

# IN THE FLOW

21+ Days of Prayer 2026



Welcome to 21 Days of Prayer! This is our biggest and best year yet! I'm inviting you to set aside 21 minutes every day for the next 21 days, and focus on Christ. Some days it will fly by. Some days it will feel laborious, but I promise that after 21 days, you will see some changes in your life, and you'll be glad you did it!

Your attention is sacred! What you give your attention to indicates who you are. In our culture, we have miraculously created paradigms where you can get all the results you're looking for without investing any of the time. You need to write a paper? Open ChatGPT, and you can write an entire book in minutes! Want all the feels of travel and adventure? Open Instagram and travel to the other side of the world. Looking for some fall-off-the-bone ribs that have been slow-cooked to perfection for the last 24 hours? You can pick those up on the way home from work! They will literally bring them to your car window. What a wonderful world we live in! We have everything we want, without any of the work.

But growing relationships is different. They take an investment of time and attention. This is most true in our relationship with God.

Once, while traveling through Colorado, my car ran out of gas. Tammi and I glided safely to the edge of the road and pulled the car to a stop. Cars were whizzing by 6 feet from my little 2-seater. No one honors the 80-mile-an-hour speed limit on

middle-of-nowhere highways in America. Luckily, we had cell service, and AAA was there within the hour.

That hour of sitting and watching the cars fly by is often what I feel like when I'm doing my devotions. I do everything possible to give God my full and sacred attention, but I can't help noticing the cars flying by and wishing I were one of them. There's so much vying for my attention! That said, relationships don't work like fast food and YouTube videos. We have to be there, fully present and ready to engage.

We have divided this year's 21 days into three sections on prayer. Each one should take a week.

- How to pray when you feel far from God.
- How to pray when you feel close to God.
- How to pray when you need discernment.

This is how I approach my Bible time each day. I start with a brief prayer asking God to meet me for the next 21 minutes. Next, I open my Bible and read the passage provided in your 21 Days of Prayer book to see what God says about prayer. After that, I read the devotional to see what someone at Revive has written about prayer. Finally, I spend my time praying and seeking God.

I'm inviting you to pull over for 21 minutes for these next 21 days! Let the world fly past you while you sit with your Creator. I know God has something to say to you!

Worshipping,

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "DUSTY TAYLOR". The signature is stylized, with a large, sweeping "D" and "T" that connect to the rest of the name.



“Whether veiled in  
distance or felt in  
nearness, God encounters  
us the moment we pray.”

## **Section 1: When God Feels Far**

I love the Easter season! I guess more accurately, I love the Biblical stories that we study over the Easter season: the triumphal entry into the heart of Jerusalem while people shout, "Save us, Save us!" (Luke 19), the nuances in the upper room when Jesus, wrapped in a towel, washed the disciples' feet (John 13), and the vulnerability of Jesus, in the Garden, praying for Himself as He prepares to battle with death (John 17).

Read this passage. Look at how Jesus prays, what He prays for, and how God answers!

### LUKE 22:39-46

There's a lot to unpack in these 8 verses. Jesus leaves behind his support system and enters prayer on His own. The party in the upper room was a huge success, but it's over now, and the weight that Christ feels is unlike anything we've ever experienced. Even if we ignore the supernatural weight of taking on the sins of the world, we still have a man in His thirties, fully aware that He is headed for one of the worst executions ever invented. No wonder He is asking for the Father to take the cup from Him! Then look at what happens in verse 43, "An angel from heaven appeared to Him to strengthen Him." I feel like this was God's way of saying, "I see you. I hear your prayers! You are not alone!" Hang on to this sentiment; we will revisit it in a couple of paragraphs.

We know the disciples were about to scatter like sheep (Matthew 26:31). We know that one of the twelve will betray Him and another one will deny Him three times. Jesus already predicted all of these things. And while no one knows what was going on in His heart and mind, I can say with assurance, I would feel far from God in this moment. "God, can you please come save me! Take this cup from me!"

I love this human side of Jesus: the side that doesn't want to die; the side that is so full of fear and emotional stress that His drops of sweat have blood in them; the side of Him that cries out to the Father, "Can you take this cup from Me," even though He knew the prophecies were actively being played out.



Desperation has a way of shrinking our world. When fear rises, options fade, and pressure mounts, it can feel as if we are being trapped with no way out. My family experienced this level of desperation once when we found ourselves lost in the forest at night, in the middle of winter, with temperatures falling below zero. The circumstances seemed bleak, but when I fell into the frozen lake, the situation suddenly became dire.

For Daniel, in today's passage, Nebuchadnezzar's decree seemed irrational and cruel, but he would expect nothing different from a King who was known for his harsh punishments. This time was different, though; the King's decree would take Daniel's life and the lives of his friends.

At crunch time, Daniel refuses to make demands of God. Instead, he seeks God and refuses to become anxious. When we panic, we forget that God is still in the same place He has always been: on the throne. Daniel, though desperate, does the only thing he can: he prays. As the clock ticks away crucial time, Daniel draws closer to God and fully entrusts his life to God's purpose.

We often assume God's silence equals God's absence. However, two things can happen while we wait. First, our trust in God's master plan can increase. Second, when we receive salvation from our experiences, it helps us see that God has been with us all along, even in what felt like silence.

Dripping wet from the waist down, I remember telling my family that the situation "just got real." Knowing what I did about hypothermia, I realized I had less than 30 minutes to get dry and warm. When we came upon a campground building that had been left for the winter, I prayed the simplest prayer I could muster: "God, please let a window be unlocked." After trying all but one of the windows with no success, my anxiety rose. I reached for the final window with a sense of dread. When I felt the window move, I knew it was liberation from our desperate situation.

Did God answer my prayer at that moment or when He had someone leave the window unlocked in the summer? Was it my pleading with



Fire had fallen from heaven. Elijah prayed boldly and watched God answer in undeniable power. The victory was public. The anointing was clear.

### Then one threat came — and the great prophet ran.

Jezebel's words sent him fleeing into the wilderness. Exhausted and afraid, he collapsed under a broom tree and prayed, "It is enough. Now Lord, take my life" (1Kings 19:4).

I understand that prayer. There have been seasons when I was hiding under my own broom tree. Functioning outwardly yet unravelling inwardly. Loving God but not feeling Him. Waiting for relief that didn't seem to come. Some days, the only victory was simply staying. In my own search for God, I often wondered if He had stepped away and forgotten about me, or worse, He didn't care.

In those moments, our thoughts whisper lies that feel like truth: *I'm alone. I've failed. Nothing will change. I don't matter anymore.* Elijah echoes them all. And God does not rebuke or shame him. Instead, He sends an angel with food and water, strengthening Elijah for the forty-day journey to Mt Horeb.

Despair did not drive Elijah **away** from God — it drove him **toward** God. Elijah stood in that cave waiting for the Lord to pass by. Wind tore through the mountains. An earthquake rattled the ground beneath him. Fire blazed. But God was not in those. He came in a gentle whisper.

When we are desperate, we search for dramatic signs — a miracle, a breakthrough, a sudden change. Yet God often meets us in quiet endurance. What felt like abandonment was actually care. What felt like silence was preparation. Faith often looks less like fire from heaven and more like sitting in a cave, waiting for a whisper.

And when God did speak, He corrected Elijah's distorted vision: "I have reserved seven thousand." Elijah was not alone. He never had been.



I didn't mean to wake up bitter. I didn't even want to be awake, but the ache was just as gnawing in my sleep, even more penetrating and cruel with the voices of judgment and blame ringing in my head. Like Hannah, I dragged out my petitions to God often, a short checklist of what was owed to me, pled with increasing desperation and fervor.

In the years after we lost two babies following our daughter's birth, I cried out to God until...until I stopped. I feared I was being punished, that God was distracted by His shiny, bright children while I suffered alone in the dark. The darkness allowed lies to enter my ears: "No point in asking. He's not a good Father but an absent one. I'm on my own." I shrunk Him down to a size I could imagine and numbed the pain.

Hannah grieved and complained, yet she did not lose hope. The cries of her heart were so wrenching, yet she stayed boldly devoted to prayer and fasting for a child, which she vowed to give to God for service in the temple. Finally, she was seen by the priest, who blessed her. This was her turning point.

Hannah's days of begging were over. She washed her face in amazing grace, faced forward, and stepped out in faith that she had been seen and heard.

Perhaps Hannah had this verse hidden in her heart from Deuteronomy 33:12, "Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in Him, for He shields him all day long, and the one the Lord loves rests between His shoulders." Can you see yourself as *the* beloved, the image of your head resting on His chest, His cheek on your head?

Philippians 4:5-7 encourages us with truth, "The Lord is near. 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 understanding, will guard your hearts and mind in Christ." That's the recipe.



When was the last time you experienced a crisis? Natural disasters like fires, floods, accidents, financial loss, job loss, or serious illness suddenly present and threaten our safety and peace. They challenge our coping mechanisms and usually consume our time and attention. I can relate, can you?

King Jehoshaphat had such an experience. His advisors told him that a huge coalition army from across the Jordan River had already advanced westward beyond the Dead Sea and was encamped at the oasis of Engedi. They were only about 35 miles from Jerusalem. Wow! Jehoshaphat knew his military resources were insufficient against the advancing horde. The king was afraid (20:3). Panic would be a common response, but instead, the king "set his face," to seek the Lord." Most of us would resort to our own resources and plans, but the king made God his **first** point of contact, not his **last** resort.

He announced a fast and brought all of Judah together at the temple, turning fear into prayer (20:5-13). There were three phrases that Jehoshaphat used as he prayed that day:

**Are You Not?** "Are You not God in heaven? (v.6). You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In Your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand You."

**Did You Not?** "Did You not drive out the inhabitants of this land?" (v.7). Jehoshaphat remembered God's past faithfulness and provision. He remembered how God had driven out the nations that previously occupied the land and given it forever to the descendants of Abraham. He repeated a portion of the prayer that Solomon prayed a century earlier (2 Chron 6:28-30).

**Will You Not?** "Will You not judge them?" (v.12). The king asked God to execute judgement on the attacking horde and ended his prayer with: "For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You" (v.12). When we experience a crisis, we can all relate to this confession.



In this passage, the Israelites are caught in the infamous golden calf fiasco at the base of Mount Sinai. Exodus 19 and 24 provide important context prior to the incident. We are told that God instructed Moses to warn the Israelites to keep their distance and not touch the mountain (Exodus 19:12). When God's glory engulfed Mount Sinai, it blazed with fire, filling the Israelites with terror (Exodus 19:16-18). Moses remained on the mountain with God for forty days and forty nights (Exodus 24:18). Meanwhile, the Israelites grew restless and took matters into their own hands.

It may be difficult to understand how the Israelites turned so quickly to idol worship. After all, they had experienced God's epic deliverance from Egypt and witnessed His provision firsthand in the desert. But let's pause and enter into the tension. Their connection to the Almighty God had disappeared into a mountain consumed by smoke and flames. He was gone for a long time. They were in the middle of a desert. Imagine with me the questions that could have been swirling in their minds: Had Moses abandoned them? Was he even still alive? Would they be next? That kind of uncertainty would be wildly unsettling. So the Israelites fell back on what they knew from life as slaves in Egypt: demanding a solid, visible representation of a god they could control.

When God tells Moses of Israel's rebellion and prepares to bring judgment, Moses does something incredible—he appeals to God's mercy. In Exodus 32:32, we even see him offering to be blotted out on their behalf. When the people's sin creates distance from God, Moses stands in the gap, foreshadowing our perfect mediator, Jesus.

When I face uncertainty, I tend to grasp for something tangible to ease my heart. My human nature sometimes drives me to seek what seems familiar and controllable, yet doing so leaves me feeling distant from God. Can you relate? Do you have any uncertainties or struggles you are wrestling with?

I invite you to close your eyes and take slow, intentional breaths until your heart and mind are still before the Lord. What do you sense He might be speaking to your heart?



My friend trains horses for a living, and one day, a client brought in a new horse that had been trained by someone else. The client wanted to know if the horse would be a safe fit for her, so she left him with my friend for a trial week.

On the second trial day, my friend said to me with a rueful half-smile, "Wanna feel what it's like to ride a robot?" Before I'd even fully settled into the horse's saddle or cued him to do anything, he drifted down the arena - mechanically following the fence at a steady walk without any thought toward me at all. He wasn't being bad or dangerous; he was simply doing what he'd been trained to do. He'd been trained so consistently to start every ride just walking the fenceline, it no longer occurred to him to think about his rider.

Even when I did cue him, his responses felt like I was pushing buttons on a computer and achieving a result rather than communicating with someone and achieving understanding. Again, he wasn't being a bad horse. But my friend and I have worked hard to create the kind of relationship with our personal horses that when we get on, the first thing our horses do is mentally check in with us for a short moment as if to say, "Hello! What are we doing today?"

How often do we roll out of bed and mechanically drift through our days, jobs, and even do Kingdom work on autopilot simply because we're just doing "what we know"? How often do we start our days by first checking in with God: "Good morning, Father! What are we doing today?"

Saul (Paul) was an intelligent man. He had been trained well in Jewish laws and traditions and educated formally by the respected Sanhedrin leader and rabbi, Gamaliel. Thanks to his consistent and advanced education, he thought he "knew" what he needed to do in life – but lacked any connection back to God (his ultimate leader) or Jesus (his ultimate rabbi). With all that knowledge but no connection, was he actually doing what God wanted him to do? (Acts 9:1-2)





"Draw near to God and  
He will draw near to you."

## **Section 2: When God Feels Near**

There is a difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is passive—an involuntary physical response to sound waves. Listening is intentional, requiring effort to focus, interpret, and understand. While hearing is impeded by external, physical barriers, listening is hindered by intrinsic, personal boundaries. Often, we hear, yet we do not listen.

Eli, the high priest and judge in 1 Samuel, had heard the Lord. He held the distinction of hearing God in an era when the Lord's word was rare. He was God's chosen vessel. Yet, his sons ignored the Lord's commands; they passively received and actively rejected His word—and ultimately, His blessings.

Amidst this persistent disobedience, Samuel consistently ministered to the Lord. He tended the temple, helping restore God's people. However, his obedience originated from inherited knowledge rather than firsthand experience. He followed his high priest, Eli, and obeyed the Lord's perfect word even when his earthly models were flawed.

One night, Samuel was asleep in the temple—a testament to his diligence. He was likely tending the lamps in the Holy Place as well as caring for Eli. In this quiet moment of consistent obedience, God called to Samuel. Though Samuel knew the Word, he did not yet know God's voice. Naturally, he ran to the voice he recognized: Eli.

"Here I am!" he answered—a response reminiscent of Abraham, Jacob, and Moses. Two more times God called, and two more times Samuel ran to Eli. He answered the only authority he knew with faithfulness and eagerness.

Finally, the high priest realized he was no longer the sole recipient of God's word: God was speaking to Samuel. This was a sobering moment for Eli; the teacher would now have to ask the student what the Lord had said. Rather than reacting out of shame, Eli instructed Samuel on how to prepare for the Lord's call:



Isaiah 6 is an inspiring chapter. Let's walk through what happens:

(6:1-4) Isaiah sees a vision of the Lord on His throne in Heaven.

(6:5) He is devastated by the separation between his sin and God's perfection.

(6:6-7) Isaiah is purified of his sin and guilt.

(6:8) God asks for a messenger, and Isaiah says, "Here I am. Send me!"

Sound familiar? For most of you, your walk with God has gone something like this:

(1) You came face-to-face with the reality of the Lord in some fashion.

(2) You realized how broken and sinful you were.

(3) You believed in Jesus, who conquered sin and death, and by faith in Him, you were saved.

(4) You committed to Jesus' Great Commission: to make disciples, following Him and His teachings.

That step between believing and saying "send me" can be hard for us. Maybe it's easy to believe in Jesus (He was perfect, after all!), but we may struggle to believe in *our* capacity to spread His invitation of grace. The enemy constantly reminds us that we're broken. I could misrepresent Jesus! I'm not qualified! There's too much on my plate! I've hurt and hindered so many people! We decide our capability for ministry based on who we are. But listen to how Jesus starts the Great Commission: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18).

All those disqualifying characteristics? They crumble at the Name of Jesus. It's about Him! Don't let Satan convince you that Jesus and ministry are standing on the other side of your imperfections. He's right next to you and wants to walk through life, sin, and ministry together. When Isaiah saw the majesty of the Lord, he did not hesitate to raise his hand to be sent. We have that assurance! If the Creator is for us, who can be against us?



### **The Moment at the River**

Take a moment to quiet the noise around you. Let's step back to the banks of the Jordan River. Imagine birds overhead, the scent of water, and the hum of the crowd.

Amidst the throng, you see a man. He looks ordinary—nothing about his appearance screams "royalty." As He approaches the river, the Baptizer yields. Then, the atmosphere shifts. Heaven rips open. A voice like a thunderclap shakes the ground, making the hair on your neck stand up. You stand frozen as the voice declares: "You are my Son; with You I am well pleased."

### **The Significance of Age 30**

In 1st-century Jewish culture, this moment carried immense weight. Traditionally, when the oldest son turned 30, he officially took on his father's work, carrying his father's full authority. For those watching, the message was clear: Jesus was Immanuel—God among men. The baptism at the river reveals the perfect unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. While baptism added nothing to Christ's own perfection, it serves as a symbol of salvation for the rest of humanity.

### **From the Jordan to "Revive"**

This reminds me of a recent event. My daughter, Jolynn, was baptized. At Revive, we treat baptisms like a "rocking party"—we love celebrating people publicly proclaiming their faith. We even film videos where people share their "why." While my wife and I were focused on Jojo's big moment, Jesus was using her story to reach someone else.

There was another young girl in the crowd who had been struggling. She wanted a relationship with Jesus, but didn't know how to find it. During her video, Jojo simply said that she saw Jesus get baptized in a movie and knew she wanted to follow His example. That simple faith pierced the other girl's heart. She thought, "I want that, too." For a week, that girl wrestled with her fears. Finally, on a Wednesday night at youth group, she found the courage to ask her leader: "I want to be close to God like Jojo is, but I don't know how." The leader brought her to me. As we talked, I felt God leading us to involve her family. Despite her nerves, she said, "I'm scared, but I want to accept Jesus." We walked through that journey together, and today, she knows the Lord.

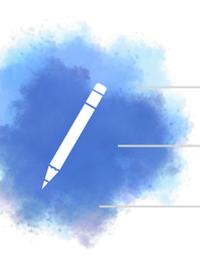


Have you ever tried to start a fire? Or even just light a match? The first rule, of course, is don't use wet material. What was Elijah thinking? Not only was he using wet wood, but saturated wood. So saturated, in fact, that the water collected at the base of the pile. Oh, to have such faith!

I have fond memories of going camping as a child. When we went, one of the first priorities was to have fire of some sort. Usually, Dad had the basics in the car so we could camp on the spur of the moment. One time, though, we went camping, and he had forgotten any kind of fire-starting material. No lighter. No matches. Nothing. The whole family was tasked with searching the deserted campsite for fire. Maybe someone left something. Otherwise, our random camping could not happen. I remember wanting to camp so bad. We prayed for fire, and then we carefully and methodically looked. Guess what? God answered! Some people had not completely extinguished their fire. I saw a puff of smoke. With time, patience, and a little faith, we had a fire from that little smoke puff.

Now I am an adult. Do I still have that faith? Would I have had enough faith to drown the material in water and then seek God? Every day, I am called to rekindle my faith that I may be so near to my Heavenly Father that it is a simple request to ask the impossible and know that my God will answer.

**PRAYER:** Lord, draw me close, help me to want to be so near that praying for the impossible is not a shot in the dark – it is a call to my first Love, a call to faith, and a call to grace. Light a fire in me to seek Your will and know that I am walking in alignment with You. As I pray for the impossible, increase my faith to believe and walk in possibilities. In Jesus' Name, AMEN.



In the Gospel of John, we see one of the most amazing miracles in Scripture: the feeding of the five thousand. A massive crowd follows Jesus across the Sea of Galilee. They are hungry, far from home, and without resources. Not exactly the type of groupies you want following you, right? I can imagine the disciples in that moment, looking at one another, wide-eyed and nervous for what will happen next. But where the disciples see scarcity, Jesus sees an opportunity for the Father's glory.

Before the bread is multiplied, before the miracle unfolds, Jesus does something so simple it can often be overlooked — He gives thanks. In that moment, surrounded by need and impossibility, Jesus is not anxious. He is not hurried or overwhelmed. He doesn't 'Google' a recipe that will feed the masses. Instead, He is deeply in tune with the Father. The miracle begins not with abundance, but with communion of gratitude and thanks.

In reading this, we are reminded that Jesus acts in perfect step with His Father. He does what He sees the Father doing. He speaks what He hears from the Father. In this passage, that nearness is evident. While the disciples calculated wages and 'what-ifs', Jesus lived in that moment from connection.

Gratitude in the face of uncertainty reveals trust, and trust reveals intimacy. Jesus' confidence was not in the size of the supply laid before him (thank goodness!), but in the sufficiency of His Father. His heart was anchored in relationship, and from that relationship flowed provision. When we feel close to God—when our prayers feel intimate, when the Bible speaks clearly to us, when worship stirs our hearts—we are living in something precious: the nearness of God.

And here's the kicker: nearness to the Father does not end with us. It overflows from us. Because Jesus was secure in the Father, thousands were fed. His communion with God became the provision that fed them. The same pattern is true for us. When we are abiding in God, we become the same: a calm spirit in chaos, generosity in scarcity, faith in uncertainty. People are blessed not only by what we give, but by the peace of the Holy Spirit we carry within us.



As most of us do, I struggle with doubt: doubt in the unknown, in my abilities, in my worth. The list can go on and on. But the one doubt I don't carry is who God is. I know He is faithful. I know He is holy. I know He is good.

In Exodus 3, the Lord came down to Moses and invited him into a major moment—one that would be talked about for centuries and shape the history of God's people. The response we see from Moses is one of reverence. He shows a great fear of the Lord, yet we also see his doubt surface.

"But Moses protested to God, 'Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?'" (Exodus 3:11)

"Who am I?" I've found that when I'm face-to-face with the Creator of the universe, I am humbled by His presence. Then I let my humanity creep in: why would He choose someone like me to do something for Him? Will I be able to do it? Surely not. I feel like Moses, looking at Egypt and choosing fear, choosing doubt. But God invites us to look at Him and have faith. The calling was never dependent on who Moses was, and it isn't dependent on who we are either. It rests entirely in who God is and in His presence with us.

"God answered, 'I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God at this very mountain'" (Exodus 3:12).

The answer to Moses' insecurity wasn't self-confidence; it was God's presence. The choice we have to make is to trust. It's remembering He's right there next to us. He walks with us, strengthens us, and goes before us. If we allow Him to, He guides our every step. What doubt, fear, or insecurity are you still holding back from laying at His feet?



How do you respond to suffering?

When you enter a painful season, what is your default response? Do you minimize it and push through? Do you let it consume your thoughts, creating a prison cell in your mind? Or do you quietly let it become part of your identity, a label you carry, a cloud that follows you everywhere?

What if Jesus offers us a better way?

In Acts 4, Peter and John are arrested for proclaiming the risen Christ and healing a man in His name. They are interrogated and threatened by the very leaders who opposed Jesus. This was not a minor inconvenience. It was costly, frightening, and unjust. We would not hesitate to call it suffering.

So how do they respond?

In verse 23, we see that the moment they are released, they go straight to their fellow believers and tell them everything. They do not isolate. They do not act like they have it all together or put on a brave face. They invite their community into their pain. And the community responds not with panic or platitudes, but with prayer. Together they lift their voices to God, reminding each other of His character and His control. They don't ask for comfort alone; they ask for courage, and for God to be glorified even in their suffering.

Their suffering becomes a doorway to deeper fellowship and deeper dependence on God.

Part of me can't help but wonder if Peter and John were following the example that was modeled for them during Jesus' life and ministry. This wasn't the first time they had seen suffering shared in community. We see the same pattern in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-38). As Jesus prepared to face the crushing weight of the cross, He brought Peter, John, and James with Him. The Son of God did not suffer in isolation; He invited His closest friends to watch and pray beside Him.



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Some people think they have discernment when actually they are just suspicious. Suspicion comes out of the unrenewed mind; discernment comes out of the renewed spirit.

-Joyce Meyers

**Section 3: When We Need Discernment**

If you know me at all, you know how busy my schedule is. I'm a gal on a mission! I keep a schedule that's booked down to the minute, and I typically have the next 6–8 months of events already planned.

My plans are extremely well thought out, and when they're interrupted, my reaction is not very pretty. I've spent a LOT of time pushing right past the interruption, staying as firm as I can in what I've set out to do — even to the point of total exhaustion.

Can you relate?

### **Read Joshua 5:13–16.**

Joshua has been battling, leading, and thriving in forward motion — and then the Commander of Heaven's Armies told him to stop and take the sandals off his feet because the direction Joshua was about to receive from the Lord was the REAL deal. And he obeyed without question! He fell on his face and worshiped, removed his sandals, and then listened to what the Lord instructed him to do.

**Read Joshua 6.** It would take a LOT of trust in the Lord to walk around a city for six days. I'm fully convinced that if Joshua had not stopped, worshipped the Lord, and removed his own shoes, the instructions from God would have been followed by a lot of questions. Instead, he was postured to listen and trust.

Joshua's response to being interrupted was to worship God and remember WHO fights the battles. In that space of awe and wonder, he was obedient in taking off the shoes that had carried him into a multitude of battles and journeys, giving the Lord his full attention.

What would happen if the Commander of Heaven's Armies stood in front of you today and asked you to pause before your next move? Would you be willing to switch up your plans? Or would you be arguing the case for your own agenda?

Take some time to reflect.



Solomon is young. Newly crowned. The weight of leadership is already pressing in. God appears to him in a dream and says, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

That question reveals what we love. If God asked you that today, what would come out first?

Security? Clarity?

Relief? Success?

Solomon says something surprisingly honest: "I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Give your servant a discerning heart." He does not ask *for* something. He asks to *become* something. He feels the gap between what he has been given and who he currently is. And instead of asking God to change his circumstances, he asks God to shape his heart.

Discernment in Scripture is not just being smart or decisive. It is a formed heart. It is learning to see what God sees and care about what He cares about. It is becoming the kind of person who can carry responsibility without being hardened by it. When I need discernment, I usually want answers. I want the next step spelled out. But God seems more interested in who I am becoming than in simply telling me what to do.

And here is the quiet pinnacle of the story. After God grants him wisdom, Solomon goes to Jerusalem. He stands before the ark of the covenant. He offers sacrifices. He worships. The first act of a wise king is submission. Wisdom does not make him independent. It makes him bow. That is how we know the discernment was real. It did not make him bigger in his own eyes. It made God bigger.

To stay in the flow of the Spirit is not just about getting guidance. It is about staying under authority. The Spirit forms us into people who return to God again and again, who do not outgrow dependence. We do not just need better decisions. We need surrendered hearts.



In Luke 6, we find one of the many accounts of Jesus praying. "In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve." This also happens to be an excellent account of how Jesus used discernment to make big decisions. We, of course, should use His example for both prayer and decision-making.

**Let's follow the steps:**

1. Jesus went to the mountain. That's good. We like mountains. We like getting outside our normal routines to commune with God. For many, being in nature makes it even better.
2. Jesus prayed. We can get behind that, too. Jesus prayed. We are called to pray, so following His example can stretch us, but we understand and support the idea, even if we are not always good at the action.
3. Jesus called His disciples and went on to begin His ministry. It's a simple formula. Jesus went out into nature, spent time in prayer, and did the thing He prayed about. All of it is tied up nicely. Jesus had decisions to make. We have decisions to make. Jesus prayed. We pray. Jesus feels good, and we feel good, too.

It is possible to skate through this passage and miss what's really said, though. Luke mentions it almost casually, which might tempt us to take it casually. That would be a mistake. Luke writes, "and all night he continued in prayer to God." Wait, what? Did that say all night? Not really *all night*, right?

Casual reading might also cause us to miss the reason Jesus was praying in the first place. He was calling His disciples. These are the ones who would be responsible for carrying His message to the nations after His death. Getting it right was important.

Maybe we don't have decisions to make that require the discernment Jesus shows in this passage, or that ask us to carry the weight that Jesus carries, but we do have matters for prayer that require some of the focus and intensity that Jesus displays. These things will require more than casual prayer.



Peter was hungry. Fasting maybe? Or perhaps, just because the journey had been long. As dinner was being prepared, Peter went to the roof to pray, and went into a trance, and maybe because he WAS hungry, he had a vision of various animals, hearing a voice, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!"

Yet these weren't animals that ANY God-fearing Jew would eat. These were unclean animals! Peter protested, pointing out that he had never eaten anything unclean. He was a law-abiding Jew! (I wonder if Peter thought it might be a test at first?)

Yet the same vision repeated three times. Each time, the voice told him, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."

Peter's heart was to please God, yet he was being told to do something against the very law that God had ordained in the Torah. The scriptures read that Peter was perplexed. To abstain from the "unclean" was to be set apart, as a Jew, from the rest of the world. AND it was LAW. What a conundrum!

I like to think that Peter might have remembered when others had broken similar laws. David eating the temple shewbread (1 Sam 21;1-6). Or perhaps when Jesus Himself had broken with the law, healing on the Sabbath (Matt 12:10, Luke 13:10-17, Mark 31:6). Perhaps Peter did reflect on these later.

I wonder if the backlash he would receive from his fellow Jewish brothers for breaching Jewish law occurred to him? Yet he didn't have much time to reflect in the moment, as the rest of the story and preparation on which God had been working showed up at his doorstep. Because of these visions, even though he didn't know why, he was willing to do what he most likely wouldn't have previously. He went with the visitors whom God had sent to him: with "unclean people" — against Jewish tradition and Law.

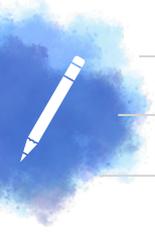
He became the first to understand that the Gospel was for ALL people — none excluded! A NEW law under the new covenant of Jesus. A whole new mission field opened up due to his willingness to obey what God was saying in that moment and his willingness to trust God with the outcome. What if Peter had decided to adhere only to the “old ways” and missed the opportunity to take the Gospel to Gentiles?

I wonder how many times we have been prompted by the Holy Spirit to do something that goes against our limited views, and perhaps, against traditions of men— things that are engraved into our religious understanding? What opportunities have we missed in our “piety” instead of saying “yes?”

This experience with Peter shows us that God thinks “outside of the box” to accomplish some things for His purpose. It is wisdom to seek confirmation when He asks something that feels contrary to what we have been taught, and we must let love of God and the wisdom of the Spirit be our lead. God gets to do what HE desires, how He desires.

Am I, (or you) willing to let God change our course, and even how we think, in obedience to His will?

**PRAYER:** Lord, help us to be open to what You are doing. Fill us with Your Spirit to love those not like us. Lead us in wisdom to put aside ourselves, and to change course when You call, not relying on our own understanding, but on Yours, by saying “yes” to even the uncomfortable. In Jesus’ Name, AMEN.



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In 2014, my wife, Natalie and I were newly married, and I was asked to move to a new city for work. I was excited as this was an opportunity for career advancement. The area we were headed to was more affordable, so we were going to be able to live in a bigger home. If I were successful in my role, my path to even more opportunities in my career would be clear. Natalie and I spent hours scouring housing websites and dreaming of what our new life would look like in a new place. We moved, closed on our new home, and began our new adventure.

The next two years were challenging. We each faced challenges with employment, challenges with community, and we lost our first baby to miscarriage. I can remember feeling lost, confused, anxious, frustrated, and hurt. The excitement of opportunity and new beginnings shifted quickly as I struggled to understand why I felt so much opposition in all areas of our life. I felt stuck.

In Daniel 9, Daniel learns that in his people's exile, Jerusalem must lie desolate for a period of 70 years. I can imagine that Daniel, like me, might have felt lost, confused, anxious, frustrated, and hurt. Daniel prayed and fasted. He wore burlap and ashes to position his heart as humble. In his prayer, Daniel recognized God's greatness, confessed his sin, leaned into God's promises, and pleaded for the Lord's deliverance. In response, God sent the angel Gabriel to Daniel and delivered wisdom and understanding through Gabriel's message. What an awesome God!

God's plan is perfect. I didn't realize it at the time, but in hindsight, before we moved in 2014, I was not even close to being ready for the career advancement I was pursuing. Natalie felt called to more formal music ministry, but nothing had materialized, and we had never considered adding to our family by having kids. During this challenging time away from Boise, I learned so many valuable professional lessons that helped to prepare me for future career growth. Natalie also took her first ministry position as a worship leader, and we welcomed our first child, Harrison, into our family. The Lord had a plan all along. We can now see that His work during this time was clearly for our good and He was faithful every step of the way.



According to a quick Google search, humans make around 35,000 decisions every day. Most decisions are fairly insignificant, like deciding what to eat (although choosing Mexican food is rarely a hard or bad choice). However, many decisions require a greater deal of thought and discernment. For example, maybe you are considering a career change or a large financial commitment. For a believer, these weightier decisions often include seeking God's direction. The good news is that God promises over and over again to lead His people. He promises to guide us on the right path when we trust Him.

Proverbs 3 says to "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

What a gift it is to know the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and to be able to lean on this truth. Several years ago, my wife, Brittany, and I had the privilege of going on a guided African safari and boat tour of the Nile River. I was the missions pastor at our church at the time, and we took a team on a mission trip to Uganda. One of the men who had graduated from the mission school had gone on to start his own business. He loved the Lord, and God directed him to start an amazing safari company that he used to point people to God and provide an incredible opportunity to see God's creation. After we finished our work in a remote Ugandan village, we got to experience this. While on safari, we encountered all the African wildlife you can imagine, including, from what we were told, a fairly rare sighting of a lioness with her cubs. When we realized we were only feet away, although "mostly" protected in our reinforced van, we were incredibly grateful to have our guide, who was driving and keeping us safe throughout the safari experience.

God is our perfect guide. Isaiah says that the Lord will lead us in the way we should go. Our job is to seek Him and listen for His voice. This is using wisdom and discernment similar to how godly men like Solomon followed God's leading. I have found that the more connected I am to the Lord, the more I know His voice, the more wisdom and discernment He imparts to me, and the more confidence I have in knowing I am on the path He has for me.



In Acts 13, we are introduced to a group of prophets and teachers. A group that includes the following: a murder and persecutor of Christians (Saul/Paul), a man (Manaen) who grew up with Herod (the ruler who beheaded John the Baptist and presided over one of Christ's trials), a black African who may have also helped Jesus carry the cross (Simeon), a Cypriot Jew (Barnabas), a gentile from north Africa (Lucius), and one of the writers of the Gospels (John Mark). An unlikely bunch doing ministry together - worshipping the Lord and fasting as one.

The word translated *worshipping* [*ministered*, NKJV] is usually used in the context of service of priests and Levites in the temple. They were all doing the work of the ministry, being called as a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2).

Under the gentle yet persistent tether of the Holy Spirit, a deep longing took root in the hearts of these faithful servants. Their mission was clear: the Gospel must move. They were gripped by a holy ambition to see the name of Jesus echo across the region and to welcome new believers into the fold. Yet even with a clear mandate, they found themselves standing at a crossroads of uncertainty. They knew the *what*, but they were still waiting on the *who*. Have you ever known what needed to happen but required spiritual discernment as to the *how* or the *when* or the *who*?

These men did not lean on their own understanding or rush into a frantic, self-made plan. Instead, they anchored themselves in the disciplines of the faith, and God answered:

*"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."*

They moved forward with the unshakable confidence that comes when God's presence is prioritized, and as a result, He faithfully provided the blueprint for their purpose. He does the same for us.



What brings you to repentance? For King David, it came with the rebuke from Nathan the prophet. Nathan confronted David with the knowledge of his sin; Nathan rebuked David, telling him he had despised the Word of the Lord when he had chosen to sin. Read 2 Samuel 12. David was filled with sorrow at Nathan's rebuke.

2 Corinthians 7:10 describes the kind of sorrow God wants His people to experience... the kind that leads us away from sin and results in salvation. Salvation's initial work continues in our lives; repentance also must be addressed again and again as God shines His light into our hearts to reveal changes that are needed to grow within us the fruit of *His Spirit*.

David's prayer of repentance provides a model for us at those times we need to repent: As we look through this writing in Psalm 51, we see words like "blot out; wash me; purify me; remove; create; renew; restore; forgive"—meaningful words that relate to repentance. The first four words refer to our need for God to do a work of removing and washing, purifying us. The last four words are even more powerful: "create, renew; restore, forgive." These last demonstrate God's eternal achievement. The Hebrew word for Create is *Bara* indicating that only God performs this action. His divine act of creation brings it into existence. "Create in me a clean heart" (51:10). Renew: We were created in the image of God. Sin separates us from God. "Renew a loyal spirit within me." "Restore to me the joy of my salvation." "Forgive."

David cries out for help; he understands it is only God who can change our nature; we cannot do it ourselves. Scripture reads that "Your Word is a lamp to guide our feet and a light to our pathway" (Psalm 119:105). In His Word, we are given direction for our lives. In the instant of David's sin, he had despised the Word of the LORD. Psalm 119:11 reads "I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you." It is so important to hide His Word in our hearts so that we understand what actions are sinful.



Today, we encounter the first recorded song in all of Scripture: the Song of Moses. It rises up after the Israelites have watched their enemy, Pharaoh's army, utterly destroyed. The crushing weight of oppression has lifted, the urgency of fear has loosened its grip, and hope for freedom finally stretches before them. They are beginning to know God in a new way, not just as the God of their ancestors, but as the One who rescues, protects, and leads.

And yet, they are still in the wilderness.

They have moved from Pharaoh's brutal rule into a grace-filled partnership with God, but their surroundings have not magically changed. What has changed is them. This victory was entirely the Lord's doing. They left Egypt as a mixed multitude, bound together loosely by a shared longing for freedom, and now, through song, they are being shaped into a unified people under God's leadership. Their praise becomes part of their formation.

When we look back at the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we see God work miracles again and again. Yet Scripture does not record them breaking into song when their prayers were answered. Why here? Is it because we so often forget to stop and thank God? Or is there something about freedom, true deliverance, that loosens the soul and gives birth to spontaneous praise? I don't know for certain, but I do know this: there is something deeply necessary about stopping to dance, stopping to tell the story, stopping to celebrate what God has done.

Music carries memory. It awakens emotion and moves beyond words. It lifts our souls above what is temporary and binds us to believers across generations. Through song, our individual voices are woven together into a single offering of praise to the one true God. Scripture even tells us that one day we will all sing the song of Moses together. Song becomes a holy act of remembrance, a way of telling God's story so it will not be forgotten.



“Yes, I’ll pray for you.” Maybe you’ve said this to someone for a specific situation in their lives. Then you pray for that specific thing, but you want to keep praying for them over time and aren’t sure what to say. Or maybe God lays a person on your heart, but you aren’t exactly sure what to pray for. But what if, instead of just praying the first thing that comes to mind, we turned to the Scriptures? In many of Paul’s letters, he often prays for the people he’s writing to, and these prayers can be a great outline and framework for us to know the types of things that we could be praying for the people in our lives. These are things that matter to God and things that He would love to do in every person’s life. Two examples of this are Ephesians 1:16-19 and Ephesians 3:16-19. Let me write out examples for you:

**Ephesians 1:16-19:** God, Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for the privilege of praying for her. Would You give her spiritual wisdom and insight, so that she would know You more. I pray that her heart would be flooded with light so that she can understand the confident hope You have given to those You have called—Your holy people who are Your rich and glorious inheritance, of which she is a part. I also pray that she will understand the incredible greatness of Your power for us who believe You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**Ephesians 3:16-19:** God, today I pray for \_\_\_\_\_. I pray that from Your glorious, unlimited resources that You would empower him with an inner strength through Your Spirit, so that Christ will make his home in \_\_\_\_\_’s heart, as he trusts in You. Let his roots grow down into Your love and keep him strong. And I pray that he would have the power to understand, as all Your people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep Your love is. And may he experience Your love, though it is too great to fully understand. Let him be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that only comes from You. Thank You, God, for how You are working in his life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



A siren wails. Your heart quickens; your eyes dart from side mirror to rear view and back. Your ears fine-tune to each point of the compass, trying to discern from which direction the warning cries. Why is that? What is it about *that sound* that causes a reaction in us? When bells chime, a dog barks, or even when we're stuck in traffic beside a vehicle blaring the most obnoxious music, we don't go on the same kind of alert. Why?

It's the same reason your heart aches when you see the swath of death on a fire-ravaged mountainside. It's the reason your mind lurches when you see a broken body. Dissonance. Something is not in harmony. When we hear or see things out of union with the Creator's design, our spirit *knows*. We're also aware when we are "out of alignment" spiritually. We just know. We don't feel harmony in our souls. The pitch is off. We are not in union.

It feels off because we were created for union with God, and though sin broke that, Jesus came to restore our ability to harmonize with His heartbeat. We were designed to live, march, and dance to the same rhythm that flows from the Father, Son, and Spirit.

In John 17, we read Jesus' high priestly prayer, asking God to restore and solidify our union with God and each other. A huge part of staying in the flow of the Spirit through prayer requires us to agree with and step into the heart of this sacred prayer of our Savior. Read each verse again and respond to the prompt.

**Verse 20** - Jesus is praying for you! Sit in the gravity of that for a moment.

**Verse 21** - How are Jesus and the Father one? Why does Jesus want us to be one as His Body?

**Verse 22 + 23** - The glory Jesus gave us is the Holy Spirit. How can the Spirit bring us to complete unity? What happens if we agree with and submit to letting Him unify us?





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