

A grayscale photograph of a person walking away from the camera on a path. In the background, a suspension bridge is visible against a light sky. The image has a diagonal line pattern overlay.

STEPS

YOUR WALK WITH GOD

40 DAY DEVOTIONAL FOR MEN

40 Day Devotional for Men

Step Up Your Walk with God

Men-

The challenge is to set aside 14 minutes a day for 40 days for a guided devotional time. This gives you set-aside time to consider 40 simple life practices and how to apply them. You will have conversations with your soul and with God. This conversation is always based on knowing Jesus as your Savior. If you aren't sure of this relationship, talk with someone who can help you be confident of His life for you and in you!

If you make this Step Up time part of your day every day for 40 days it will create a life shaping pattern in your life. This is more than a game changer. It's a life changer!

Select a time and place that limits distraction. Come into it with expectation that God has something to say to you personally. Enjoy the "time away with God" with a cup of coffee or something that helps you create the environment you want. You might take some notes as you go. Your biggest challenge will be how fast the 14 minutes goes by.

The topics come from simple life practices that I have found helpful in digging deeper into one's soul. Though one week emphasizes marriage, you don't have to be married to grow from that topic. Our God is eager to pour His Spirit on you and fill you with His grace and power. Step Up and receive it during this 40 day challenge.

-Pastor Roger Theimer

Step Up: Devotional Flow

In only 14 minutes you can move through this flow. Take more time to get more out of it!

Simple Life Practice:	This gives a simple truth in one sentence.
Explanation:	A brief explanation about the principle.
Bible:	Biblical reference applying to the principle. Read it.
Reflection:	Reflection question. You may want to even write some ideas down in the “notes” section.
Application:	What are you going to do or think differently?
Prayer:	Use the powerful pattern of prayer.

If you are in a group with other guys, you can use the topics from that week for your discussion when you meet.

Step Up: Prayer

There are different types of prayers. Some are conversational like when you are driving and praying as you go. Some are filled with deep petition like when facing a crisis. Some are inspirational and filled with song and thankfulness.

We encourage you to develop another type of prayer during this 40 day period of Step Up. This is a **powerful pattern of prayer** based on the Lord's Prayer. Even a few prayer thoughts in each area gives you plenty to pray about. Each day after you have finished your time in the word and reflection, take a few minutes to pray in these following areas.

Pray with **PRAISE**. (Hallowed by Your name.) Praise God for who He is and what He has done for you.

Pray for **PRIORITIES**. (Your kingdom come.) Pray for a specific way today He might better shape you into the likeness of Christ. Intercede as well for others. Pray for those far from God.

Pray for **PROVISION**. (Give us today our bread.) Pray for your material needs or physical healings. Pray for others as well.

Pray for **PARDON**. (Forgive our sins as we forgive.) Mention any sin that is blocking your relationship with God. Pray for others whom you are forgiving.

Pray for **PROTECTION**. (Deliver us from the Evil One.) What is the current test or temptation you are undergoing? Pray for God's protection.

Step Up: Topics

Simple Life Practices

Week 1: Intimacy with Your Father

- Create space for God every day.
- Expect God to speak.
- Meet with a spiritual friend.
- Commit to a local church.

Week 2: Love's Pursuit

- Understand God's purpose for marriage.
- Define love as commitment.
- You are well-loved to love well.
- Love God by loving your wife or girlfriend.
- Explore your wife's love language.
- You need respect, she needs to be cherished.

Week 3: Forgiving Others and Forgiving Yourself

- Daily seek God's forgiveness and forgive yourself.
- Learn the skill of asking forgiveness from others.
- Forgiveness step one: identify the injury and how it feels.
- Forgiveness step two: adjust your boundaries and expectations.
- Forgiveness step three: release the debt.
- Forgiveness step five: reconcile if possible.

Week 4: Becoming Who You Are

- God's purpose is for the image of Christ to live through you as it can only be done by you.
- Base your self-image and self-worth first on who you are in Christ.
- Know your strengths and beware of the shadow sides.
- Know your wounded areas and beware of how the enemy will target that.
- Secure in your own skin means not easily offended, thin skinned quickly takes offense personally.
- Understand what you need and express it in healthy ways.

Week 5: Brokenness

- Be honest with God about what breaks your heart.
- Jesus ministers through his brokenness. So can we.
- In all situations ask "Lord, how are you using this?"
- Don't run from brokenness, but walk through it with God and a few trusted others.
- When we are emptied of ourselves we can pray and trust more boldly.
- Seek hope in the character of God.

Week 6: Managing Emotions

- Check your beliefs behind feelings.
- Replace fear with trust.
- Anger turned inward becomes depression.
- Adjust expectations that free yourself and others.
- Choose your attitude and shape your feelings.
- Express feelings with "I" statements.

Week 7: Spiritual Warfare

- Pray for the working of the Holy Spirit.
- Prep for battle: discern spiritual strongholds.
- Prep for battle: refuse to rehearse old injuries.
- Prep for battle: ask "Is that really true?"
- Prep for battle: confession brings freedom and change.
- Victory is assured as you pray in the authority of Jesus' name.

Different Groups for Men

Different Group Sizes

- One-on-one (2)
- Triad (3)
- Small Group (4-8)
- Large Group with Small Group Breakouts (15-50)

Meeting Times

- At least twice a month. At most weekly.
- Typically 1 hour to 1 ½ hours
- Times chosen convenient to that group
- Locations. Church. Homes. Office. Coffee shop.

Topics

- Step Up 40 Day Devotional
- Sometimes books or Bible studies
- Sometimes simple discussion questions like
 - What's your week been like?
 - What do you see God doing in this?
 - Read Bible verse. Pray.

How to Get Connected to a Group

- Ask a friend if he would like to try a one-on-one. Ask two friends if you want to try a triad. Find three or more for a small group.
- Join an existing group.
- Join an existing group to learn how to launch your own.
- Email Pastor Roger if you want help finding a group or finding resources:
 - roger@kingofkingsomaha.org

Use This Devotional for Group Discussion

Create a conducive environment. Make sure your setting is comfortable and the time is convenient. It's helpful to have places where you don't have to be too concerned about being overheard if you are saying something personal. Choose seating arrangements that help you speak directly to one another and you are in close proximity. Small group space is available at church but please email Pastor Roger to reserve your time.

Opening Warm-up. (20 min)

Each person share "Here's what's happening in my world." Others listen, give feedback or questions. They don't give advice.

Content Discussion. (20 min)

Each person share: "This is something that grabbed me from last week's devotion." As that person unpacks it, others can join in with their perspective as well.

Take Away: "What is God saying?" (10 min)

Discuss as a group, "What is God saying to us today?" After discussion, add to it by reading a Bible passage of your choosing.

Pray. (10 min)

All are encouraged to pray and that can be easy if the prayers are short and conversational. Participants then can pray several times as different thoughts come to mind. The Holy Spirit can guide these prayers.

*Intimacy
with Your
Father*

Week 1

Week 1: Intimacy with your Father
Wednesday - May 1, 2019

Create Space For God Every Day

Explanation: Find a time to be alone with God and reflect on His truth and pray. Experiment until you find what works for you, whether this is morning or evening. Morning has its advantages because it gives you more awareness of what God is doing throughout your day. Plan for this time. Log your progress. Have material ready. It is worth getting up fifteen or thirty minutes earlier. Before you go to bed, tell yourself that the most important thing you will do tomorrow is to meet with God first thing. You will begin to look forward to it.

Bible: Read Luke 11:1-4

Reflection Question: The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray after they observed Him often taking prayer retreats. Ask the same question. Tell Him what has worked in the past and what hasn't. Listen for three ideas to help you in this life practice. Write them down and try them.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Week 1: Intimacy with your Father
Thursday - May 2, 2019

Expect God To Speak

Explanation: God speaks in general ways through His Word and also through others as they communicate God's Word. This includes everything from sermons, to conversations to books. But God also speaks specifically. This is a personal word that impresses our soul as a message specifically from Him to us. We just need to be ready to hear it and recognize it. So ask God every day before you spend time in His Word, "What is Your specific word for me today." Given time and meditation, you will usually have an "aha...that's what God wants to tell me today." I use a journal to occasionally record these. Find what works for you.

Bible: Read Luke 11:5-11

Reflection Question: What topics are you asking God to give you guidance or insight on?

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Week 1: Intimacy with your Father
Friday - May 3, 2019

Meet With A Spiritual Friend

Explanation: Find a friend that will meet for an hour or hour and a half every week or two. During that time talk about what is going on in your life. The objective is for the friend to listen and empathize, but not necessarily offer advice. Sometimes he might offer insight and give suggestions on what else to consider. Then spend time praying for what you see God doing. Another option is to read a couple paragraphs of the Bible that pertains to the topic of discussion. It is easy then to pray those Bible truths over the situations.

Bible: Read Luke 10:1; 17-23

Reflection Question: Is there any person that comes to mind as a possibility? What church leader might be able to give suggestions as to who might also be interested in being a prayer partner? Pray and wait if you don't have an idea right away.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
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Week 1: Intimacy with your Father
Saturday - May 4, 2019

Commit To A Local Church

Explanation: A life inhabited by Christ and following Him cannot fully happen unless committed to a local church. This means more than regular attendance, this means investing in relationships like a small group and finding a place to serve. In short, it becomes a place where you serve according to your unique gifting and personality. You build up others there as well as receive encouragement from them. The Christian life is not a solo sport and will always fall short of what it might be if not expressed in a commitment to a local body.

Bible: Read Acts 2:42-47

Reflection Question: What can be done this week to take steps in making a commitment to a local church?

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

*Love's
Pursuit*

Week 2

Understand God's Purpose For Marriage

Explanation: The world around us says that the purpose of marriage is to have someone who makes you happy. Biblically that is the by-product of marriage, but not the purpose. God's purpose for marriage is that we would experience a unique oneness with our spouse that reflects the love and oneness of Christ's love for us. Sacrifice. Giving all. This gets at the true essence of love. God creates this marriage union so we experience a unique oneness with our spouse in heart, soul, body and mind. We not only learn to love each other in marriage, but first and foremost, we are loving God when we love our spouse. One of the best (and hardest) ways we love God is by loving our spouse. So marriage is a sacred love that God uses for mutual joy and comfort, children when it is His will, and as a place where His love can be made known.

Bible: Read Matthew 19:1-9

Reflection Question: People were asking Jesus, "Just how far can we go so that a divorce is justified?" Jesus instead pointed to God's purpose of oneness in marriage. The reason for divorce is hardness of heart...resisting God and the other. Do you have any hardness of heart? Talk to God about it. Ask Him for the expressions of love that let you and your spouse (or future spouse) experience the oneness that God designed.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Define Love As Commitment

Explanation: Love is most often thought of as an emotion. And it can be a wonderful feeling that motivates us to extend ourselves to another. But at its essence, love is more of a decision. It is a commitment. A commitment to another person's best interest. No matter what it costs you. Even if they don't deserve it. Because they are worth it. Consider how God does this for you. He does more than feel attracted to you. He is committed to your best interest. And His commitment brings rescue and relationship. No matter if it cost Him His Son. Even when you didn't ask for it or deserve it. But you were worth it to Him! You can now apply all of the same to the people you love! Become committed to their best interest no matter what it costs you. Even if they don't deserve it. After all they are worth it!

Bible: Read Romans 8:28-39

Reflection Question: If you judged God's commitment only based on your interpretation of life's circumstances, then God's intentions toward you might be suspect. But you understand the commitment He has for you in giving His Son as a trade for your life. Reflect today by memorizing this definition of His love: "I'm committed to your best interest...no matter what it costs me...even if you don't deserve it...because you are worth it to me!"

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Week 2: Love's Pursuit
Wednesday - May 8, 2019

You Are Well-Loved To Love Well

Explanation: The essence of the Christian life is to love God and love others as you love yourself. But it isn't a life or life-style we can do by our own resolve. It is not a self-improvement course. It's not about working at it harder. Loving others well can only be done by being so thoroughly loved by Christ that it spills out of our lives. Another way of saying it is that it is not just a matter of imitation of Christ, but inhabitation of Christ. The Christian life is all about Christ who is given for you, so that Christ might live in you, and Christ would work through you. The endpoint is you love well because you are well-loved. God has poured His love into you through what Christ has done in your place...His life, death and resurrection. Give meditation to that every day. When you then are reminded of how well-loved you are, then you will love well.

Bible: Read I John 4:13-21

Reflection Question: : Look through these verses again and find a truth that stands out to you. Perhaps this is a special word from the Lord for you today?

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Week 2: Love's Pursuit
Thursday - May 9, 2019

Love God By Loving Your Wife

Explanation: Here's an interesting question. Why do I love my wife, or if single, why would you love your future wife? Many answers abound. Because I feel attracted to her. Or I choose to love her because I vowed in my marriage vows. It's what God expects of me. Or because she loves me. Or because it goes better for me when I do. Probably all of the above are part of the answer. But there is one perspective that might just be the most compelling and the most overlooked: I love my wife because that is the way I show my love to God. It is actually one of the most important ways I show my love to God. So if you ever consider telling God, "I will do whatever You want to show my love for You," then don't expect Him to say, "Quit your job and become a missionary." It will rather sound like, "The next time you see your wife, think of Me. The way that you show love to her, is an offering of love to Me!"

Bible: Read John 15:9-17

Reflection Question: What do you think it will look like for you today to "remain in my love" as Jesus says?

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Week 2: Love's Pursuit
Friday - May 10, 2019

Explore Your Wife's Love Language

Explanation: If you haven't taken the Five Love Languages Quiz, it will be helpful for understanding your love language and your wife's. What is hers? Words of affirmation? Acts of service? Physical touch? Quality time? Gift giving? The key here is becoming a student of your wife. It's more than learning about love languages. It's about learning about your wife! What makes her tick? What does she need? What does she like? What are her fears? What brings her satisfaction? What does she need from you that only you can give her? There's more questions here than can be answered in one setting. But it reminds you that there is some question for you to consider every day. Who is she? How can I love her in a way that fits her need? An interesting thing happens. You start to appreciate her uniqueness more and more, even when some aspects have taken some time to appreciate!

Bible: Read I Corinthians 13:1-7

Reflection Question: What are ways I can demonstrate the love other's need by communicating in their love language? What will that look like?

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Week 2: Love's Pursuit
Saturday - May 11, 2019

You Need Respect; She Needs To Be Cherished

Explanation: We have always heard that true love is unconditional. We are to love even if our spouse doesn't deserve it. Right? But the same can be said for respect. We are to respect our spouse even if they don't deserve it. Notice how this plays out in most marriages. For most men, love looks like respect. For most women, love feels like being cherished. It is helpful for both to be reminded of this. Ask your wife, "What actions do I do that help you better feel cherished and honored? What are things I do or say that take away from that?" Then talk about unconditional respect. What would that look like? Someday you also might share with your wife what communicates respect to you. Help her better love you as well.

Bible: Read Ephesians 5:21-33

Reflection Question: Consider each day one significant way you can communicate that you value her...that you cherish her. Write it down so you can record your progress. Yes! It's that important!

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Forgiveness

Week 3

*Week 3: Forgiveness
Monday - May 13, 2019*

Daily Seek God's Forgiveness & Forgive Yourself

Explanation: Forgiveness is at the core of our relationship with God, with ourselves, and with each other. It means to release a debt and not seek a "payback." It is what God does for us when He releases the debt of our sin and lays it on Jesus at the cross. God seeks no retaliation on us. We will do the same for those who sin against us. Today let's focus on seeking God's forgiveness.

Any sin you have committed against another person is also committed against God. David says to God after his sin of adultery, "Against you, you only (chiefly) I have sinned." The key is more than feeling bad about your sin, it is daily turning to God and giving it to Him. This is the picture of repentance. Move from standing with your back to God and holding onto your sin to turning around and facing God. Picture yourself laying it at the foot of the cross. It is an empty cross because the debt has been paid. One time for all. Don't pick up the sin again and rehearse it. Release it. Forgive yourself. Leave it there. It is finished. And daily take fearless inventories to admit the sin of that day and daily lay it at the foot of the cross. Each day Christ's resurrection proves that it is paid in full.

Bible: Read Psalm 51

Reflection Question: What are the key sins that I am struggling with now? Take the time to write them out. Confess and release them. Check daily for new recurrences.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

*Week 3: Forgiveness
Tuesday - May 14, 2019*

Learn The Skill Of Asking Forgiveness From Others

Explanation:

What to do: 1) Determine if it is a small matter for a quick conversation or if it is bigger and needs more time and attention. Choose the appropriate setting to discuss. 2) Own what you've done and don't make excuses or explanations. Instead ask questions to understand how it feels to the other person. How did it cause loss or pain? Repeat what you hear to be the feelings or consequences from the injury. 3) Ask for forgiveness, but respect that it might take time for the other to release the debt. Honor that. 4) Ask if there is anything that might be helpful to make up for the hurt.

What not to do: 1) Don't speak in a tone of voice that is less than genuine. 2) Don't expect that the other person will also ask forgiveness. Asking forgiveness is not done to create a reciprocal obligation. 3) Don't expect that with forgiveness the injury goes away. It takes time to heal. It takes time to trust.

Finally, asking forgiveness takes humility. It is like the humility we have when asking God for His forgiveness. We have nothing to bargain, only a request for the other to release the debt. It takes strength of character to admit our own fault and take responsibility.

Bible: Read I John 1:5-10

Reflection Question: Which of these action points of asking someone for forgiveness is most difficult? Why? Pray for that area.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Forgiveness Step One: Identify The Injury And How It Feels

Explanation: These next few days, let's consider what it takes to forgive another person. This is helpful to know so that you can give forgiveness and also so that you understand what it takes for others to forgive. Step one is to identify the injury. What happened? As a result, what have you lost? What feelings come with this loss? If it is a significant injury, then you must take time to grieve the loss. The goal will be to ultimately release the debt (forgive), but before you can do that, you need to fully understand the significance of that debt. Note that this is done regardless if the person who injured you is sorry for their action or even understands what they have done. That is a separate conversation and regardless of their action, you must forgive. Forgiveness is for your sake. Without it, hanging on to the injury will turn to bitterness. Withholding forgiveness becomes like acid and corrodes the container that holds it.

Bible: Read Matthew 18:21-35

Reflection Question: The power of forgiveness comes from the fact that God has first forgiven us so much. He paid for our sin by placing the wrath against our sin on His Son at the cross. In the story, this is the King forgiving a debt of a gabillion dollars. The servant who was unmerciful refused to forgive \$20,000 dollars. It's still a sizable debt. But in comparison? What sizable debts against you do you need to identify, grieve the loss it has caused, and then release?

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Forgiveness Step Two: Adjust Your Boundaries And Expectations

Explanation: Before you release the debt of someone's injury against you, it is helpful to adjust your boundaries and expectations. When you forgive someone it may not change their behavior. You can't control that anyway. You can only take responsibility for your own decisions. What will they be? For example you can choose not to expect certain behaviors that the other person at the time is not capable of giving. Or can you set a boundary that better describes what you need or keeps them from repeating the injury. Some of these boundaries and expectations may need to be communicated and some may not. It is helpful to ask the questions, "What am I responsible for and what am I not? What do I need and how shall I best express that?" Think these things through in the forgiveness process.

Bible: Read Matthew 18:15-20

Reflection Question: What do you need to forgive? What boundaries need to be set up? What expectations need to be adjusted? What needs to be communicated and what needs to be simply known to yourself.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Forgiveness Step Three: Release The Debt

Explanation: Some visualization is helpful here. Picture yourself at the foot of the cross. Forgiveness begins with understanding the debt that someone owes you because they wronged you. Picture hanging onto this bag of injury. You can hang onto it in such a way that you try to get even or hurt them back. Instead release the debt. Drop the bag of injury. Let it fall at the foot of the cross. That is the place where God has released your debt. And that is the place where God releases their debt as well. God is the judge. It is His responsibility to deal with that person and their sin. If they are unrepentant for example, that is more between them and God rather than just between you and that person. At any rate, it is out of your hands. You are free to love that person in spite of the injury they have caused.

Bible: Read Ephesians 4:29-5:2

Reflection Question: Some of this forgiveness visualization process can be practiced on a regular basis until it becomes more of a pattern of responding. Also when we forgive, the injury will come back to mind at a later time. We must visualize it again, and forgive again. What bag of debt you are quick to hold onto and how can you practice releasing the debt?

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:

Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Forgiveness Step Four: Reconcile If Possible

Explanation: Reconciliation is a two-way street. It is not possible in all matters of forgiveness. If one person is refusing the relationship, reconciliation is not possible. If one person violates boundaries, it may not be possible for the relationship to continue. But even if it may not in the end be possible, as followers of Christ we are always compelled to pursue reconciliation. In reconciliation, the immense power of God's love is seen. We live in a fractured world broken by sin. It is a divine miracle that relationships can be restored. First our relationship with God is restored and then our relationships with others. Reconciliation becomes the daily exercise of the Holy Spirit in our lives exhaling forgiveness. Reconciliation does not gloss over injuries, but works through them and ends up with stronger relationships!

Bible: Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Reflection Question: Sometimes reconciliation can be in specific issues of a relationship. Details need to be worked out around that issue. But underneath the issue is the relationship. Reconciliation in the relationship is maintained with forgiveness but it is celebrated with joy. Keep relationships healthy by enjoying each other. What can you do to pursue reconciliation?

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:

Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

*Becoming
Who You Are*

Week 4

*Week 4: Becoming who you are
Monday - May 20, 2019*

God's Purpose Is For The Image Of Christ To Live Through You As It Can Only Be Done By You

Explanation: A healthy question to ask yourself daily is "God, how are You working in my life today?" Often this question comes when you feel your soul is being squeezed by life's losses. It can be a cry out to God. "Where are you?" Other times you can ask the same question when your soul is filled with joy. In all life circumstances this is the answer to the question: God is interested in you becoming more who you were meant to be. This is the new person in Christ, becoming more like Christ. God works this in you as you trust in what Jesus has done on your behalf. Just as His death pays the debt of your sin, His life lives through you. Baptism is the reality that you are being joined with Christ and as you remember that daily, you lean into how He is transforming you into the likeness of Christ. That's God's goal. Living out the image of Christ. And it should be yours as well.

Bible: Read 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:17-21

Reflection Question: Consider today's circumstances and ask how you might express Christ-likeness as you meet these unique challenges. How is God using what you are going through now to fashion you more into the likeness of Christ?

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:

Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

*Week 4: Becoming who you are
Tuesday - May 21, 2019*

Base Your Self-Image And Self-Worth First On Who You Are In Christ

Explanation: How does God see you? How much does He value you? Who are you in His eyes? The more you see yourself the way God does, the more you have an accurate self-image. You are of infinite worth to God. Your value to Him is seen in how much He paid to redeem you through the blood of Christ. Though you sin daily, at the same time God sees you as completely righteous and forgiven because of Christ. God delights in the unique way you can express the presence of Christ living through you in your unique personality. God is saying right now, "Wow! Dude! You are amazing!" This is because of who you are and not even connected to what you do. It's not about your performance. Though He is pleased with that as well, His high regard for you is based on who you are in Christ!

Bible: Read Ephesians 2:1-10

Reflection Question: Throughout the day let your thoughts turn to how much God values who you are. From this place of value He fashions you as His workmanship to bring His love to those in your setting, particularly to your wife.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:

Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

*Week 4: Becoming who you are
Wednesday - May 22, 2019*

Know Your Strengths And Beware Of The Shadow Sides

Explanation: God is continually fashioning you in the likeness of Christ and it is being expressed in a completely unique way as can only be done through your personality and gifts. Become aware of your personality and strengths. It's worth reading books like Strength Finders and taking inventories. Live out your personality strengths rather than trying to acquire personality characteristics that God did not give you. But every strength has a shadow side that the enemy would use against you. Usually this is when the gift is overused or used in a way that breaks down relationships. Become aware of that as well. All of this plays out in your relationships. He especially wants your gifts to bless those closest to you, your closest family and friends. As you watch your strengths flourish in these relationships, you can grow in appreciating other's unique gifts as well.

Bible: Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-13

Reflection Question: What inventories have you taken to better understand your gift set? What could you discern just from self-analysis or asking others? It is very helpful to know your wife's gift mix so as to best appreciate that about her and your differences.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

*Week 4: Becoming who you are
Thursday - May 23, 2019*

Know Your Wounded Areas And Beware How The Enemy Will Target Them

Explanation: Take the time to investigate why certain actions or words of others bring out strong emotional reactions. Often there is a connection to a past injury or loss you have experienced in that area. The enemy, Satan himself, knows this and will try to gain a foothold in that area. He has the capacity to suggest thoughts. These are like whispers to your soul that are lies or partial truths. It gets you thinking in ways of getting even or feeling powerless or assuming the worst in others. It's usually expressed in anger. A spiritual battle is on. It's okay to feel anger, but not to live there. Investigate the thoughts eliciting the anger. Are they really true? Pray God exposes the lie and gives you strength to respond in a Christ-like way.

Bible: Read Ephesians 4:26-27; Ephesians 6:10-18

Reflection Question: Much of this work is done in personal time of reflection. It is helpful to journal this because it often takes time to see patterns of thinking. Once you have discovered certain stronghold places you are vulnerable because of past injuries. You will be better equipped to see how certain events trigger a strong reaction. What are possible strongholds the enemy might be pursuing in your life?

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Secure In Your Own Skin Means Not Easily Offended, Thin-Skinned Means Taking Offense Quickly And Personally

Explanation: This is a key question for your emotional well-being and says much about your spiritual grounding. What is it that offends you or you feel attacked by? Why is it personal for you? What are you afraid of losing? Notice that your reaction is usually more about how you interpret the offense than the action itself. The key is to detach, slow down and process what is going on. Why is this affecting you? It's okay to be angry, but don't simmer in it. Don't let the sun go down on your anger. Don't give the enemy a foothold. You may have to re-interpret the other person's actions. It is one thing to feel personally attacked because your pride is injured, but it is another thing to ask, "How do I respond as one who is in Christ? What does the 'new creation' person have to lose?" It takes time and sometimes emotional pain, but you will become less easily offended and more in tune with the other person. You better understand what might be behind their offending action.

Bible: Read Ephesians 4:17-24

Reflection Question: Is there something in your heart that you need to work through in taking offense with a certain person or situation? Ask God for His intervening power to help you live out your identity in Christ and not be quick to take things as personally. Be quick to forgive instead.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Understand What You Need And Express It In Healthy Ways

Explanation: A very healthy question to ask is, "What exactly do I need in this situation?" Especially ask it if you are going through a time of frustration or anxiety. You may be surprised by your answer, but it usually takes some reflection time to get that need or expectation to the surface. You may even have to write it down to understand if it is a legitimate need you want to pursue and if it is, how do you want to meet it. Then comes the important part. Communication. Make it clear to those who might be the ones to meet that need. "I need..." But respect the fact that it is beyond your control as to how others respond. Also share your needs with your heavenly Father in prayer. He asks that you do this and He is always committed to your best interest. It helps you then see how He uses others to meet those needs or in some cases have those needs wait. Sometimes you learn that it might be more about wants than needs. But the end result is still reachable. Communicating more clearly what you need or want.

Bible: Read Matthew 7:7-12

Reflection Question: What is a need in a key relationship that is not getting met? Talk to God about it first. Wait for the right time to share those needs with that person, but don't emotionally hold them responsible for meeting those needs. It's their decision. Your responsibility is to communicate them in a respectful way and then give them room to respond as they choose.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Brokenness

Week 5

Week 5: Brokenness
Monday - May 27, 2019

Be Honest With God About What Breaks Your Heart

Explanation: All people experience brokenness. Brokenness comes from being wounded by sin, either our own, the sin of others, or the sin of a fallen world. It is a hurt that can penetrate to the core of our soul. Emotional brokenness can happen when one feels unloved, rejected, defective or unwanted. Spiritual brokenness happens when we feel guilt or shame driving us from God. Brokenness also comes from having our hearts broken over loss. Grief. Injustice. Mourning. Brokenness can be a great opportunity for growth and healing. Or brokenness can lead to our destructive ways to cover it up or act it out. This week we'll consider how God can use this for our good. It begins with telling Him about it. Be honest. Seek His healing in forgiveness for what you are responsible and seek His comfort and guidance for that which you aren't.

Bible: Read Psalm 51

Reflection Question: What are the seasons you have gone through in terms of brokenness? Write them out, see what are the key themes of loss or hurt you are experiencing. Notice what is easily identified (on the surface) and what takes longer to uncover (longstanding wounds). Talk to God about these.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Week 5: Brokenness
Tuesday - May 28, 2019

Jesus Ministers Through His Brokenness And So Can We

Explanation: Jesus was greatly wounded yet completely healthy and whole. What was His key? First He turned His eyes to the Father, not to those who abused and rejected Him. Second, He told the Father what was bothering Him. Third, Jesus grieved. Fourth, He heard His Father speak and He was okay with that. Fifth, Jesus forgave. God used His brokenness ultimately to give us forgiveness and hope for the times we go through it. So will God use our brokenness.

Bible: Read Luke 22:39-46

Reflection Question: : How are you different after having gone through a time of pain or loss? You may want to even ask others if they notice anything different. You may feel more emotionally scarred but your character might be getting shaped more like Christ. You may be more sensitized to others who have experienced a similar loss that you will be ministering to that person through your brokenness.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Week 5: Brokenness
Wednesday - May 29, 2019

In All Situations Ask, “God, How Are You Using This?”

Explanation: : God is not the author of sin nor the brokenness it brings. But God is very involved in it. Remember He did not abandon Adam and Eve to fend for themselves after they rejected Him as their God. He pursued them and stayed with them in their broken world. He redeemed the ultimate consequence of brokenness, death, and made it the doorway to life. Then He entered this broken world personally in His Son who literally took all our brokenness on Himself. So how will God enter the painful times we go through? How will He use them? The specifics will be revealed as you walk through it, but true for every person who seeks Him during this time, He will walk with them and they will learn all the more to trust Him. Even if it feels like trusting Him in the dark.

Bible: Read Romans 5:1-11

Reflection Question: : Pause to ask the question, “God, how are You using this time I am going through? What are You accomplishing in me?”

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Week 5: Brokenness
Thursday - May 30, 2019

Don’t Run From Brokenness, But Walk Through It With God And A Few Trusted Others

Explanation: Our instinct is to avoid pain. Therefore we avoid dealing with the reality of our losses and the impact of brokenness. Walk through it instead. Find a trusted person to talk through what it feels like and what your thoughts are during the dark times of the soul. Take the time for healthy grieving, expressing sadness and loss. Perhaps it will lead you to more clarity. Emotional wounds are breeding grounds for false beliefs. The more we uncover about ways we are believing or behaving that aren’t helpful, the more significant the restoration. This will help you going forward. Eventually you must release the injury to the foot of the cross and give forgiveness.

Bible: Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11

Reflection Question: Notice in the reading how Paul embraces the sufferings of Christ because through it he notes that comfort overflows. Contemplate how these verses fit your life.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

When We Are Emptied Of Ourselves We Can Pray And Trust More Boldly

Explanation: The more healthy our self-image the less we have to defend it. Our value rests in God's value for us. It is seen specifically in how Christ has served us. To serve us, He emptied Himself and made Himself "nothing" that is, a servant. He emptied Himself on the cross. So do we. We empty ourselves of our self-sufficiency to control our world or elevate our position of importance. When we empty ourselves, it is looking to God for help and His promise is sure...He raises us up in due time. His power is given to the humble.

Bible: Read Philippians 2:1-11

Reflection Question: What do you think God might be prompting you to empty yourself of?

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Seek Hope In The Character Of God

Explanation: It's too easy for us to see God as too small. His magnitude is certainly obvious in His creative power. With a word He creates all that is and His whisper sustains it. But perhaps even more amazing is the character of God behind His power and might. His character is one of dependability. He keeps His promises. His love is sure and steadfast. His wisdom is for us. When you go through times of brokenness don't just focus on the circumstances. Hang on tightly to the character of God.

Bible: Read I Peter 1:3-9

Reflection Question: What promises of God do you gather from today's reading that gives you a "living hope?"

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

*Managing
Emotions*

Week 6

Check Beliefs Behind Feelings

Explanation: Feelings are a gift from God and designed to give us insight into what is happening in our soul. God designed the strong feelings in marriage, both love and anger, to help the two grow in oneness. We need to be open to how He can use them. We can enhance positive feelings and pay attention to how we express our negative feelings. In either case it is helpful to understand that feelings flow from our beliefs and interpretation of the situations around us. For example, another person doesn't make you become angry. That is a feeling from the way you interpret the other person's actions. This is an opportunity that God can use to teach you about what lies beneath the surface of your own emotions. What are the beliefs about the situation that make you angry? Are they based on truth? Strong negative emotional responses like anger are not wrong. God can use it to strengthen relationships just as He will use positive emotions like love!

Bible: Read Ephesians 4:20-28

Reflection Question: What thoughts or beliefs that you have bring a sense of anger or sadness? How about despair or hopelessness? Take time to examine the beliefs beneath those feelings and see if they are actually true, or if they are to be surrendered to the Lord in a way that would diminish their capacity to evoke those feelings. In contrast, what thoughts evoke feelings of love? Reflect on those!

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Replace Fear With Trust

Explanation: There are three types of general fear that the enemy will use against us: the fear of losing connection, fear of losing control, and fear of losing comfort. Connection has to do with relationships. When threatened with loss in our relationships we can become emotionally reactive with a wide variety of responses: jealousy, anger, grief, just to name a few. Similar emotional response can happen when we sense a loss of power in our ability to shape our outer world (control) or when we aren't getting our physical needs met (comfort). Emotional responses aren't to be avoided, but they are to be used as detectors. Look at the fear beneath. It can be replaced with trust that God will provide. And then our emotional responses will change as well.

Bible: Read Philippians 4:4-7

Reflection Question: The next time you feel yourself experiencing an anxious feeling or thought, ask yourself what are you afraid of losing? Then turn that into a prayer of trust. Know that in Christ, He has purchased for you life with Him that gives you capacity to respond in faith as He did when He lived a perfect life in our place.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Anger Turned Inward Becomes Depression

Explanation: Anger is a secondary emotion. It usually has its origin in a fear or caution of losing something. Instinctively we want to fight back and protect what might be lost. When it is not expressed in a way that helps someone alleviate that fear or at least get it out, then the emotion can easily slip into a deep sadness. So it may be helpful when facing a deep sadness or even depression to express what's going on underneath the surface. What am I afraid of losing? What am I angry about but don't feel any resolution? At such points feeling helpless might not be a bad thing. It might be an empowering thing if you turn it to God with the plea, "Help, Lord. This is bigger than what I can solve."

Bible: Read Matthew 5:38-48

Reflection Question: When this Bible passage says that we are to "be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect" perhaps this is more than perfectionism. It might be living out the righteousness that we have in Christ, His righteousness living through us. He lived a perfectly righteous life in our place. Pray to turn depression or anger into love toward others though the power of God doing a perfecting work in you!

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Adjust Expectations That Free Yourself And Others

Explanation: Sometimes we expect too much over a short amount of time and we don't expect enough over a longer period of time. We don't have the power to change others, but we can influence change. That begins with adjusting our expectations to what is realistic so that we aren't as easily disappointed or angry when they aren't met. We give acceptance and then can better set new boundaries for ourselves. We can determine what we will do or not do when others do something we wish they didn't. We can even talk about it beforehand. We can dial down the emotional intensity in these areas. We can better examine what needs we are asking to be met by the other person. Surprise! The resulting emotional environment makes it easier for people to change and better meet one another's needs. Over time and with conversation giving respect to one another, growth happens. Seek God for His patience and wisdom in this process

Bible: Read 2 Corinthians 3:12-18

Reflection Question: Remember that God's top agenda for you is to transform you more and more into the likeness of Christ. That process finds its source for change in His forgiveness. Daily we have new opportunities to better love Him and others. Our expectations for others is replaced by our desire to better love them as they are. How does this apply to you today?

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Choose Your Attitude And Shape Your Feelings

Explanation: It's true. You can choose your attitude. And it does shape your feelings. Now you might have to give yourself a bit of a "talk'n to" to get your attitude where you would like. But don't kid yourself, attitude is the biggest part of your emotional and mental well-being. An attitude is shaped by the thoughts you choose to think and how you repeat them. Consider thankfulness. We often don't give thanks because we feel thankful. We first give thanks and then we feel thankful. God has much to offer that shapes our thinking in the likeness of Christ.

Bible: Read Philippians 4:8-9

Reflection Question: God gives us more than a positive mental attitude, though it looks very positive. What is different is that our source for being positive is not just thinking positive thoughts. Moreover we attempt to see the world the way God does. He sees every circumstance as an opportunity to be thankful and see how God might work in this circumstance. How might you practice that today?

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

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Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
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Express Feelings With "I" Statements

Explanation: When we feel strong emotions it is easy to think primarily of the action that another has done to set it off. Then conversation easily slips to "Well you did this...or you did that." Then conversation can spiral to blaming others for how you are feeling. It is more helpful to take responsibility for your feelings by expressing feelings with "I" statements. It might look like this: "When this happens...I feel....because...." Fill in the gaps. "When you talk to me in this tone I feel belittled because it reminds me of the tone my parent used." These are helpful ways to process emotions even if they are not spoken out loud or used in conversation. Ask God for help so you are better equipped to take responsibility for your own responses.

Bible: Read James 3:3-13

Reflection Question: What are the most common settings or conversation topics that you are inclined to use "you" statements rather than "I" statements? How might you change that?

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

*Spiritual
Warfare*

Week 7

Pray The Working Of The Holy Spirit

Explanation: The question is not: “Am I going through a spiritual battle?” Rather, “What is the current spiritual battle I am facing?” That question of discernment is vital in preparing for spiritual battle against Satan and his attacks. From beginning to end, the key to victory is relying on God’s strength as He comes to us in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will help you discern the battle you are facing and give you the wisdom, guidance and even will-power to stand against the forces of the enemy. Pray the working of the Holy Spirit that will help you more readily discern your battles and be prepared to meet them.

Bible: Read John 16:12-15

Reflection Question: Think of one spiritual battle you are facing today? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal it to you. Note that at the heart of every spiritual battle is Satan’s efforts to keep you from relying on God and His power. Satan’s goal is that you would not grow in Christ-likeness nor live the full life that God has for you in Christ.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Prep For Battle: Put On The Full Armor

Explanation: Our spiritual battle is primarily defensive. We stand on conquered ground. Jesus won the war already when he went to the cross in our behalf. But the battles still wage on. We want to remain standing when attacked. So we take up the armor of God and put it on with prayer. Pray each of these as you picture yourself suiting up for battle. Put on the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, footwear of readiness to share the gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, and sword of the Spirit. Suited up? Then take a stand against the enemy’s attacks.

Bible: Read Ephesians 6:10-18

Reflection Question: Perhaps this week you are more keenly aware of what spiritual battles you are facing. As you reflect on that, which of these armor pieces seem more vital? If one or two specific armor pieces seem more relevant to your struggle, the Lord is likely leading you to focus there. Pray that you would use well that armor.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Week 7: Spiritual Warfare
Wednesday – June 12, 2019

Prep For Battle: Refuse To Rehearse Old Injuries

Explanation: We live in a world broken by sin. Every person has scars from wounds in relationships. Our instinct is to rehearse those offenses in our memories so that we feel more self-righteous in holding a grudge. We resist going directly to other person and speaking about it. This is a favorite attack of the enemy. Instead we are to bring it to the Lord and at times directly to the person who has injured us. The reason is not to justify ourselves or retaliate against the other person. It is to give opportunity for forgiveness and repentance. If necessary we could even take a third person to help bring repentance. When believers meet in such a way, this is the place “where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them!”

Bible: Read Matthew 18:15-20

Reflection Question: Is there an injury in my life that I am rehearsing and need to release? Is there a conversation that I need to have with that person?

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Week 7: Spiritual Warfare
Thursday – June 13, 2019

Prep For Battle: Discern Spiritual Strongholds

Explanation: Satan suggests thoughts that would rob, steal or kill the blessings we have in Christ. If we believe the enemy lies it can become a stronghold. These conversations happen in our hearts. Strongholds are an argument against God or a pretension that His way is not best. Common strongholds might include: “God could never forgive me.” (stronghold of hopeless guilt) “Bad things always happen to me.” (stronghold of self-pity) “I couldn’t forgive that person.” (stronghold of resentment). The list of strongholds continue: pride, rejection, defeat, vanity, greed. The question isn’t if the enemy is suggesting such thoughts and trying to establish strongholds. It’s a question of which one! So ask yourself, “What am I listening to in my heart?” “Is it really true?” Pray for spiritual protection to hear the lie and reject it. Then dive into God’s truth and claim that instead.

Bible: Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Reflection Question: Identify at least one message you hear from time to time in your heart that is being used by Satan to create a stronghold. Write it down so you can be aware of it whenever it emerges. Reject it. Ask God to send His Holy Spirit to protect you from believing it. Pray the truth you want to believe instead.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Week 7: Spiritual Warfare
Friday – June 14, 2019

Prep For Battle: Confession Brings Freedom And Change

Explanation: A key to spiritual victory is to walk in the light and not live in spiritual darkness. How? We confess our sins. This brings them into the light. God has already provided for the forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Christ. Confessing them fills our souls with the light. We see the truth of his faithful love for us. We learn humility and dependence on God. We desire what He desires. This is what it looks like to live in the light. Light then dispels the darkness.

Bible: Read 1 John 1:5-10

Reflection Question: Is there any sin your life that you are intentionally ignoring. Bring it out of hiding. Confess it. Bring it into the light and watch what God can do in breaking that bondage.

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
Praise. Priorities. Provision. Pardon. Protection.

Week 7: Spiritual Warfare
Saturday – June 15, 2019

Victory Is Assured As You Pray In The Authority Of Jesus' Name

Explanation: Learn the language of authority in Jesus' name, calling Christ's power into spiritual warfare. Christ has defeated the power of Satan through His life, death and resurrection for us. We call on this power when we call on the name of Jesus in faith. Today's reading literally describes the spiritual reality of Satan falling like lightning from heaven. This is like in football when you sack the quarterback, the wide receivers are no longer a threat. Satan has been sacked by the power of the cross and resurrection. Call on the name of Jesus and remind the spiritual forces of darkness they are defeated. God's Holy Spirit brings this about when we call on the name of Jesus. The Holy Spirit always points to who Jesus is and the power that we have in knowing him. Rely on this power, not your own. Today's reading will remind you to not be impressed by this power over Satan more than you are impressed by this power that has saved you and written your name in heaven.

Bible: Read Luke 10:1;17-23

Reflection Question: Where do you need to apply the name of Jesus? Is there a spiritual stronghold you are wrestling with? What about a circumstance that seems overwhelming or oppressive? It might even be a physical ailment. In any of these cases, call on the name of Jesus that will rebuke the power of the enemy in these circumstances. Exercise your spiritual authority you have because you trust in what Jesus has done for you!

Application: What are you going to do differently?

Notes:

Step Up. Pattern for Powerful Prayer:
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