers an opportunity to listen to God's call regarding the use of your finances, intentionally plan for the future, and generously invest in meaningful giving experiences.

What is possible in 40 days?

You can renew your mindset toward how you handle your finances by approaching Lent as a season of reflection, restoration, and renewal. Decide to embrace a financial fast, allowing you to review your spending habits and save money while seeking God's direction on your next steps. Start where you are. The discipline of controlling your spending, tracking your habits, thinking about the future, and setting aside resources can give birth to new opportunities.

Do you have the financial freedom to do what God calls you to do?

- 1.) Track your daily spending for every purchase, subscription, impulse purchase, and choice.
- 2.) Identify all of your financial obligations by putting all of your income and expense information in one place for your review.
- 3.) Determine a financial fasting approach that you will embrace. In the next 40 days, stop doing what you have always done and be open to something new. Choose one day a week, one full week, or all 40 days to refrain from any unnecessary purchases.
- 4.) Seek God's direction about increasing income, expanding earning power, launching a new idea, and your next move in life.
- 5.) Establish an accountability partner to remind you to seek God in every financial move, pray about your financial goals, and resist the urge to spend unnecessarily.
- 6.) Give consistently. Take this season to invest in the lives of others. Each day, explore how to trust God this season to ensure your giving is more significant than your spending.

Thoughtful stewardship begins with awareness. Through financial fasting, you are exercising discipline in your spending habits, saving money, controlling your debt, and renewing your mindset toward how you handle your finances. Let us enter this season open to God's direction and attentive to God's plans for our lives.

Day 1: Understanding the Bible

****Scripture:****

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” — 2 Timothy 3:16 (NRSV)

****Reflection:****

The Bible is more than just a book; it is the inspired Word of God. This scripture highlights its purpose: to teach us, correct us, and guide us toward a life that reflects God's righteousness. It's been written through various authors over centuries, yet its message remains unified. As new Christians, recognizing the Bible's divine inspiration invites us to approach it with reverence and an open heart.

****Activity:****

Take some time today to explore a Bible that feels comfortable for you—whether it's a physical copy or an app. Look for different translations and choose one to read, considering how the wording may affect your understanding. Spend a few minutes in prayer, asking God to reveal His truth to you through His Word. Then, read Mark 1:1-15 and jot down your initial thoughts or questions about what you've read.

Day 2: The Bible as Our Guide

****Scripture:****

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” — Psalm 119:105 (NIV)

****Reflection:****

The Bible serves as a guide for our lives, illuminating our paths and showing us how to navigate challenges. Just as a lamp provides light in the darkness, the Word of God reveals the right direction for our choices and decisions. For new Christians, making the Bible a part of our daily lives helps us grow in faith and understand God's character. It encourages us to seek wisdom and discernment through its teachings.

****Activity:****

Spend time meditating on Psalm 119:105 today. Find a quiet place to reflect and think about a decision or challenge you are facing. Write it down in a journal, and beside it, list a few verses or principles from the Bible that provide guidance for your situation. Conclude with a prayer asking God for wisdom and clarity regarding the path you should take. Consider sharing what you've learned with a friend or fellow believer.

Day 3: The Nature of God

****Scripture:****

“God is love, and anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”
— 1 John 4:8 (NLT)

****Reflection:****

Understanding who God is begins with the realization that at His core, God is love. This love is not just an emotion; it is an active force that seeks our highest good. It is unconditional, sacrificial, and transformative. For new Christians, grasping God’s nature as love helps us comprehend His actions throughout the Bible and in our lives. It encourages us to reflect that love in our relationships with others and reminds us that we are valued and cherished by Him.

****Activity:****

Take a few moments today to reflect on what God's love means to you personally. Write down three specific ways you have experienced God's love in your life. Next, think of someone you can show love to today, whether through a kind word, a small act of service, or a prayer for them. Commit to taking that action and see how reflecting God's love impacts both you and the other person.

Day 4: God as Our Protector

****Scripture:****

“The Lord is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” — Psalm 91:2 (NIV)

****Reflection:****

God is not only loving, but He is also our protector. He offers us refuge in times of trouble and guides us through life’s storms. As new Christians, trusting in God's protection can bring peace and assurance amidst uncertainty. Knowing that He is a fortress means we can lean into Him, especially when facing fear or doubt. This trust fosters a deeper relationship with God, as we learn to rely on Him through life’s challenges.

****Activity:****

Spend some time today meditating on Psalm 91:2. Find a quiet space where you can reflect on the areas of your life where you need God's protection and guidance. Write down any fears or challenges you're currently facing, then turn them into prayers asking God to be your refuge. Finally, take a moment to thank Him for His promises of protection and presence in your life. You might also consider sharing this insight with a friend who needs encouragement, highlighting how God's protection has been evident in your own journey.

Day 5: Jesus as Our Savior

****Scripture:****

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” — John 3:16 (NIV)

****Reflection:****

Understanding who Jesus is begins with recognizing Him as our Savior. This scripture highlights the incredible depth of God's love for humanity; He sent His Son to offer us redemption and eternal life. For new Christians, this means that no matter our past or the mistakes we've made, through Jesus, we have the opportunity for forgiveness and a fresh start. Embracing Jesus as our Savior is the foundation of our faith, reminding us that we are deeply loved and valued.

****Activity:****

Take a moment today to reflect on the significance of Jesus' sacrifice. Write down a prayer of gratitude for the love and grace you have received through Him. Consider also jotting down one way you can share your understanding of Jesus as Savior with someone in your life. This might be through a conversation, sharing your testimony, or inviting them to church.

Day 6: Jesus as Our Friend

****Scripture:****

“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.” — John 15:15 (NIV)

****Reflection:****

Jesus desires a personal relationship with each of us, and He invites us to see Him as our friend. This verse illustrates that as followers of Christ, we are part of something intimate and profound. Jesus shares His heart and purpose with us, guiding us as we navigate life. For new Christians, understanding Jesus as a friend can transform how we relate to Him, inviting us into an open dialogue filled with trust and love. It encourages us to bring our hopes, fears, and dreams to Him.

****Activity:****

Spend some quiet time today in prayer, talking to Jesus as you would with a close friend. Share your thoughts and feelings, and listen for His guidance. You might also choose to write a letter to Jesus, expressing your feelings about your relationship with Him and what being His friend means to you. To deepen this friendship, consider reaching out to a fellow believer for mutual encouragement and support, fostering connection in your faith journey.

Day 7: Understanding Sin

****Scripture:****

Romans 3:23 (NIV)

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

****Reflection:****

Today, we start by acknowledging the concept of sin. The Bible teaches that everyone falls short of God's perfect standard. Sin separates us from God and disrupts our relationship with Him and others. It can take many forms, including thoughts, actions, and behaviors that go against God's commandments. Understanding our own sinfulness is the first step toward recognizing our need for God's grace. Reflect on the areas in your life where you struggle and how that affects your relationship with God and others around you.

****Activity:****

Take some time to sit in a quiet space and pray. Ask God to reveal to you any specific areas in your life where you may have fallen short. Write down your thoughts in a journal. This isn't to condemn you but to help you grow in awareness of your need for forgiveness and grace. Consider sharing your journal entries with a trusted friend or mentor when you feel comfortable—this can aid in accountability and growth.

Day 8: The Grace of Forgiveness

****Scripture:****

1 John 1:9 (NIV)

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

****Reflection:****

Yesterday we looked at the reality of sin; today, we focus on the incredible grace of God that offers us forgiveness. This scripture reminds us that when we take the step to confess our sins—acknowledging our failures to God—He is faithful to forgive us and cleanse us. This grace is a beautiful gift we do not earn, but it transforms us and restores our relationship with God. Reflect on the weight of forgiveness in your life and how it can empower you to live differently, free from guilt and shame.

****Activity:****

Spend some time in prayer again, confessing your sins to God. Be honest about what you've written in your journal from Day 1. After confessing, thank God for His forgiveness and grace. To visualize His grace, consider creating a "forgiveness jar." Write down things you want to let go of or be forgiven for on pieces of paper, and place them in the jar as a symbolic act of releasing them to God. Each time you see the jar, remember that you are forgiven and free to live in His grace.

Day 9: Understanding Salvation

****Scripture:****

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

****Reflection:****

Today, we begin to explore the profound gift of salvation. This scripture highlights that salvation is not something we can earn; it is a gracious gift from God. It is through faith in Jesus Christ that we are saved, and this faith leads us to a transformed life. Salvation restores our relationship with God, offering hope and new beginnings. Reflect on the significance of grace in your life—think about what it means to you to be saved, and how this understanding shapes your identity as a follower of Christ.

****Activity:****

Find a quiet place where you can reflect. Take some time to pray and express your gratitude to God for the gift of salvation. Write in your journal about what this gift means to you personally. Consider creating a visual reminder of your salvation—perhaps a cross or a simple drawing that represents your faith journey. Place it somewhere you will see it often as a reminder of God’s grace in your life.

Day 10: Living in the Light of Salvation

****Scripture:****

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

****Reflection:****

As we continue to explore salvation, today we focus on what it means to live as a new creation. Accepting Christ not only saves us but also transforms us. It signifies a fresh start, where old habits and ways of thinking begin to pass away, and new patterns emerge in our lives. Reflect on the changes you are beginning to notice in yourself. What old habits or mindsets do you feel God is prompting you to let go of? What new attributes or actions are you being called to embrace?

****Activity:****

Reflect on the transformations you want to see in your life as a new creation. Write down specific areas where you feel God is leading you to change or grow. Spend time in prayer, asking God for the strength and guidance to make these changes. To symbolize this transformation, consider making a "Renewal List" where you list new habits or spiritual practices you would like to incorporate into your routine. Keep this list somewhere accessible, and revisit it regularly to encourage your growth in faith.

Day 11: The Significance of Baptism

****Scripture:****

Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

"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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

****Reflection:****

Today, we delve into the significance of baptism. In this passage, Jesus commissions His disciples to baptize, highlighting that baptism is an essential step in the journey of faith. It symbolizes obedience to Christ and publicly declares our commitment to follow Him. Through baptism, we identify with Jesus' death and resurrection, signifying that we are beginning new life in Him. As a new Christian, reflect on your own desire for baptism. What does this act mean to you? How does it symbolize your commitment to following Christ?

****Activity:****

Take a moment to journal your thoughts about baptism. Write down what inspires you about this act and what it symbolizes in your faith journey. Additionally, if you have not been baptized yet, consider reaching out to your pastor or a church leader to learn more about the process and its significance. If you have been baptized, think of a way to celebrate that moment—perhaps sharing your story with a friend or writing about your experience in your journal.

Day 12: The Transforming Power of Baptism****Scripture:****

Romans 6:4 (NIV)

"We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

****Reflection:****

As we continue to explore baptism, today we focus on the transforming power it holds. This scripture illustrates that through baptism, we are not just publicly declaring our faith; we are participating in the death and resurrection of Jesus. It signifies that the old self is gone, and we are raised to live a new life. Reflect on the changes you wish to see in your life as a result of your faith in Jesus. What old habits, thoughts, or fears do you want to leave behind? What new ways of living or thinking is God calling you to embrace?

****Activity:****

Spend time in prayer, inviting God to help you recognize areas in your life that need transformation. Write down a list of old habits or mindsets you want to let go of, as well as new practices or attributes you want to cultivate. Consider creating a "Baptismal

Prayer” where you ask God to empower you to live out your new life in Christ. Keep this prayer somewhere visible as a reminder of your commitment and the transformation God is working in you through the act of baptism.

Day 13: The Power of Prayer

****Scripture:****

Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

****Reflection:****

Today, we reflect on the incredible power of prayer. In this passage, Paul encourages us to bring every concern and request to God. Prayer is not just about asking for things; it's about deepening our relationship with Him. It provides us with a safe space to express our fears, hopes, and gratitude. As a new Christian, think about what prayer means to you. How can it be a refuge during times of distress? In what ways has God answered your prayers or provided peace in your heart?

****Activity:****

Set aside a few moments today to write a prayer for the things that weigh on your heart. Begin with gratitude, acknowledging what you're thankful for in your life. Then, list your requests, big and small. Lastly, take a moment to thank God for His listening ear and for His promise of peace. You might also consider starting a prayer journal where you can keep track of your prayers and the ways you see God at work in your life.

Day 14: Listening in Prayer

****Scripture:****

Psalms 46:10 (NIV)

"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

****Reflection:****

Today, we focus on the importance of listening in prayer. Often, we think of prayer as a monologue, but it's also a dialogue. Psalm 46:10 calls us to be still and recognize God's

presence. It invites us to take time away from the busyness of life to hear what God has to say. In your Christian journey, consider how you can create space for listening. What might God be revealing to you in the stillness? How can you cultivate a heart that is receptive to His voice?

****Activity:****

Find a quiet spot where you can be alone and undistracted. Spend five to ten minutes in silence, focusing on your breathing and inviting God's presence. After this time, write down any thoughts, impressions, or scriptures that come to mind. This practice of listening can be a powerful way to deepen your prayer life. Consider making it a regular part of your routine, where you intentionally set aside time for both speaking and listening to God.

Day 15: Understanding Faith

****Scripture:****

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

****Reflection:****

Today, we begin to unpack the concept of faith. This passage from Hebrews teaches us that faith is not just a feeling but a confident trust in God and His promises, even when we cannot see the outcome. As a new Christian, consider what faith means to you. Reflect on the hopes and beliefs you hold onto as you begin this journey. How does trusting in God change your perspective on life's challenges? Remember that faith is often built through experiences and the steps we take, even when the path is unclear.

****Activity:****

Take some time today to write down a list of things you are trusting God for in your life. Include both big and small items. Under each one, jot down how you can show faith in action. For example, if you're praying for a friend, perhaps you could reach out to offer support. Prayerfully consider each item as you look to grow in your trust and belief in God's plans for you.

Day 16: The Role of Faith in Our Lives

****Scripture:****

2 Corinthians 5:7 (NIV)

"For we live by faith, not by sight."

****Reflection:****

Today, we reflect on living by faith rather than by sight. It can be easy to rely on our own understanding and what we can see around us. This scripture invites us to embrace faith as our guiding principle, which can lead to a life rich with purpose and direction. As you navigate your new journey as a Christian, think about areas in your life where you find it challenging to live by faith. How can you trust God more deeply in these situations? Remember, faith can lead to incredible transformation, even when circumstances seem uncertain.

****Activity:****

Choose a specific area of your life where you feel tempted to rely solely on your own sight or understanding. Spend some quiet time in prayer, asking God to help you see things through the lens of faith. Write down any thoughts or feelings that arise during this time. Consider sharing this with a friend or mentor who can support you as you take steps to live by faith in this area.

Day 17: Growing in Faith

****Scripture:****

Romans 10:17 (NIV)

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ."

****Reflection:****

As we conclude our devotional on faith, we reflect on the importance of God's Word in growing our faith. This scripture emphasizes that faith is cultivated through hearing and understanding the message of Christ. As you grow in your new faith, make a commitment to engage with Scripture regularly. How can immersing yourself in God's Word strengthen your understanding and trust in Him? Consider the ways God has spoken to you through His Word in the past and how you can seek that guidance in the future.

****Activity:****

Set aside a specific time each day this week to read and meditate on the Bible. Choose a passage that speaks to you—perhaps from the Gospels or a Psalm. After reading,

take some time to write down what God is revealing to you and how it relates to your journey of faith. You might also think about sharing these insights with someone else to encourage them in their own walk with Christ.

Day 18: The Promise of Eternal Life

****Scripture:****

John 3:16 (NIV)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

****Reflection:****

As we reflect on what happens when we die, we begin with the beautiful promise of eternal life. This verse reminds us that through Jesus' sacrifice, we are offered the gift of forever with Him. In your new faith journey, consider what it means to you to have this promise. How does knowing that eternal life awaits you impact the way you live today? Take comfort in the idea that physical death is not the end, but a transition into a new and everlasting life.

****Activity:****

Spend some time in prayer thanking God for the gift of eternal life. Write a letter to yourself describing what eternal life means to you. Include your hopes and questions about this promise. Seal the letter and keep it somewhere safe to revisit later, especially during times of doubt or fear.

Day 19: Hope in the Resurrection

****Scripture:****

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 (NIV)

"Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him."

****Reflection:****

As we conclude our devotional, we focus on the hope offered through the resurrection of Jesus. This passage reassures us that death is not the end and that we have a

glorious future waiting for us. It invites us to see death through the lens of hope rather than despair. Reflect on how this hope transforms the way you view life and relationships. How might it encourage you to share your faith with others, especially those who may be fearful of death?

****Activity:****

Think of someone in your life who might feel anxious or uncertain about death. Write them a note or a message to share the hope you have in Jesus. This could be a simple word of encouragement or an invitation to discuss faith. Reach out to them and express your care and concern – you never know how much your words may mean to them.

Day 20: The Beauty of Heaven

****Scripture:****

Revelation 21:4 (NIV)

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

****Reflection:****

As we begin our journey of faith, it's essential to reflect on the incredible hope that heaven represents. This verse offers a vivid picture of what awaits us—joy, peace, and the complete absence of suffering. Imagine a place where grief and pain are no more, where we are fully embraced in God's love. Consider how this promise of heaven shapes your understanding of life here on earth. How does knowing that such a beautiful reality awaits you influence your daily decisions and interactions?

****Activity:****

Take a moment to visualize heaven as described in the scriptures. Spend some time in quiet reflection, imagining what it might be like—what sights you see, what feelings you experience, and who you might meet. Write down your thoughts in a journal or on a piece of paper. You could also create a visual representation of heaven through drawings, paintings, or even a collage. Let this activity inspire hope and excitement in your heart as you anticipate the eternal life that awaits you with God.

Day 21: The Invitation to Heaven

****Scripture:****

John 14:2-3 (NIV)

"My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

****Reflection:****

Jesus' words in this passage emphasize His desire to bring us into a personal relationship with Him in heaven. The promise of a place prepared specifically for us is deeply encouraging. Reflect on the intimate nature of this invitation; God desires for you to be with Him forever. Consider how this knowledge can foster a deeper relationship with Christ today. How can this promise of being with Jesus in heaven encourage you in your walk of faith?

****Activity:****

Think about your relationship with Jesus. Spend some time in prayer, expressing gratitude for the invitation to be with Him in heaven. Write a prayer or a letter to Jesus, sharing your hopes and desires for your relationship with Him. Seal it and place it somewhere special as a reminder of your commitment to growing closer to Him in this life.

Day 22: Understanding Satan

****Scripture:****

1 Peter 5:8 (NIV)

"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

****Reflection:****

As new Christians, it's vital to understand the reality of spiritual warfare. This verse reminds us that there is an enemy who actively seeks to lead us away from God. Satan, often depicted as a deceiver and tempter, uses various tactics to undermine our faith and relationship with God. Reflecting on this truth can empower you to be more vigilant in your spiritual life. How can being aware of Satan's schemes help you to strengthen your faith and resist temptation?

****Activity:****

Take a moment to journal about ways you can stay alert in your spiritual journey. Consider areas in your life where you might be more vulnerable to distractions or temptations. Write down practical steps you can take to guard your heart and mind, such as memorizing scripture, spending more time in prayer, or seeking accountability with fellow believers. Share your reflections with a trusted friend or mentor to help keep you accountable.

Day 23: The Reality of Hell

****Scripture:****

Matthew 25:46 (NIV)

"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

****Reflection:****

Hell is a sobering reality mentioned in the teachings of Jesus. It represents the ultimate separation from God, a consequence of rejecting His love and grace. As new Christians, it's important to understand both the severity and the hope we have through Christ. Reflect on the significance of eternal life with God and how it contrasts with the fate of those who turn away. How does this understanding motivate you to live boldly for Christ and share the message of hope with others?

****Activity:****

Consider writing down the names of friends or family members who may not yet know Christ. Set aside time to pray for them, asking God to open their hearts to the message of salvation. You might even think about ways you can share your faith with them in love. Additionally, create a plan to engage in conversation or an invitation to a church event where they can hear more about God's love and grace. Keep this list handy and pray regularly for those individuals, trusting God to work in their lives

Day 24: The Purpose of Fasting

****Scripture:****

Matthew 6:16-18 (NIV)

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to

others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

****Reflection:****

Fasting is about seeking a deeper relationship with God rather than a mere expression of piety. Jesus emphasizes the importance of the heart behind the action. Fasting allows us to humble ourselves, draw closer to God, and focus on spiritual growth. As new Christians, we might wonder how fasting can enhance our spiritual journey. Reflect on your motivations for fasting and how it can help you seek God's presence in a more profound way.

****Activity:****

Set aside a time in the coming week to begin your fasting journey. It could be a meal, a day, or even a certain type of food. Prepare your heart by praying and asking God for guidance on what to fast from. Keep a journal to note your feelings and experiences during the fast. Consider how focusing on God during this time can lead to breakthroughs in your spiritual life.

Day 25: Fasting and Prayer

****Scripture:****

Acts 13:2-3 (NIV)

"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off."

****Reflection:****

Fasting is often coupled with prayer, creating a powerful combination that allows us to draw closer to God and seek His will. In Acts, we see the early church using fasting as a means of worship and guidance. As you reflect on this passage, think about how combining fasting with prayer can strengthen your relationship with God. It's a time to listen and discern His calling in your life, whether big or small.

****Activity:****

Choose a specific need or decision in your life that you would like to seek God's guidance on. Set aside dedicated time for prayer as you enter your fast. Write down your thoughts, petitions, and any insights you feel God may be providing. Make it an

intentional part of your fasting experience, inviting God into your decision-making process.

Day 26: Fasting for Transformation

****Scripture:****

Isaiah 58:6-7 (NIV)

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

****Reflection:****

True fasting goes beyond personal sacrifice; it impacts our communities and promotes social justice. In this passage, God's definition of fasting includes caring for others. As you consider the implications of fasting, reflect on how your spiritual discipline can lead to tangible acts of love and justice in the world. How might your fasting transform not only your heart but also the hearts of those around you?

****Activity:****

Plan a day or a series of acts that demonstrate fasting in the form of service. This could involve volunteering at a local food bank, donating clothes, or sharing a meal with someone in need. As you engage in these activities, maintain a heart of prayer, asking God to open your eyes to the needs around you and guide you in being His hands and feet in your community. Document your experiences and insights in your journal as a reminder of how fasting can shape your life and the lives of others.

Day 27: The Body of Christ

****Scripture:****

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 (NIV)

"Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jew or Gentile, neither slave nor free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many."

****Reflection:****

The Church is often referred to as the Body of Christ, illustrating the idea that each believer plays a unique and vital role in the community. As new Christians, it's important to recognize that being part of a church means you are not alone in your faith journey. Your gifts, experiences, and perspectives contribute to the health and vibrancy of the Church as a whole. Reflect on how your involvement in a church community can help support others and how their support can nurture your spiritual growth.

****Activity:****

Take time today to learn about the various ministries and groups within your local church. Consider attending a meeting, volunteering for an event, or simply reaching out to someone involved in a ministry that interests you. This engagement will help you see where you fit within the Body of Christ and how you can both give and receive support in your faith journey.

Day 28: The Importance of Fellowship

****Scripture:****

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

****Reflection:****

Fellowship is a vital aspect of the Christian faith. It reminds us that we are part of a larger family of believers who can encourage and support one another in our spiritual walk. In times of difficulty and joy, sharing our lives with others strengthens our faith and helps us grow in love. As you reflect on this passage, think about the role of encouragement in your life and how you can be an encourager to others in your church community.

****Activity:****

Set a goal this week to connect with at least one other person from your church, whether it's through a phone call, a coffee meeting, or participating in a small group event. Share your faith journey and experiences with each other, and pray together. This connection will deepen your fellowship and strengthen your bonds within the Church, reminding you that you are not alone in your journey of faith.

Day 29: Living as a Disciple

****Scripture:****

Luke 9:23 (NIV)

"Then he said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.'"

****Reflection:****

Being a disciple means making sacrifices and prioritizing your relationship with Christ above all else. It's not always easy, but it is essential for spiritual growth. Reflect on what it means to take up your cross in your daily life. What personal sacrifices might you be asked to make to follow Jesus more closely? How can you align your daily habits and decisions with His teachings?

****Activity:****

Choose one habit or activity you can give up this week to create more space for God in your life. This could be reducing screen time, cutting back on social media, or spending less time on a hobby. Use this time to pray, read Scripture, or help someone in need. Document how this change affects your relationship with God and those around you.

Day 30: The Heart of a Disciple

****Scripture:****

Matthew 22:37-39 (NIV)

"'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

****Reflection:****

At the core of discipleship is love—love for God and love for others. Jesus teaches that these two commands are the foundation of our faith and the way we live as His disciples. Reflect on how genuine love can transform your actions and relationships. Think about how loving others can be a powerful witness to your faith and encourage others to seek Christ.

****Activity:****

This week, make a conscious effort to perform an act of kindness for someone each day. It could be as simple as sending an encouraging note, helping someone with a

task, or offering a listening ear. As you engage in these acts, pray for those you are serving and ask God to open doors for deeper conversations about faith.

Day 31: The Call to Discipleship

****Scripture:****

Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

"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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

****Reflection:****

Discipleship is not just a personal journey; it is also a call to share that journey with others. Jesus commissioned His followers to make disciples, highlighting the importance of community in our faith. As new Christians, consider what it means to be someone who not only learns from Jesus but also helps others grow in their faith. Reflect on how you can take the first steps to share the message of Christ with those around you.

****Activity:****

Spend some time today praying about someone in your life who you can share your faith with. Write down their name and pray for opportunities to have conversations about faith with them. Prepare to share what you've learned in your own journey and how Jesus has impacted your life.

Day 32: Making Disciples

****Scripture:****

2 Timothy 2:2 (NIV)

"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."

****Reflection:****

Discipleship is a multiplying process. As you grow in your faith, you are called to pour into others. This requires investing in relationships and teaching what you have learned. Think about how you can mentor someone else in their faith journey. Reflect on the importance of creating a community of believers who support and encourage one another.

****Activity:****

Identify an individual in your life who is newer in their faith or seeking to grow. Reach out to them and offer your support; perhaps propose meeting regularly to discuss faith, study the Bible, or pray together. Your commitment to walking alongside someone else can ignite their journey and deepen both your faiths.

Day 33: The Call to Share******Scripture:****

Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

"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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

****Reflection:****

As new Christians, it can be overwhelming to think about sharing your faith. However, Jesus has given us a clear command to go and share His love with others. Evangelism is not about having all the answers; it's about sharing your personal journey and the transformation you've experienced in Christ. Think about the people in your life—friends, family, or acquaintances—who may not yet know about Him. Remember, sharing your faith is a journey, and God is with you every step of the way.

****Activity:****

Take a few moments to write down the names of three people you feel led to share your faith with this week. Pray for them, asking God to open opportunities for you to share your story. Consider a simple way to reach out to one of them, whether it's through a coffee invite, a text, or a thoughtful note sharing how your faith impacts your life.

Day 34: Living as a Witness******Scripture:****

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

****Reflection:****

Evangelism is not just about words; it's also about how we live our lives. Others will notice the hope, joy, and love that come from a relationship with Christ. This scripture reminds us to be ready to share our faith when the opportunity arises and to do so gently and respectfully. Your actions, words, and attitude reflect the love of Christ, making you a witness to those around you. Consider how you can embody this hope daily.

****Activity:****

Spend time observing how you live out your faith in your daily routine. Do your actions reflect the hope you have in Christ? Practice being an active listener when interacting with others—ask them about their lives and share how your faith impacts your perspective. This week, find one specific instance where you can be a light, whether through an act of kindness, a moment of encouragement, or simply a patient word of wisdom.

Day 35: The Heart of Serving******Scripture:****

Mark 10:45 (NIV)

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

****Reflection:****

Serving others is at the core of what it means to follow Christ. Jesus, our ultimate example, came not to be served but to serve. As new Christians, embracing a servant's heart can transform how we interact with the world around us. Serving is a way to express love and gratitude for the grace we have received. By putting the needs of others before our own, we mirror Christ's love and reflect His character. Think about how serving others not only blesses them but also deepens your own faith.

****Activity:****

Take a moment to list three ways you can serve someone else this week. These could be simple acts, such as helping a neighbor with groceries, volunteering at a local shelter, or writing a note of encouragement to a friend in need. Choose one action from your list and commit to doing it this week. Pray for guidance and an open heart to identify others who may need your help.

Day 36: The Impact of Serving**

****Scripture:****

Galatians 5:13 (NIV)

"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love."

****Reflection:****

Serving others humbly helps us embody the love of Christ in practical ways. Our freedom in Christ calls us to live differently—not for ourselves, but for others. Serving one another not only brings joy to those we help but also strengthens our community and our faith. Reflect on the ways your life can be a blessing to those around you. Remember that even the smallest act of service can have a profound impact on someone's day or life.

****Activity:****

This week, look for opportunities to perform an unexpected act of kindness. It could be paying for someone's coffee, helping a colleague with a work task, or simply offering a listening ear to someone who needs it. As you serve, keep a journal of your experiences and thoughts. Reflect on how these actions not only impact others but also change your heart and perspective. Pray for those you serve and for the humility to continue making serving others a priority in your life.

Day 37: The Purpose in Pain**

****Scripture:****

Romans 5:3-4 (NIV)

"Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

****Reflection:****

As new Christians, it can be challenging to understand why God allows suffering in our lives. However, Scripture teaches us that suffering is not without purpose. In Romans, Paul highlights how our struggles can lead to growth, strengthening our character and deepening our hope. Suffering can refine our faith and draw us closer to God as we learn to rely on Him in our times of need. Reflect on your own experiences with suffering and consider how they may have shaped you and your relationship with God.

****Activity:****

Take some time this week to write down a difficult experience you've faced and how it has impacted your faith, character, or perspective on life. Consider sharing this with a trusted friend or mentor to encourage them. Additionally, spend time in prayer, asking God to help you see the purpose behind your struggles and to grant you the strength to persevere through them.

Day 38: Comfort in Suffering******Scripture:****

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NIV)

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble."

****Reflection:****

God's Word reminds us that He is not distant in our suffering; rather, He is a God of compassion who comforts us in our trials. When we experience suffering, it opens our hearts to empathize with others who are hurting. Our own struggles can prepare us to offer genuine support and encouragement to those in pain. Embracing God's comfort equips us to extend that same comfort to others, demonstrating Christ's love in action.

****Activity:****

This week, seek out someone who may be going through a difficult time. It could be a friend, family member, or even a coworker. Offer your support through a listening ear, sharing your own story of comfort, or simply being present with them. As you engage, reflect on how God has comforted you in your hardships and how you can embody that same compassion in your actions. Conclude with prayer, asking God to guide your words and empower you to be a source of comfort for others.

Day 39: The Call to Forgive******Scripture:****

Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV)

"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

****Reflection:****

Forgiveness can be one of the most challenging aspects of our faith journey. In this passage, Jesus emphasizes the importance of forgiveness in our relationship with God. When we forgive others, we reflect God's grace in our lives and open our hearts to receive the same grace ourselves. It's essential to recognize that forgiveness is not about excusing someone's wrongdoing; rather, it's about releasing the hold that bitterness and resentment can have on our hearts. Reflect on those in your life you may need to forgive, understanding that forgiveness is a choice we make, even when it feels difficult.

****Activity:****

Take some time today to write a list of individuals you need to forgive, whether it's from recent events or past hurts. After creating your list, choose one person and spend a few moments in prayer, asking God to help you let go of any bitterness you may feel. If you feel led, consider reaching out to that person to express your forgiveness, whether in person, through a letter, or simply in your heart.

Day 40: The Power of Forgiveness******Scripture:****

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV)

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

****Reflection:****

In this passage, Paul encourages us to let go of negative emotions that can weigh us down and to cultivate a spirit of kindness and compassion. Forgiveness frees us from the burden of anger and resentment, allowing us to live more fully in the love and grace that God offers us. Remember that forgiveness is a process, and it may take time. As you practice forgiveness, you might discover a renewed sense of peace and purpose in your life. Reflect on how God has shown you forgiveness and consider how this motivates you to extend that same grace to others.

****Activity:****

This week, identify a specific area in your life where you struggle with anger or resentment. Take a moment to journal about how this has affected you and what steps

you can take to move towards forgiveness. Then, create a small reminder for yourself—a sticky note, prayer card, or journal entry—that highlights God's forgiveness in your life. Each day, read this reminder to reinforce your commitment to forgive and pray for the strength to let go of any lingering negativity.