40-day

PRAYER CHALLENGE

3/6/2019 - 4/14/2019

(Ash Wed. to Palm Sunday)

40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Tues., March 5th – Pre-Fast

Do you love the Lord? Do you want to be as close to Him as possible? No matter where you are in your spiritual journey with the Lord, you can always be closer to Him than you are today.

One way to draw closer to the Lord is to declare a time of fasting and prayer where you deny the flesh and its appetites to focus more of your energy on the Spirit. Trust God to lead you in the type of fast He has in mind for you. This may be a fast where you give up solid food completely or you simply limit yourself to one or two meals a day. Unless health limits restrict this, a biblical fast reduces the intake of food. You may choose to add other things to the fast such as denying yourself caffeine, sweets, t.v., web-surfing and/or online chatting, etc. The idea is to deny the flesh and its habits and desires and the time that they require and give that time to God. If you choose to fast a meal, spend that meal time in prayer. That time includes preparation, eating, and clean-up. Give yourself to at least the greater part of an hour of focused attention in prayer and devotion.

During this 40-day period you will tap into the power of the Lord as you experience Him in a new way and see His hand move in your life and in the lives of those around you. You become His vessel to reach a lost world. It is His power working in your life and through your life.
Each day you will be challenged to deepen your relationship with the Lord. Through the daily devotional, the fast, and the time spent with the Lord in prayer, the journey you are about to embark upon has the potential to transform your life and the lives of those around you! Embrace the challenge. Over the next 40 days, let Him manifest His power in your life through the discipline of fasting and prayer!

Each day you'll have the opportunity to journal your thoughts and responses to the devotional & your prayer time. Today, the day before you begin your fast, write a letter to God. Let Him know the intent of your heart.

Write down what you're hoping to experience, what your concerns & fears are, and ask for His immeasurable GRACE to see you through the next 40 days. If you stumble, if you fall, repent (ask for forgiveness), get back on your spiritual feet, and return to your fast where you left off.

"You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me will all your heart."
Jeremiah 29:13

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight."
Proverb 3:5-6

Dear Lord,

Today, as I begin this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Wed., March 6th – Day 1

Examine your time with the Lord. Let the daily devotional set the tone for your day. Make an appointment with Him each day, at the beginning of your day. Find an undistracted time in the morning to read the verse for the day and pray. Take 10 minutes and get quiet before Him. Yes, that means getting up just that much earlier, so, go to bed just a little earlier tonight!

Maybe all you need to do is sit up from your sleeping and put your feet on the floor. Maybe you need to get a shower first and shake the sleep out of your head! As best you can, make it one of the first things of your day.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed.
Mark 1:35

Treat this appointment with the respect you would if you were seeing your doctor or going to an early morning meeting at work. You will never regret the time you spend in his Word and in prayer. Today, it's very simple. Other days, well, it may be more difficult to look inside yourself and hear what Jesus is trying to reveal to you about a situation in your life, your attitudes, actions, or the words you say and how you say them. Let these appointments with God be times of an open heart and an humble spirit. Truly ask the Lord to speak into your life.

Read Proverbs 51:10-12
What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Thurs., March 7th – Day 2

It is impossible to seek God's will and listen to His voice with a cold heart that harbors unresolved matters. For the next few days, you will be looking at scripture that will prod you to look a little deeper with Lord into your own heart.

Looking inside isn't always easy. Sometimes it's flat-out horrifying, depressing, and really difficult. But, with the Holy Spirit's help and power, that can change. We can be transformed from the inside, out! No one is exempt from needing a little inspection from the Holy Spirit. Any thing that needs attention can be made better. In the end, what we find there may end up being more positive, more powerful, and even more awesome than we thought possible!

It all starts, though, with allowing God in; actually inviting Him to look in and to search out, and find anything that might not be right. When He taps something for you to look at, don't resist, don't ignore it. If this thing can be dealt with and resolved, what better shape will your heart be in? Better than it was before you opened it to Him.

Read Psalm 139:23-24

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Fri., March 8th – Day 3

We give ourselves to so many things. Our time, our patience, finances, even our leisure and recreation seem to get gobbled up by unseen forces. All too often, the enemy of our souls has convinced us that we need something more than we need God. The only way this happens is because you & I surrender to the tyranny of the Enemy and allow ourselves to be subjected to wrong priorities in regards to those things that draw us away from God.

It only takes a moment and we can find ourselves where we know we should not be. It isn't always a physical location or place. It can be a moment of thought, a flash of attitude, or just a lazy mind that is undisciplined and wanders. Regardless, it is necessary to be intentional about what we submit ourselves to.

The human mind & spirit are far too susceptible to the influences of the Enemy to be left without boundary and instruction. As you move along into this 40 Day journey, be alert to the fact that the Enemy does not want you to become more in tune with the Father and His Will for your life, or His will for New Horizons. Keeping a close eye on your mind and spirit, and submitting them to the Lord, is your first and best weapon against the Enemy's tactics to discourage you.

Read James 4:6b-10

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Sat., March 9th 2 – Day 4

Isn't it amazing how stubborn people can be. You know, other people. Not you, but someone you know. Maybe someone you work with, someone in your family, somebody at church, but certainly not you! Bull-headed to the point there's just no changing their mind or consideration of a different way or outcome.

These kind of people are like rocks that end up being crushed or rolled off to the side to be left alone because there's know pliability in them. "My way or the highway!," they say. So many times not realizing the rigidity in them is not their greatest strength, but greatest weakness.

I find it intriguing that people (you & me) are either too introspective, or not introspective enough (stubborn). We miss seeing what God sees in us—the good, the bad, the beautiful. and the ugly. We may refuse to see what we don't like and we cast ourselves in the image that we want and ignore the rest. If it were up to God, He would bring out the very best while removing all the rest!

In fact, the problem isn't with Him, it's with us. We become afraid of what He might create in us if we give Him too much authority. Seriously, if He's Lord of your life, then let Him be the master-crafter of your heart, your life, the next 36 days!

Read Jeremiah 18:1-6

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Mon., March 11th – Day 6

Ever had stuff that never gets finished? We have a half-bath in our house that got a face-lift this summer, but it still needs some finishing touches. It seems that it won't ever be completed! Either the temp is too high in the attic to work on pulling wires, I just don't have enough time, or other stuff needs more attention and it gets put off 'til later. If it were up to me, I would've never started the whole process (project)! When it does get completed it will be quite a comfortable place to go and read a book, the newspaper, or even my Bible!

Seriously, though, there's stuff like that in our own lives, too. Maybe you were working so diligently at becoming what you really thought God wanted you to become and something happened. You got sideswiped, spun around, and sent into a tailspin. Just tryin' to get your bearings again is about all you can accomplish at this point. That's not bad. Maybe it was intended by the Lord to change your direction. You, see, He will use whatever it takes to lead, guide, and direct us into paths of righteousness and holiness. Our need is to be willing. God will complete what He started in you and me.

He's not interested in doing a remodel. He's not doing a makeover. He's doing a whole new thing! Fast & pray, He will bring it to pass what He wants to accomplish in you!

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23
What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Tues., March 12th – Day 7

Proverbs says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.” (14:12) If this is the case, what other option do we have? So many of us really lean on our own understanding. We press into what we know as if that is the extent of the amount of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom that’s available to us. It’s possible we’ve had to become self-sufficient, not relying on anyone. Due to those who were leaders in our lives, having made poor choices and decisions for us, sent us down paths that we wouldn’t have chosen for ourselves.

Life is filled with opportunities to do things our own way when we flex our independence and will. If there was a way to know how best to proceed in a decision, in making plans for the future, developing a vision for what could be, or just what to do about tomorrow, why wouldn't we want to pursue it? Most of the time there’s a lack of trust in others, even in God.

In Jeremiah 29:11, God tells the people of Israel, “For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” If He had plans for them, I’m sure He has plans for you and me! Funny thing, though, He insists that we do it His way. Let’s ask the Lord to direct our lives and lead us in ways that don’t just seem right to us, but are awesomely righteous!

Read Psalm 25:4-7

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Wed., March 13th – Day 8

We begin our 2nd of 6 weeks on this journey. Our focus this week will be on **seeking God's will & listening**.

This fasting & praying thing has a different pace from the rest of life, have you noticed? To really be about drawing closer to God, it requires slowing down a bit, giving attention to, and intentionally directing your heart toward the Lord. It can't be done on the fly and without forethought. Are you able to keep on track even if stuff comes up? And, you know it will!

The art & discipline of the "fast" is to manage and direct your attentiveness to God while the world continues to move around you. Remember, fasting is about "feasting" on the Lord and his goodness; giving yourself to the discipline of moment by moment connection and fellowship with Him. The growling of the stomach is just a reminder to seek Him and listen to a still and quiet voice speaking into your spirit.

A noted author has said, *"God will not always speed up to catch up with us. He expects us to slow our pace to walk with Hm. God will not always scream and shout because life is noisy. He expects us to provide some quietness…. God will not be squeezed into the framework of our complicated schedules."*

Do you need to make any adjustments? It'll be worth the effort!

Read: Psalm 37:4-7a / 46:10a

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Thurs., March 14th – Day 9

When was the last time you were lost? Whether recently, or not, a certain panic can set in. The experts tell us, when lost or disoriented in the outdoors, to stop where we are and gain our bearings. To get directed, it's always necessary to get a fix on a stationary object, something large that doesn't move and/or change and then redirect in relation to that point. This works pretty well out in the wilderness and even in cities. Unfortunately, the life journey that we're on seems to have few stationary points to hold on to.

As a child, did you ever get caught up in the wonder of a department store? At that moment, when I knew I was lost, trying to find something to gain a bearing was not really my priority! Usually a check out station in Montgomery Ward was my best option. If I would seek out that place where I knew Mom would be, I knew she could find me, too. God seems to work the same way! If we will search for that place where the Lord usually shows up, we can be sure He will be there. In fact, I won't just find Him, He will find me!

He knows the panic and stress in my heart and even the motive of my search, as I seek Him. The intent of my heart will be known by Him. The desire of our Father, God, is that we would look for Him in every circumstance and situation in life, not just when we're lost.

Read: I Chronicles 28:9a
What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Fri., March 15th – Day 10

But Abram said, *"O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?"* (Genesis 15:8) We want to know God's will!

You'll know by first knowing God. He doesn't leave you in the dark to grope around in unbelief. He wants you to go to Him for discernment & understanding. If assurance of knowing what God was saying came easily, you and I would be tempted to take the credit for our accomplishments. He wants you to know what to do, but on His terms. Knowing what to do follows obedience.

Take God at His word today and be faithful to His instructions. It may mean extending kindness to a nemesis at work or praying more for your teenager and saying less. Indeed, *"how to know"* follows, *"how to be."* Be patient, allow God to work. Wait.

He constantly communicates with His children through His Word. He may speak to you in a dream. He may be shouting at you through friends and/or foes. Circumstances may be squeezing you toward specific outcomes. Be aware of all that is converging around you; Christ doesn't work in a vacuum. He works in "life."

Resist the temptation to rush to the next big thing. There are a lot of little miracles yet to be encountered. You know by knowing Him. The Bible says, "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better." (Ephesians 1:17).

Read: Isaiah 42:16
What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Sat., March 16th – Day 11

A Native American Indian and his friend were in downtown New York City, walking near Times Square. It was during the noon lunch hour and the streets were filled with people. Cars were honking their horns, taxicabs were squealing around corners, sirens were wailing, and the sounds were almost deafening.

Suddenly, the Indian said, "I hear a cricket." His friend said, "What? You must be crazy. You couldn't possibly hear a cricket in all this noise!" "No, I'm sure of it, I heard a cricket." He listened carefully for a moment, and then walked across the street to a big cement planter where some shrubs were growing. Looking into the bushes, beneath the branches, sure enough, he located a small cricket. His friend was utterly amazed. "That's incredible," he said. "You must have super-human ears!"

"No, said the Indian. "My ears are no different from yours. It all depends on what you're listening for."

"But that can't be!" said the friend. "I could never hear a cricket in this noise." "Yes, it's true," came the reply. "It depends on what is really important to you. Here, let me show you." He reached into his picket, pulled out a few coins, and discreetly dropped them on the sidewalk. With the noise of the crowded street still blaring in their ears, they noticed every head within 20 feet turn and look to see if the money that tinkled on the pavement was theirs. "See what I mean?"

For us to hear God's voice, we must determine its importance.

Read: Matthew 13:15-16

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Mon., March 18th – Day 13

Do you remember the adage, *"Maybe there's a reason why God gave us two ears and only one mouth!"* It really does have a point, doesn't it?

In James chapter 1, we're admonished to be *"quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry…."*, because the opposite doesn't reflect a life that is steeped in the righteousness of God. If we're ever to have a hope of hearing from the Lord, we not only have to be still, but we also must be quiet and listen.

Have you ever noticed how people who aren't truthful tend to say too much? There's always more story than is really wanted or necessary. The story they're spinning begins to lack congruence among all the parts? You know they're just making it up as they go, and most of it can't be relied upon. Too often, we're so busy telling God how it should be, what our plans are, and believing we should be receiving His blessing, that we totally miss His word for our lives. To hear Him, to know His will, requires less speaking are more listening.

Try preparing yourself to hear from the Lord by taking a couple of minutes and just being quiet before Him. Next, reflect upon His character of complete holiness, purity, and faithfulness. Lastly, ask Him to speak to your heart about your life and remain silent before him. He will speak, we must listen!

Read: Ecclesiastes 5:1-2
What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Tues.., March 19th – Day 14

A little boy has two suckers and goes up to his smaller brother and asks him, “Which sucker do you want?” He holds one in each hand, the cherry one is closer to his body while the orange one is extended toward his sibling. The smaller brother reaches for the “red” one and is interrupted by an orange sucker in the kisser! It was a gesture to make the offer, but what was really in his heart wasn’t reflected in his action. His brother’s desire wasn’t truly being taken into consideration. We’re quite adept at doing something like this in our search for the will of God for our lives. I can get caught up in the choice that is most desirable to my eyes and convince myself it’s the right choice.

A key ingredient in seeking the Lord’s will, His vision for your life, your ministry in the kingdom of God, even His greater vision for New Horizons Community Church, is to receive a peace in our heart above everything else. When we face a decision and present our request to God, we need to wait for God’s peace in our hearts. Colossians 3:15 says, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” When you receive that, you’re on the right track!

Giving ourselves over to the unknown is one of the hardest things we do as followers of Jesus Christ. There’s a constant tension between what I see and desire with my “eyes” and what I ask for with my heart. Let a peaceful heart settle His will for you.

Read: Matthew 26:39
What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Wed., March 20th – Day 15

Playing "hide-n-go-seek" as a child was always a lot of fun. We played it in our neighborhood for hours during the summer months. There was such a thrill in finding those we were hiding and being found was also kinda cool, too! You see, we would join the one who was seeking and help them find the rest! As we got older, our hiding and our seeking became more sophisticated and cunning, but the game never changed! There's just something about it, when we'd all hide and a really good "seeker" would come lookin' for us! The reward and praise was incredible when the "seeker" would find the "hidden" in the most obscure — one of those, "they'll never find me here," places.

With the Lord and His will for our lives, it's not quite the same. It's not a game where He doesn't want to be found. In our relationship with Him, and during this fasting journey, He will be found because it is His desire to reveal Himself to us. I'd propose that our difficulty in nailing down His will and hearing His voice has lot more to do with our inability to focus, submit, surrender, listen, revere, wait, and diligently seek without distraction, than His desire to make His will known. We do know what His will is for our lives: seek His kingdom first, be holy as He is holy, walk in His spirit and be filled, to do justice, love mercy, be humble, etc. Maybe our focus needs to shift to being what He desires and let the becoming be derived from that? Seek Him, find his will!

Read: Hebrews 11:5-6

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Thurs., March 21st – Day 16

It's week 3. Are you becoming aware of the desire of God to communicate with you in new ways? Are you listening? Trying to conform to His will? Repenting and being forgiven? Seeking His face and wanting to know His heart? Keep faithful. Don't shrink back! A break-through for you may be just about to happen!

This week's daily devotionals will focus on our **obedience to God's will** and **faith to follow through** with His direction.

So many times we feel inadequate and less than capable to meet the challenges that God places in front of us. The desire is there, initially, but something happens. We hear voices from within and without, that distract and even tempt us to disobey or lose faith. To follow the Spirit's leading always comes at a price; a sacrifice of time, a release of our agenda, the discipline to tithe from our income, to forgive from our broken heart, even the stretching of our faith to wait.

Where will you be spiritually when this 40 day experience of seeking God's heart comes to a close? Will your obedience be evident to others as you step out in faith, trusting Him like never before? Will your faith be stronger because of your willingness to be obedient to the call of God to devote yourself to being a true disciple of Jesus? Pray today for your heart to be obedient.

Read: Deuteronomy 28:1-12
What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Fri., March 22nd – Day 17

A captain cautiously piloted his warship through the fog-shrouded waters. With straining eyes, he scanned the hazy darkness, searching for dangers. His worst fears were realized when he say a bright light straight ahead. It appeared to be a vessel on a collision course with his ship.

To avert disaster, he quickly radioed the oncoming vessel. "This is Captain Jeremiah Smith, please alter your course ten degrees south! Over." To the captains amazement, the foggy image didn't move. Instead, he heard back on the radio, "Captain Smith. This is Private Thomas Johnson. Please alter your course ten degrees north! Over."

Appalled at the audacity of the message, the captain shouted back over the radio, "Private Johnson, I order you to immediately alter your course. Over." A second time the oncoming light did not budge. "With all due respect, sir," came the private's voice again, "I order you to alter your course immediately! Over."

Angered and frustrated that this sailor would endanger the lives of his men and crew, the captain growled back over the radio, "I will have you court-martialed for this! For the last time, I command you on the authority of the U.S. government to alter your course, now! I am a battleship!"

The private's final transmission was chilling: "Captain Smith, sir. Once again with all due respect, change your course! I am a lighthouse!" **NOTE: When dealing with God, remember, He knows where you are and what you need. Obedience, please.

Read: Proverbs 3:5-6

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Sat., March 23rd – Day 18

You know the game… "Dad, can I go to Billy's house?" Answer: NO. "Mom, can I go to Billy's house?" Answer Yes. Thanks, mom!

The kinds of answers we get from the Lord aren't always what we expect. We hear the response of the Lord to our inquiry and then decide to get another opinion on the matter. Why do we not receive the answers God gives us? Even if they are harsh, more difficult than expected, or even more drawn out than we wanted, where do we get the idea that His answers are up for some kind of evaluation or even debate? A non-surrendered heart will always object to the direction of the Lord!

In the old familiar hymn, "Trust and Obey," we find that in order to be happy in Jesus, there's no other way, but to trust and obey. The lyrics continue, "When we walk with the Lord, in the light of His word, what a glory He sheds on our way! While we do His good will, He abides with us still, and with all who will trust and obey." There's a definite connection between obedience and blessing. There's a necessity on our part to ruthlessly cast off notions or ideas, that we can get away with side-stepping the direction of the Lord and come out better than if we followed Him and His direction for our lives.

Where are you contending with the Lord? A relationship? Your finances? Your giving to the Lord? A job or career choice? What is the Lord asking of you? Serving in a ministry? Trust & obey.

Read: Deuteronomy 8:1-3

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Mon., March 25th – Day 20

The story is told of a great circus performer by the name of Blondin who stretched a long steel cable across Niagara Falls. During high winds and without a safety net, he walked, ran, and even danced across the tightrope to the amazement and delight of the large crowd of people who watched.

Once he took a wheelbarrow full of bricks and amazed the crowd by pushing it effortlessly across the cable, from one side of the falls to the other. Blondin then turned to the crowd and asked, "Now, how many of you believe that I could push a man across the wire in the wheelbarrow?"

The vote was unanimous. Everyone cheered and held their hands high. They all believed he could do it!

"Then," asked Blondin, "would one of you please volunteer to be that man?" As quickly as the hands went up, they went back down. Not a single person would volunteer to ride in the wheelbarrow and to trust his life to Blondin.

Simply, we are asking the Lord to lead us into His will, and it may carry us to places that are unknown to us. New Horizons Community Church needs to see what God sees. We need to trust His vision and allow Him to carry us through to the other side.

Read: Philippians 1:3-6
What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Tues., March 26th, – Day 21

The Prince of Grenada, an heir to the Spanish crown, was sentenced to life in solitary confinement in Madrid's ancient prison called, "The Place of the Skull." The place had earned it's name. Everyone knew once you were in, you would never come out alive. The prince was given one book to read the entire time—the Bible. He read it over hundreds and hundreds of times. The book became his constant companion.

After 33 years of imprisonment, the prince died. When they came in to clean out his cell, they found some notes he had written using nails, to mark the stone of the prison walls. The notations were of this sort: Psalm 118:8 is the middle verse of the Bible; Ezra 7:21 contains all the letters of the alphabet except the letter "j"; the 9th verse of the 8th chapter of Esther is the longest verse in the Bible; no word or name of more than 6 syllables can be found in the Bible.

When Scot Udel origninally noted these facts in an article in Pyschology Today, he noted the oddity of an individual who spent 33 years of his life studying what some have described as the greatest book of all time yet he could only glean trivia. From all we know, he never made any spiritual commitment to Christ, but he became an expert at Bible trivia. What kind of faith do you have? There's a difference between knowing the facts about God and allowing Him to change you from the inside out. Many people never entrust their lives to Christ. Let faith grow in you and be transformed!

Read: James 1:22-25

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Wed., March 27th – Day 22

Several years ago I heard a message entitled, "'Achan' All Over." The scripture story behind the message was about Israel conquering yet another people during their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. The people were given specific instruction when they plundered mighty Jericho that nothing of what was left was to be taken and possessed by anyone. These were the directives from the Lord. Achan, the son of Carmi, disobeyed.

Joshua prepared the people for their next encounter, the men of Ai. As it turned out, the army of Israel was unable to overtake Ai, a small and unprepared stand of soldiers. The army of Israel was struck down and chased away. The people's hearts were melted and distraught.

The Lord brought it to Joshua's attention that someone among the Israelites had broken the covenant. He said, "I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction." (Josh. 7:12b) Joshua ultimately found the source and had it destroyed, all the items along with the one who had brought them into the camp.

Achan paid a high price for not being obedient to the Lord. Not only did he suffer, but so did his family, and all of Israel. How does your "dis-obedience" affect your relationship with the Lord? With others? With regard to the effectiveness of the church in fulfilling it's mission? We are not without responsibility when the ministry of the Church is impeded and when our families suffer, due to our lack of obedience to the Lord.

Read: Joshua 7

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Thurs., March 28th – Day 23

Outside magazine often features stories about people who risk their lives to accomplish things that nobody else has done.

Larry Walters took flight in a lawn chair suspended by 42 helium filled balloons. After reaching 16,000 ft., he began popping the balloons with a pellet gun, descending to the ground safely.

In 1987, Frenchman, Jean Luc Antoni, set a world record of 61 mph riding a mono-ski down a rocky slope in France. He survived!

Reg Mellor, age 72, is the reigning world champion of "ferret-legging." Ferret legging is a contest involving the tying of a competitor's pants at the ankle and the subsequent insertion into those trousers of a couple of particularly vicious, fur-coated, foot-long carnivores called, ferrets. The "brave" contestant's belt is then pulled tight. He proceeds to stand in front of judges as long as he can, while these rodents try to get out. Reg Mellor hold the world record at 5 hrs. and 26 minutes!

What these men have achieved is on the side of the ridiculous and crazy. Not only dangerous, but seemingly worthless, accomplishing little of importance. Many times, obedience to Christ can seem to be outside the realm of "thinking" men, even scoffed at because what is required seems beyond the realm of reason. Trusting Him to bring us through is a necessary element of our growth. In fact, the Lord will put you in hopeless situations just so you'll place greater trust in him. Remember, Jesus said, "What is impossible with men, is possible with God." (Luke 18:27)

Read: Hebrews 11:1

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Fri., March 29th – Day 24

This day begins week 4 of our 6 weeks of fasting and prayer. I want us to focus on ***strength of spirit*** and ***courage of heart*,** to go where God leads us to go and do what He calls us to do.

There are times when "Goliath" sized challenges make us feel small and insignificant, powerless and feeble. To the point of pulling back and away, you and I can miss the blessing of drawing upon the resource of heaven, seeing God's strength in our lives! God is glorified when we recognize our weakness(es) and hand them over to Him. He will become our strength and our courage to overcome temptation, to defeat the enemy, to respond in love when we don't feel love, to grow in compassion when we feel no mercy.

As you are continuing on in this "fast", you may be noticing more of your weaknesses; areas of life that you once thought you had conquered are being revealed to you as places of great need of His strength. Don't hesitate. Ask the Lord in boldness to be your strength! See how acknowledging His ability to do what you can not do on your own will bring deliverance and power! Jesus said to the Apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (1 Cor. 12:9)

Let's begin this week knowing that all power and authority belong to him (Matt. 28:18) and let him be strong in our weakness.

Read: 2 Corinthians 2:1-5

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Sat., March 30th – Day 25

Sixty-year-old Foster Walker accidentally strolled onto the scene of a holdup at a store in Memphis, Tennessee. The gunman pointed a pistol in his face and said, *"Hand over your money or I'll shoot."* Mr. Walker said, *"Go right ahead and shoot. I just got through reading my Bible, and I've already said my prayers."* The robber just stood and stared at him, speechless. He didn't shoot. Foster turned and walked out of the store, untouched.

When the Enemy (Satan & his minions) brings a challenge to your life, what do you do? What are you doing to prepare for that encounter? Most of those who claim the name of Jesus in their lives are woefully unprepared. They *"lean on their own understanding,"* and miss the wisdom of God that will protect and direct them.

The Enemy is very adept at spinning people out of control and into the ditches of life. We often think of those without faith that are just spinning and toiling, but what of those of us who are not aware of the spiritual battle that is raging all around us? Believers must regard this realm and embrace the need to be diligent and on our watch, not in a paranoid way, but in awareness of the tactics of the Enemy to challenge our stance.

Jesus experienced this during His preparation fast (Matt. 4:1-11) before beginning His kingdom ministry and He defeated the Enemy through prayer & the wisdom of the Word. Foster Walker looked straight into the barrel of a gun and didn't flinch! He, too, was prepared. Courage is theirs who know and prepare.

Read: 1 Peter 5:6-11

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Mon, April 1st – Day 27

When I read the Bible and come upon a familiar or even a tough verse, I find it helpful to revert the sentence order. It's kind of like hitting refresh on your computer screen or changing up some outfits I wear. A fresh face on an old familiar standby. For example, instead of *"For God so loved the world,"* try it as *"the world was so loved by God."* That begs a question: how loved by God? To what extent and in what way?

Maybe that's kind of what the writer of this song did with Isaiah 40:31. Instead of *"they that wait on the Lord will renew their strength,"* it reads, *"strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord."* Can you picture strength rising, bubbling up inside you, as you wait upon God? You may only have a hint of confidence at first, but as you continue to wait, strength continues to rise up within you, as a trickle of water turns into a running stream and then into a raging river, a force to be reckoned with!

"Everlasting God"

Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord
We will wait upon the Lord, We will wait upon the Lord

Our God, You reign forever, Our hope, our Strong Deliverer
You are the everlasting God, The everlasting God
You do not faint, You won't grow weary

Our God, You reign forever, Our hope, our Strong Deliverer
You are the everlasting God, The everlasting God
You do not faint, You won't grow weary

You're the defender of the weak, You comfort those in need
You lift us up on wings like eagles by ~Chris Tomlin~

Read: Isaiah 40:28-31

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Tues., April 2nd – Day 28

As you learn to trust God and allow your spirit to be filled with His Spirit, there is a strength to do what others may think is impossible. For instance, you may think that you could never stand in front of people and share your faith. But in the power and strength of His spirit, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"* (Phil. 4:13) You can!

A strong spirit is a spirit of faith; believing God and taking Him at his word. A weak spirit is filled with doubt, *"...he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does."* (James 1:6-8). As we fast, where is God attempting to strengthen your spirit? Ridding you of doubt? Challenging your confidence in yourself?

An area in which too many Christians struggle is the area of their finances. We want to be faithful to God, but there are so many other obligations. God wants to strengthen your spirit, but He can't if your view of your finances is opposed to His. He instructs us to trust in Him, yet we trust in ourselves. He offers to bless us, yet we bless ourselves. Exodus 23:19 tells us to *"bring the best of the first fruits...to the house of the Lord your God,"* too many bring leftovers. Do you bring your best? Are you committed to letting God strengthen your spirit by trusting His ways? This is an area where **all** of us need to grow. So, if you don't trust Him enough to bring first fruits (a tithe), do you just bring Him a tip? He will bless your life with a strong spirit! He will when you trust Him with all that you are and all that you have!

Read: Malachi 3:9-11

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Wed., April 3rd – Day 29

Many people are courageous everyday, as a matter of their character. Courage is something from the heart. It is the essence of a willingness to do what many others don't do or fail to do, because of fear. Having courage is not doing something without recognizing the danger. It sees the danger, but is more impressed by the need to act rather than the possible negative consequences of acting. In fact, not acting is not an option for those who are courageous.

It isn't necessarily, "running into a burning building," that makes someone have a heart of courage. It is more often that the courageous understand that the blessing and benefit of involving themselves is greater than staying where they are comfortable. Having the courage that God wants us to have requires a deeper faith in His ability, rather than the limits of our own resources or skills. A heart of courage happens on the inside when we place ourselves fully into His care and His keeping.

A Christian author stated it this way, *"Courage is not limited to the battlefield or bravely catching a thief in your house. The real tests of courage are much deeper & much quieter. They are the inner tests, like remaining faithful when nobody's looking, like enduring pain when the room is empty, like standing alone when you're misunderstood."*

Are you courageous? How much more of God will it take for you to have a courageous heart, to step out into what you perceive as dangerous? Is the Lord calling you out into the deep? Fear not, take courage! Step up and out to Him.

Read: Matthew 14: 22-29

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Thurs., April 4th – Day 30

Many of us who played competitive sports (football, in my case) can remember the ritual of readying our uniforms for game day. Even getting the gear on was a ritual. In the couple of hours prior to game time, some walked around the locker room with just shoulder pads without a jersey, others put their game pants on and a helmet, and still others sat around reading their playbooks in street clothes. Regardless of our rituals, when we burst onto the field all of us were ready and geared up!

We knew what was ahead of us and that's why we didn't leave any gear back in the locker room. Our shoulder pads, helmets, belts, cleats, knee and thigh pads, and other protective gear were all in place and ready for the whistle to blow. Wearing that stuff could make a young man feel invincible!

Getting down in my stance, I always knew that my teammates were ready to go up against our opponent. All week long, we had trained physically and gotten ready mentally . Our opponents had done their homework, too. They readied themselves for the competition. Without gear, we'd have been unable to be defensive or offensive. Trained or not, we'd have felt the wrath and power of the other side; our strength and courage would have been defeated.

Spiritually speaking, now, many need to put on the gear of the Spirit, His protective gear. We must learn how to use it to be effective in the battle! Training and preparation are important, but the armor brings strength and courage. When we think we can't stand, we do! Put on the armor and use it for His glory!

Read: Ephesians 6:10-18

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Fri., April 5th – Day 31

Three words that can take every ounce of our strength and courage: "Please, forgive me." Three more that are like them: "I forgive, you." The amount of emotional energy required to hold on to grudges, grievances, and hurts is enormous. Our culture suffers greatly because of the unresolved hurt in peoples' lives. The church, too suffers from unforgiveness in the fellowship. Whether you need to forgive or be forgiven, strength and courage are needed.

Think about what forgiveness means. Forgiveness is giving up your right to punish another person for what they did to you; it is a choice you make. The person doesn't need to ask you for your forgiveness before you choose to forgive. Choosing to turn it over to God and leave it in His hands removes unforgiveness from your heart. If you are asked to forgive, drop the weight and be lifted to a higher plane. Jesus instructs us to keep clear accounts with one another. He doesn't ask us if we want to or if we feel like we have the strength or enough courage. On two occasions he addresses this. Mark 11:25 says, *"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you."* In Matthew 5:23 -24 he says, *"If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First, go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."*

If we'll do as He directs, we will be benefited, personally, and so the whole church will gain strength and courage!

Read: Colossians 3:13

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Sat., April 6th – Day 32

This week we'll be focusing on ***seeing God*** and ***His vision*** for us. Week FIVE & still ALIVE!!! What else would you expect from a God who loves you? We are blessed because of his never failing love that reigns over our lives. There are many days where we receive more love than we deserve, but there is never a day that we receive less than we need. Our God is a great big God!

He has great big possibilities in store for us. It's all part and parcel of his love for us. His love includes guidance, deliverance, protection, strength, rest, healing and hope, and so much more. Knowing this, we can face any situation in this life!

Have you ever had a situation that seemed like it was just too big to handle? Did you pray about it and never see any change? These are the times for us to be sure and place our focus on the God of change instead of the change we desire.

When the Israelites were in battle with the Philistines, no one wanted to fight Goliath because he was over 9 ft. tall. A small boy named David said he would slay the giant. David had confidence in the Lord because of His deliverance in the past. He wasn't looking at the circumstance, he was simply acting on his faith in God almighty.

How could David be so confident? The answer is that David didn't focus on how big Goliath was, he focused on how big God was. When we keep our eyes on the "giants" in our lives, God looks small. When we keep our eyes on God, the giants become less. Ask God to reveal to you how you really see Him. Ask God to increase your faith. Ask Him to be **BIG** in your life... not small!

Read: 1 Samuel 17:37

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Mon., April 8th – Day 34

If someone asked if you believe all things are possible with God, what would you say? Most of us would say, "absolutely!" But, do you really? When you pray, do you pray like you believe this? If a blind person walked into New Horizons and wanted to be prayed over so they could receive their sight, do you believe God can do this? What's your "vision" of God's ability? Do you believe that God wants to do some pretty amazing things in your life and in the New Horizons' body? I do. I'm beginning to sense my faith needs a bit of stretchin'! I need to see God as bigger and more able than I've been willing to in recent months.

Too often, we limit the power of God because we don't pray for things only God can do! His plans and purposes for your life and mine include more than we can ask or imagine. Don't hesitate to believe for things that are beyond your ability. Our God is wants to show off!!! But why should He if we aren't looking for it?

Mark 10:27, says, "All things are possible with God." As far as we're concerned, that settles it! We are convinced. But our actions betray or words. Our prayers don't reflect a desire to know what God is up to, and how we can join Him in what he's wanting to do. Truth be told, we're really O.K. with God believing in Himself. The rub comes when we have to believe. When you read the passage for today, ask yourself if you make requests of the Lord like the father did for his son. Our vision of God's ability must be bolstered by nothing less than unrestrained confidence in what He can do that is beyond us but requires our belief!

Read: Mark 9:20-23

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Tues., April 9th – Day 35

A man was looking for a job and he noticed that there was an opening at the local zoo. He inquired about the job and discovered that the zoo had a very unusual position that they wanted to fill. Their gorilla had died and they needed someone to dress up in a gorilla suit and act like a gorilla for a few days. He was to just sit, eat and sleep. No one would be the wiser.

The zoo offered good pay for this job, so the man decided to do it. He tried on and looked just like a gorilla. He took a position at the back of the cage and pretended to sleep. After a while, he got tired of sitting, so he walked around a little bit, jumped up and down and tried a few gorilla noises. The people who were watching him really liked that. He would move or jump around, they would cheer and throw him peanuts. He jumped around some more and climbed a tree. That really got the crowd excited. They threw more nuts. He grabbed a vine and swung from one side of the cage to the other. The people loved it! Wow, this was great, he thought. He swung higher and higher and the crowd grew bigger. All of a sudden, the vine broke! He swung up and out of the cage, landing in the lion's den.

He panicked. There was a huge lion not 20 ft away, and it looked very hungry. So the man in the gorilla suit started jumping up and down, screaming and yelling, "Help, help! Get me out of here! I'm really not a gorilla! I'm a man in a gorilla suit! Help!

The lion quickly pounced on the man, held him down and said, "Will you SHUT UP! You're going to get us both fired!"

Our God… nothing is like him… others are simply frauds.

Read: Isaiah 45:18-22

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Wed., April 10th – Day 36

Who do you want to see come to know the Lord? Someone needs Jesus. Who is it in your life? Who are you praying for to get saved by the Grace of God? Maybe they need a deliverance from something that has them in bondage.

In Acts, God's Spirit was made manifest in many ways that were powerful and unusual for the day. Because of that outpouring of the Holy Spirit, people were coming into new relationship with God via faith in Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God was giving ability where there had been none. There was evidence of a new thing happening that nobody could explain. Curses were being broken. People were being set free. New understandings of who God is were coming to light. It was a brand new thing that God was doing.

That same Spirit is still alive and working in the Church, today. Our desire to see the lost come to be found must be increased. Our hearts must turn from comfort to courage and begin to see what God sees.

Do you ever watch people and wonder what kind of life they have? I'm not talking about judging or condemning them, but simply observing and wondering about their life's direction. Do they see anything bigger than the end of their work week? Do they know that the difficulties they go through serve a greater purpose? Are they aware that God wants to give them a new view, a new family, a new marriage, a new heart, a new reason for being? That's what I think about. How about you? Is God pouring His dreams into you for others?

Read: Acts 2:17-18

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Thurs., April 11th – Day 37

What do you see yourself doing for God in His kingdom? What are you doing right now that you believe is in line with His vision for His kingdom? God's vision for you is a part of something greater and more grand than what you may know at this time.

When we walk with God, we must be willing to let His vision guide us into, through, and out of what He desires. It makes a tremendous difference when we participate in what God is doing; too often we become so focused on what we're achieving that we forget what God is wanting to accomplish through us and in us.

Remember the story of the building of St. Paul's Cathedral in London? Christopher Wren tells about the reactions of construction workers who were asked what they were doing. Those workers who were bored and tired responded by saying, "I'm laying bricks" or "I'm carrying stones."

But one worker, who was mixing the cement mortar, seemed especially cheerful and enthusiastic about his work. When asked what he was doing, he replied, "I'm building the most magnificent cathedral in all of London!" In some preconstruction meeting the cement mixer got tuned into what the greater vision was! He was working as one who was being obedient to the architects concept. He wasn't focused on his menial task. It was of little value on it's own, but in the broader scope of things, the mortar was an integral component of a grander picture. What's your view of God's vision for you? Brick layer or cathedral builder? Are you seeking His vision for your kingdom or His?

Read: Acts 26:12-19

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Fri., April 12th – Day 38

When a man is going to ask a woman to marry him, he usually has a pretty good idea that she is going to say, "yes," prior to his asking. If he didn't believe she was going to answer affirmatively, he most likely wouldn't attempt the inquiry.

As adults, we often hesitate to ask people for things when we don't know how they'll respond. However, children are quite different. They approach their parents with confidence and boldness when they ask for things. They even seem to have confidence in asking for things they know they'll never get! At what point does our confidence fade with God. Can we be so confident that we know there's a, "yes," just waiting for us?

In Luke 11:5-8, *(check it out as part of your reading, today)* the passage says, because of the man's boldness, the friend will give him as much as he needs. Think about it for a minute. We have the privilege of coming before the Lord with boldness! If we offer up a feeble prayer, we will receive a feeble answer. We need to be bold in our requests of the Lord and then we will receive as much as we need. Scripture says we reap what you sow, even in our times of prayer.

Today, and every day, be bold in your prayer time with the Lord. Do not be afraid to ask Him for the desires of your heart. (ref. Psalm 37:4). He already knows what they are; He placed them there to begin with. He's just waiting for you to ask. So many times we think that the "desires" we have for ministry and the church are too much to ask. Be confident. Be aligned with His will and your request will be granted. Ask Him for the "yes!"

Read: 1 John 5:14-15

What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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40 Days of Fasting & Prayer / Sat., April 13th – Day 39

Several years ago, The Martins, wrote this song. Very appropriate for our devotions for this week! See if you can let yourself dream!

Believe that anything is possible if we understand who Jesus is
I believe there's nothing that can stop us if we learn to dream like Jesus did
So don't limit your ambition to what's commonly defined
God has a special heart for those who walk outside the line
Don't be afraid to spread your wings and fly
It doesn't hurt to try, if you're gonna dream…
-Chorus-
Dream big, It's the Lord's desire for you to
Dream big, In everything you say and do
You'll see your greatest dream come true
'Cause all of Heaven is dreaming big for you

I believe that we can make a difference if we fall down on our knees & pray
Long ago just twelve men turned this world around
and we can do the same today
So let your imagination run as far as you can see
and dream along with God of everything that you can be
Don't be afraid to spread your wings and fly
It doesn't hurt to try if your gonna dream… (chorus)
-Bridge-
Oh, I love the word impossible 'cause that's what God does best
So just reach for the improbable and He will do the rest
If you're gonna dream...Dream big

Read: Jeremiah 32:26-27
What is this verse about?

How does it apply to your life?

What is required of you to see it fulfilled in your life?

How is God showing himself to you in this verse?

Dear Lord,

As I continue on in this journey, _____

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