



Beacon
of Hope,
Ray of light
of light

40 DAYS
PRAYER & FASTING 2018
PRAYER GUIDE



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GUIDE

GENERAL GUIDELINES WHEN ENTERING INTO A SEASON OF PRAYER AND FASTING

PLAN FOR YOUR FASTING

1. I commit to pray for seven days and
 - Fast Two meals a Day (preferably 6 am to 6 pm)
 - Breakfast Lunch Dinner
 - Fast One meal a Day
 - Breakfast Lunch Dinner
 - Fast from things that preoccupies my supposed time with God
 - Television Facebook
 - Others _____

2. I commit to attend prayer meetings on:
 - January 8 Evening (6:00 pm)
 - January 9 Evening (6:00 pm)
 - January 10 Evening (6:00 pm)
 - January 11 Evening (6:00 pm)
 - January 12 Evening (6:00 pm)

3. I want to extend my prayer and fasting and join the 40 Days Prayer and Fasting of ICS Community from January 4 to February 13 (after the week of prayer, individuals will be praying and fasting privately).
 - YES Every Breakfast
 - Every Lunch
 - Every Dinner

ENTERING THE FAST

What is your objective why you are fasting?

What Significant thing do you believe God would do as you pray and fast for the following areas:

1. Church: I believe that

2. Family: I believe that

3. Business: I believe that

4. Work or Studies:

5. Individual Life:

6. Others:

USEFUL BASIC PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PRAYER AND FASTING

Why should we fast? (Joel 1:14)

I. Jesus fasted 40 days before He started His ministry. (Matt 4:12; Lk 4:14)

- Fasting is an act of humbling of self, humility and consecration. (Ps 35:13)
- Fasting helps us become sensitive to the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:2). Helping us to deny our own flesh and crucify the carnal mind.
- Fasting brings spiritual revival. (Dan 9:2,3). Helping us to prevail in prayer and intercession.
- Fasting is God’s Providence to give us a healthy lifestyle and it cannot be substituted by any other way. It is the privilege of the children of God.
- To fellowship with God, have intimacy with Him and knowing Him.

II. To fine tune our spiritual sharpness, our capacity to focus, to put our heart into tranquility.

III. To be made whole, healed and restored spiritually, physically, emotionally and psychologically. (Hos 6:1-2)

PREPARING TO FAST (ESTHER 4:16)

1. Get your heart and mind ready, set your mind clearly on the objective of fasting, and maintain a thankful heart.
2. Write down the clear objectives for fasting; add a clause of flexibility, so that God may speak His objective.
3. Pray and commit to a type of fast, asking God for grace to remain determined.
4. Plan your calendar
5. Conserve your energy and devote more time to prayer and reading God's Word.

PREPARE SPIRITUALLY

Fine tune your mindset, make known to God that you desire to weaken the flesh so as to be close to the Lord spiritually. Allow the Spirit of God to direct the mind, to direct the body for renewal action, meaning: getting ready to change.

PREPARE PHYSICALLY

Don't overeat before fasting. On the contrary, reduce food intake gradually until the day of fasting. Avoid food that is high in calories. Eat only salad and fruits three days before fasting.

DURING THE FAST (MAT 6:16-18)

1. Read the Word of God and fellowship with God
2. Talk with and listen to God; try to hear the voice of God, once you hear, verify with the Holy Bible. Then wait for a season to confirm. Once confirmed, put it into action and let no one stop you.
3. Seek the Lord
4. Pray and read God's Word during meal times. Join at least one prayer meeting.
5. Be ready to respond when you hear from God.
6. Commit to renew and change yourself. Whatever God makes known to you, make restitution immediately.

PRACTICAL TIPS

1. Avoid medical and even natural herbal drugs
2. Limit your physical activity and exercise
3. Rest as much as you can
4. Maintain an attitude of prayer throughout the day
5. Drink plenty of clean water
6. Allow for temporary bouts of physical weakness, impatience, irritability and anxiety as your body adjusts.

BREAKING THE FAST (ACTS 14:23)

- One hour before- pray harder and thank God for such grace of the opportunity to have intimacy with God through fasting.
- Reintroduce solid food gradually in small portions throughout the day. Start with fruits, juices and salad.
- Continue praying. Let the momentum you gained during the past transform your prayer and devotional life.
- Expect Results. Persevere in prayer. Keep a copy of your prayer points, giving thanks to God as you see how He answers your prayers at the end of the year.

NOTE: Consult a physician, especially if you are pregnant, nursing, or taking medication. If your situation does not allow you to do a full fast, determine what will work best for you.

Week 1

JANUARY 8-14

***“ I, the Lord, have called you
in righteousness..”***

DAY 1/40

Lord of Light

By: Reniel Dalisay

Scripture Reading: *Isaiah 9:2*

People are living in a world that is overwhelmed by famine, killings, poverty, war, calamities and many others. These are all inescapable everyday realities that is why many feel that they are living and walking in this dark world of hopelessness and meaninglessness. Also, there is sin that enslaves and takes away people's faith. However, despite what is happening in the world, we still have hope in the hands of our God in whom we can anchor our lives. We must choose to do this so that we can share the Light of the world that brought us out of darkness.

We understand how important "light" is in our lives. We use it when we are searching for something or when we simply need to be able to see in the dark. The light serves as our guide. Without it, we don't know where to go. Eventually fear can grip us and like the blind, we can get lost.

Now the Bible speaks of a light that far exceeds what we see when we turn a light bulb on. It gives us a much deeper kind of light, one that was revealed to us 2000 years ago.

This “Light” shines in the darkness of our life and enlightens us to see the truth so that we can experience the fullness of the life God intends for us to have.

God himself is the Light. His nature and character are revealed through His Son Jesus. (Hebrew 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being). He lived among us and died for us. He wanted all the people to see His Light in order for us to walk away from darkness. Jesus said in John 8:12 “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Isaiah 9:2 explains that in a time of darkness, God sent a Light who would shine on everyone living in the shadow of death. This message of hope was fulfilled in the birth of Christ and the establishment of His eternal kingdom. He came to deliver all people from their slavery and death to sin and bring them back to life. God did not want us to stay on the dark and downward spiral of death. This is why He brought us the Light that will shine upon us. This Light brings us hope and life. Jesus is the Light of the world that the Lord promised us.

I remember a time when I experienced darkness in my life. My heart was blackened by the sin that enslaved me. Many thought that I was a

good guy because I put up a front. But the truth was I just pretended to be good. I did things because I did not want to be rejected. Growing up, I experienced rejection from my family. This caused the prodigal son in me to stray from the narrow road less taken.

It wasn't until a person taught me about Jesus and how He loves me so much that I learned there is a better way - the only way to the right path. That day I realized I did not need to continue living a sinful life. I needed God in my life to guide me and help me see things from His perspective. I was enlightened and it has changed me for the better, forever.

Always remember that He is the Light that will keep us out of darkness as long as we put our hope in Him. What we need to do is to anchor our life to Him. Even if we are on the verge of losing our faith from the dark and heavy storms of life, we can trust that the Light will keep on shining upon us. It will forever burn bright and it will remind us that will never be alone or lost anymore. We have eternal hope in the Light of the world - Jesus Christ!

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 2/40

Lord of Salvation

By: Reniel Dalisay

Scripture Reading: *Luke 19:10*

Every time I remember the song “Mighty to Save” by Hillsong, I am reminded of how God demonstrates His compassion and love to all people, that everyone deserves mercy and needs to be saved. It’s truly amazing. In the last part of the chorus of the song, it says that “He is the Author of Salvation / He rose and conquered the grave.” These truths help us understand that God is the Lord of Salvation and there is no other way to be saved but through Him. As we reflect on the passage of Luke 19:10, we can understand how God shows His compassion to everyone and that He does not show favoritism. Everyone needs to be saved which is why He brought us salvation through His Son, Jesus.

Luke 19:1-10 is the story of a man named Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector who was notoriously known by many. In the Bible and even today, we often stereotype a person who collects taxes to be a corrupt person--one who does not show mercy and who forces people to give. They mercilessly take advantage of people and use their power for their corrupt practice. But when Jesus spoke to Zacchaeus, everyone must have wondered why He showed mercy to such a “sinful” person.

There is always a tendency for us to judge others easily based on what we see. However, Jesus showed that we don't have the right to judge a person, otherwise we have thrown ourselves over to judgment as well. In the passage, Zacchaeus was being judged by people while Jesus demonstrated to them His compassion and love towards this man. This is the true heart of God that saves those who are lost, as found in John 3:16. God is showing us that He is the author of salvation and no matter what we have done, as long as we come to the Lord wholeheartedly, we will receive the life through our Savior Jesus Christ. We should be thankful because Jesus came to us and gave us hope that will last forever.

I always remember the prisoner I met in Iwahig, Palawan, a penal colony for those sentenced for major crimes. The prisoner I met there was known for the grave crimes he had committed, so much so that other prisoners also feared him. Yet, one pastor who always visited the place did not stop from preaching the word of God to him. One day, this prisoner testified that after a couple of month listening to the word of God, he dreamed of God telling him that He will use him and that he must follow Him. So, this man immediately asked for forgiveness and followed God. Now, he is being used by God in reaching out to other prisoners by preaching the word of God.

Our mind tells us not to easily forgive those who are truly unforgivable. But God, being the Lord of Salvation who does not show favoritism, loves the world and shows compassion to everyone-- that each one has equal chances of receiving His gift of salvation. Indeed, even the worst of the criminals can find forgiveness in God. Our Heavenly Father accorded us with the salvation that can only come from His Son in whom we are accepted and are forgiven.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 3/40

Lord of Righteousness

By: Sur and Chai del Rosario

Scripture Reading: *Genesis 18:16-33*

God, the Perfect Judge, pronounces, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous” (v. 20). Such condition tells at least two things: the Righteous God does not tolerate wickedness, and (2) in His righteousness, He will mete out His punishment on the wicked.

However, Abraham was bold enough to bargain before God to spare the wicked cities. This is quite strange considering that bargaining is supposed to be between equals. And, surely, Abraham was totally nothing compared to God. What is considered strange here is not that Abraham bargained. But God allowed Abraham to bargain. How could the all-powerful God allow a mere human to contend before Him? Assuming that Abraham was still full of reverence to God while pleading for the cities, wasn't it too presumptuous of him to think he can intercede for Sodom and Gomorrah's survival when God already declared that it is worthy of judgment?

Why did God allow Abraham to make a bargain as though He is God's equal?

Genesis 18:16-19 somehow shows us a good reason: God is delighted at how Abraham walked in righteousness. God remarked, *“Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?”* This does not really denote equality. Simply, God confides with Abraham because He finds him to be a man of righteousness. In confiding with him what He intends to do to Sodom and Gomorrah, He also pronounces blessings upon Abraham, “Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. 19 For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

To think that God values the pleas of Abraham shows us who God is and encourages us to become like Him: righteous. In calling us to be holy (1 Peter 1:16), God is not just showing us that He is perfectly righteous. He is also inviting us to share in his holiness and righteousness. Not that we can be equal with God; but we can be friends with God. And, righteousness (or holiness) is that bond that connects us with God as His friends. This just shows that when we walk in righteousness, and there is now no sin that separates us from God, we can also experience God more intimately as one would relate to a friend.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 4 / 40

The God Who Calls

By: Jabez Kenneth Villapuz

Scripture Reading: *Exodus 2-4*

The kind of God we have is a perfect leader. He delegates the tasks that He starts and He will continue to delegate it (as this is His kingdom principle) until His second coming. This is why He calls people to partake in His work, and He will continue to keep on calling those whose hearts desire to serve Him. We often deny God's call in our life because we think of ourselves not worthy to be used by Him. Indeed, we are not qualified to do the tasks He has given us, but as one famous preaching goes: God did not call the qualified; He qualifies those He called. There are many Bible characters who did not easily accept God's call. One of these is Moses.

God called Moses (Exodus 2:23 to Exodus 4:12).

God could have delivered the Israelites from the hand of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, yet He called Moses to partake in it. God called Moses to partner as deliverer. God delivered the Israelites from the hand of the Egyptians and Moses was able to be part of and witness His work.

God called Moses because he had the heart to deliver the people from trouble.

Just like Moses, God can use us as we are (Exodus 2:11-13). Moses had the heart to help; he had delivered his Hebrew brothers twice even before God called him for this greater task. Also, God called Moses to address a severe need. Just like today, people are in affliction, sorrow, and pain (Exodus 2:23-25). God called Moses to meet such needs. Our Father in Heaven have seen the affliction of His people, have heard their cry, and have known their sorrows (Exodus 3:1-2). God got the attention of Moses so that he, too, can take heed to His calling. In verse 7, God told Moses about what He felt, about what He has seen, and about what He knew of His people in Egypt. In verse 8, God told Moses what He wanted to do through Moses. In verses 9 and 10, He showed that the need was so urgent. Furthermore, God called Moses even if he had weaknesses and imperfections. Yet, despite understanding what God wanted him to do, Moses doubted if he could ever face Pharaoh. Moses even felt insecure that the leaders among His people would not believe him, highlighting that he is slow in speech. Despite these reasons, God still called him. Learning from how God called

Moses, we can also be affirmed that God can help us and equip us when He calls us. Moses' staff and his brother Aaron also became reminders of how God would be with Moses as he carried out His call.

God's calling is a call to promotion.

From tending flocks, Moses was called to tending people. From being with one family, he was to be with hundreds and thousands of families. From a wilderness, Midian, he was to move to a land of milk and honey, Canaan. This call is also an opportunity to know God and to be closer to Him. Moses and the Israelites got to know God through the miracles God wrought in their midst. They got to know Him through the plagues cast on the Egyptians. They also got to know Him through the pillar of cloud during the day and the pillar of fire during the night. God parted the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-28) and let His people walk through it; yet when the Egyptians walked on the parted sea, they perished as God moved the water back to its place.

Whenever God calls us, we are challenged to respond. Many times, the call comes with the challenge to put one's trust in God. God reveals Himself to those He calls in order to affirm them as they take bold steps of faith. When God called

Moses, He also affirmed him of who He really is so that Moses may build confidence in Him. I AM WHO I AM. The GOD of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Exodus 3:13-15) When God calls, He will take care and provide for EVERYTHING that we need. Will we lack in anything if it is God who will provide for us? If God is our Shepherd, is there anything that we could ever want apart from Him?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 5/40

We Are Called

By: Sweitenia Tejedor

Scripture Reading: *Ephesians 4:1-6*

We, as Christians, are bearers of Christ's name. Just as Apostle Paul is urging Christians at Ephesus to live a life worthy of their calling, we should participate in that same calling that they have.

What is our calling then?

1. All of Christ's believers are called of God. The God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (v. 6) is the God who calls us. The God of the universe is the One who gives the instructions pertaining to our call.
2. All of Christ's believers are called to God. God is calling us to an intimate relationship with him. This means our calling includes a daily decision to turn away from sin and to live a holy life with Him.
3. All of Christ's believers are called for God. God is calling us to be used by Him. We have been called to serve God for His glory. We, as Christians, should then embrace our calling to live and to do things purposely--to glorify our God.

We must understand that the calling that we have received is of God, to God, and for God and we should live a life worthy of that calling. As to how we have to live a life worthy of the calling, they have been elaborated in the next few verses (v.2-3) for our reference:

1. To be completely humble and gentle (v.2a)
2. To be patient (v.2b)
3. To bear with one another in love (v.2c)
4. To make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (v.3)

We are called to be a beacon of light and a ray of hope to others. Let's take heed as to what the Bible instructed us: "to live a life worthy of the calling we have received." We could not live our call properly as Christians on our own. Apart from the Spirit of God, we will fail to recognize the One who calls us; we will ignore our call to have an intimate relationship with him, and we will neglect our call to serve him. So, as we keep on in our prayer and fasting, let's ask the Lord that His Spirit may reign in our hearts. Let us ask the Lord for strength to live a life worthy of our calling which we have received from Him.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 6 / 40

Called in His Righteousness

By: Reah Padla

Scripture Reading: *1 Corinthians 1:30*

Have you ever tried watching the news only to be dismayed by most of what you see? You end up turning off the TV because there's not one positive report. It's no different when you open your favorite social media account. Your newsfeed is full of alternative stories or what most people call "fake news." Whether you admit it or not, you may have probably been swayed a few times that got you clicking the share button. At this day and age, you'd think only verified information would be available; but the opposite is happening, no thanks to the power of anonymity that grants others freedom to tell stories whatever they believe is true.

The perennial question "What is truth?" can be answered in a number of ways. Truth is always associated with reality or fact. But with the proliferation of fake news and alternative facts, how do you know what to believe? It should be easy for Christians to discern; but, in reality, it can be a challenge because deception comes in many forms. Not to be political about the issue but these fakes news and alternative facts are oftentimes used by groups as propaganda to promote an ideology. If you don't know your

history and the current events, you can be easily swayed by whatever you may read online.

Fake news can be scary; but in God's church, false teaching is just as dangerous. Christians need to learn to distinguish what is fact, fiction, and faith. Just as fake news can destroy a person's reputation, false teachings can be devastating not just to an individual but to the church. It can lead to apostasy, which is the abandonment of one's religious belief. In search for "more of God," there is the ironic danger that could lead to losing Him. Oftentimes, you look for "signs and wonders" so much that you might actually miss Christ. In the New Testament, the Jews wanted proof that Jesus was God. They looked for evidence, all while the Messiah was already in front of them.

In your daily walk with God, there may be times that you still ask for accuracy of any information about the Christian faith. You still question what is right from wrong, truth from lies. Sometimes, too, you even doubt your value to God and the worth of your salvation.

As disciples of Jesus, it should be easy for to discern the truth not because of what was studied in the past but because the Work has already been done on the Cross. With Christ as your wisdom, you can live a life of freedom, righteousness, and love.

In your search for the truth and in your struggle to become the person God wants you to be, it can be sometimes difficult to uphold the truth. But the good thing is, Jesus is the standard of truth and righteousness. He is perfection. He is bigger than religion or traditions. The Son is righteous and so His Father's children can also be made righteous. You've become righteous in Christ when He died on the Cross and freed you from your sins. His righteousness is the same righteousness that made Him do all those things for your salvation. You are bearers of Truth that is Christ Jesus--made righteous and holy.

PRAYER NEEDS:

- Pray for those purveyors of lies to stop what they are doing.
- Pray for people who are getting confused right now in their faith. Pray that they may remember that God's righteousness has saved us.
- Pray for people who doubt their worth in Christ. Pray that they may start to believe Christ's righteousness, which is also our righteousness.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. How do you discern the truth from the lies when it comes to your faith?
2. What do you do in times of doubt?
3. What does it mean to be called in His righteousness?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 7 / 40

Living Our Call To Be Righteous

By: Emma Tablizo

Scripture Reading: *Matthew 9:12*

Church is a hospital and the people going there are sick, including me. Some are engaged in gossip, while others are gullible. Some seem to be friendly while others are not. No matter how these people are, God loves them. I was once lost and He saved me by His grace, through faith. When the Lord called me to be His disciple, I got up and followed Him. I am not worthy to be one, but God chose me and He wants me to be a partner in His ministry. He never said, “Choose the good one to share my message with.” Instead, the message should be shared to people from all walks of life.

Meanwhile, Matthew, the tax collector, was a profitable man and he was surrounded by people living in sin. But when Jesus said to him, “Follow me.”, he immediately got up and followed Him without any word. He left his work and friends and became a disciple of Jesus. He was even an instrument or a bridge for Jesus’ message for Matthew’s past associates.
(Matthew 9:9)

God does not judge people based on their jobs, acquaintances and life style. As Jesus showed in choosing His disciples, He does not consider external factors but value one's heart and obedience.

Even though we are Christians, we sometime tend to judge other people, even co-believers based on our standards. Remember Jesus is concerned for all people. We may imitate Him, as this is what Jesus wants. Let us continue to show our love to everyone as Jesus is living in us. May we always live for His glory. Let us follow Jesus' example and share the Good News of salvation to everyone, including the poor, the immoral and outcast, not just the rich, moral and popular. And like Matthew, we must always be ready to abide to Jesus and be an instrument in spreading God's word.

Lord, we need a daily dose of medicine, and that is Your Word, Oh God. Thank you because You are our healer.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

Week 2

JANUARY 15-21

***“ I will keep you and will
make you to be a covenant
for the people and a light for
the Gentiles, ”***

DAY 8/40

The Lord Who Keeps Us

By: Emi Padla

Scripture Reading: *Psalm 139:16*

As long as we are alive, no matter how young or old we are, life will always throw challenges at us. Some challenges are simple and easy to overcome, while others are complex and even life-changing. Illness, for instance, can bring with it a host of other challenges – physical discomfort or even pain, financial problems, changes in the schedules of family members, and anxieties from not knowing how long we must endure the trying circumstances. Christians may even be challenged to remain joyful, as James commands, in the midst of this because it is hard not to think that the hard reality is, our circumstances have robbed us of our joy.

When we were told that my husband had End Stage Renal Disease, ERSD for short, we were informed that there were only two ways to address the illness: dialysis or kidney transplant. If dialysis were selected, there were two alternatives: hemodialysis, which required the patient to be hooked up to a machine in a dialysis center or hospital for three to four hours while the process rid the blood of its toxins and extra fluids; or peritoneal dialysis, which could be done at home and required the patient to cleanse his blood through infusing and draining

bags of dialysis solution manually two or three times a day, or automatically by a machine typically while the patient sleeps. Although we were encouraged to go for a kidney transplant, which was the only real cure, we initially opted for hemodialysis because it could ensure less infection for the repetitive process of dialysis, as opposed to doing manual dialysis at home. We were also overwhelmed by the cost that a kidney transplant would require.

Through the first couple of days after we learned about ERSD, it suddenly dawned on me that the condition was serious. It meant changing diets, going to a dialysis center regularly, spending a few hours there and working our schedules around our dialysis regimen. It also meant that if anything went wrong during dialysis, I could end up losing my husband. A classmate of mine lost her father through a heart attack while undergoing dialysis. This was a very scary thought.

Before an emergency dialysis was performed on my husband – it had to be done quickly because he was beginning to faint from anemia caused by the condition and the toxins that circulated in his body - I began to feel lonely and afraid of what the future might be like. Could this be the beginning of the end for my dear husband? Could this be widowhood for me? As I poured my heart out to the Lord, He spoke to me clearly

about a verse in Psalm 139:16, “Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” As I pondered on this verse, He reminded me that long before we learned about my husband’s disease, He already knew it. As matter of fact, long before we got married, He already knew it. What a reassuring thought! All I had to ask Him was for the grace to walk with Him in this journey, and His peace flooded my soul. And for my husband, that every dialysis session would be uneventful. Throughout the next six months of dialysis, the Lord kept us in “perfect peace.” More than that, He performed a miraculous cure for my husband when a kidney became available from an accident fatality, which was later transplanted to my husband. He kept us whole and peaceful throughout the ordeal. And while we feared that we would spend a good portion of our retirement kitty, the Lord once again favored us with significant financial assistance from the state insurance. Best of all, the transplant was a success, unaccompanied by infections or complications. Trust Him. He will not disappoint!

REFLECTION QUESTION

- Where does your help come from?
- What challenges do you need God to keep you through?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 9/40

The Lord Who Establishes Covenants

By: JM Mirasol

Scripture Reading: *Genesis 6:5-22, 7:14-22, Genesis 9:8-17*

God's promise to Noah and his descendants is a great example of a covenant. The Lord establishes covenants with those who please Him through faith and obedience.

What is a covenant? A covenant is a contract of agreement made by two parties, which in this case was between Noah and God. In Hebrew, covenant is "berith," which means to cut, referring to the dividing of animals in two parts between the contracting parties. Noah's account in the book of Genesis gives us a clear picture of how covenants are made. We'll start by looking at God's character, the Covenant-Maker:

God saves those who trust in Him.

Noah's time was a time in human history when wickedness was the norm. God saw that Man's wickedness had taken over the earth and every thought and inclination in men's hearts were evil. He decided to destroy what He had created, but Noah, as it was written – found favor in the eyes of the Lord – and he and his family were designated as survivors of the impending

disaster. He was found righteous among the people during those dark and evil times. God chose to save him and his family by instructing him to build an ark because He will wipe out wickedness with water. All living creatures not found inside the ark perished when the Flood occurred.

God blesses those who please Him.

After the Flood, Noah and his family went out of the ark, built an altar, and sacrificed the clean animals and birds as burnt offering to the Lord--remember "berith." God was pleased with the aroma from his sacrifice and made a promise to him and his descendants (the human race) not to destroy the earth again with flood. Also, the Lord blessed and instructed him and his sons to be fruitful and to multiply in the same way that He did with Adam and Eve, showing His desire for His creation to flourish and prosper.

God stays true to His word.

The rainbow we see after every rainstorm is an enduring reminder of His promise. The Lord is and will be true to His word. He who establishes the covenant is the One who is eternal, all-powerful, loving, just, and sovereign. We are assured that whatever He promises to do, He will do, and whatever was agreed upon, He will enforce.

Noah, whose name in Hebrew means “rest” or “comfort,” was the man who got God’s attention and became the recipient of the covenant. His account entirely spoke of two things:

A man of faith.

The task given to Noah is a tall order. He did everything the Lord told him to do. By trusting the Lord, he was able to prepare for the impending doom. Like what his name says, he found rest and comfort in the midst of the storm.

A life of obedience.

With faith comes obedience. Noah’s tremendous faith enabled him to live a righteous life. Right in the middle of a morally decadent society, he stood his ground and chose to walk faithfully with the Lord. He followed God’s instructions to the letter. His total obedience to the Lord saved him and his family. Because of his obedience, the human race was spared from utter destruction. Noah’s sacrifice after the Flood was a burnt offering sacrifice. Burnt offerings are made to signify complete dedication to God.

CHALLENGE:

The current world and the society we live in is slowly stepping back towards the likes of the time before the Flood. Outright rejection of God and His precepts are now being encouraged up to the highest level of human authority. The bright, lively world God created is slowly sinking

into darkness and death. The name of Jesus is not yet known throughout the world.

We are Noahs of the present age. We are to be the salt and light of this world. As partakers of God's promise (covenant) in Christ Jesus through the gospel, let us walk in faith and obedience. Let us offer our lives as a pleasing aroma to the Lord. Let us continue to trust Him and His word.

PRAYER NEEDS:

- Pray for a great revival of faith (rekindling of the fire) in the church and among our brethren around the world.
- Pray for God to raise up more Noahs who will serve as salt and light to the most secluded and farthest parts of the globe.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 10 / 40

God Made Us as His Covenant for the People

By: Joseph Vicencio

Scripture Reading: *Philippians 1:6*

I believe the intended context of the prophecy from God spoken through Isaiah (*I will make you to be a covenant for the people*) is for Jesus' mission to be the Salvation for all. Though looking at it at a granular level, He did not come *just* to save us. He saved us *for His purpose*.

1. To redeem what was lost: our relationship with Him

We were disconnected from Him by sin. We were destined for eternal punishment but through His Son and His great Love, we were wiped clean and redeemed in Salvation even in our sinfulness, even in our stubbornness, even in our weakness, He pursues to reconcile us with Him

2. To finish what He started

It may sound conclusive but salvation is not the pinnacle of our lives. Rather, it is just the beginning of His work in us and through us.

Storms will come.
Disappointments are expected.
Pain is inevitable.

But, it is through these experiences that He will mold and prune us to be conformed to be like Christ. Tony Evans once said: “God allows us to hit rock bottom for us to discover that He is the Rock at our bottom.” It is only through Grace that He will complete His work in us.

3. To be used by Him as a channel of His Love

He will allow us to be an instrument of His Love to others so that others may experience the life and salvation that can only be found in Christ.

In the overflow of Love, we will be able to impart Him to others. God can fulfill His covenant through us.

God’s covenant for the people is fulfilled though us by (1) His redemptive relationship with us, (2) His continuous grace in our daily struggles, and (3) His call for us to reach out to the lost.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 11/40

God make us light for the Gentiles

By: Sur del Rosario

Scripture Reading: *Matthew 6:31-33*

In Bible times, there is a clear distinction between Jews and Gentiles. While it later developed into Jews feeling more superior than Gentiles- because they are the apple of God's eyes, God's intention is really far from the idea of showing to the world that He just treats Israel with so much favor. Although the distinction is set between God's people and the Gentiles (a term usually used to refer to those who do not believe in God), God's purpose of 'separating' His people is so that they can be His testimony to those who do not believe. Therefore, Jews, and also believers, are distinguished so that God can challenge the unbelievers to come to Him and trust Him.

However, if we 'believers' were to look closely into our lives, can we say that we are in any way different than those who do not recognize God? Those of us who claim to have a right relationship with God, can we also confidently claim that our life shines bright so that the non-believers may eventually be inspired with the life we have and, consequently, put their trust in God?

One of the areas where we believers really need to stand out is in the area of trust. The reverse of this is 'worry'.

Jesus clearly commands, *“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

This passage highlights that distinction between God's people and the pagans (those who do not worship God). Jesus clearly draws the line: those who truly trust God enough to seek first His kingdom and righteousness are not supposed to be worrying. Worry is normative to those who do not believe in God. But true believers are to be distinguished by trusting and seeking God's kingdom rather than worrying.

We Christians can effectively distinguish ourselves as true believers when we truly put our trust in God. Those who truly believe God wholeheartedly trust Him for daily sustenance. We who truly trust will be truly radiant. And, as our light shines, people will be attracted to the light of Jesus in our lives, and they will also put their trust in God.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 12/40

Walking in His light

By: Winnie Balderrama

Scripture Reading: *1 John 1:5 – 9*

What does it mean to “walk in the light”? In the dictionary, we find many definitions of the word “walk”. It may mean a movement to go on foot or is used as another term for travel. It may also be used to describe the way in which someone lives or behaves. One’s lifestyle or way of life can be considered a “walk”. The word “light” is defined as a natural agent that stimulates sight and makes things visible. We may have other interpretations of the word, but the Bible is clear that God is light (v.5). In this verse according to John, God’s very nature is light. Jesus is the provider of light in the world. When we choose to “walk in the light”, we make a commitment to live our life according to God’s desire and follow Him daily since He is light. Our duty as Christians is to live in the light God gives. When we choose to walk in the light, we cannot walk in darkness. We should leave our life of sin and let our “light shine before men” (Matthew 5:16). Walking as an exercise is beneficial for our body. Similarly, there are important benefits of walking with God in the light.

BENEFITS OF WALKING IN THE LIGHT

1. We have fellowship with one another (v.7). The great commandment is to love God

and our neighbors. When we walk in darkness, our relationship with God and others are affected. Just like Adam and Eve's fellowship with God became ruined when they sinned, our relationship with God is broken when we do not follow and obey Him. A broken relationship with God affects all our other relationships. But when we walk in the light, the grace that brings healing to our relationship with God also brings healing to our other relationships.

2. The blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin (v. 7b). As one continues to walk in the light, fellowship with God is maintained and cleansing from sin continues. Neither fellowship with God nor cleansing from sin is automatic. There is a very clear procedure given in the New Testament by which sins are forgiven – “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (v.9). Confessing one's sin is part of walking in the light. The blood of Christ does not continue to cleanse those who make no effort at all to confess and forsake sins. We must acknowledge that forgiveness of sins is conditional.

No one who ceases walking with God in the light should expect to continue enjoying benefits God puts for those who are faithful in Christ.

Light represents the good in the Bible. Where there is light, there is happiness, honesty and association of good with good. Faithful obedience to God is required in order to continue walking in the light. Many still live in darkness because they refuse to accept the truth, obey God's Word and walk in the light. Remember that God has made His way simple so that all may enjoy the blessing of heavenly light.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

- How has your “walk” in life been lately?
- Are you walking in His light or still in darkness?
- Confessing sin is part of walking in the light. Do you have any unconfessed sin? Have you asked the Lord for forgiveness and cleansing? Do it now.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 13/40

Continuing in His light

By: Joshua Padla

Scripture Reading: *Acts 20:24*

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

His name was Desmond Doss and his service in the U.S. Army was the subject of a fairly recent and much-admired movie, “Hacksaw Ridge.” (If you haven’t seen it, do check it out as it is worth watching). Desmond, nicknamed the “Preacher,” was a Seventh-day Adventist who chose to serve in the military during World War II as a “conscientious objector” – one who refuses to kill or even hold a gun.

He became famous for saving the lives of seventy-five men as a medic who had no weapon in the Battle of Okinawa. What’s even more amazing is how he did it – Desmond carried or dragged the bodies of the wounded and disabled soldiers he found one by one to the edge of the Madea Escarpment, also known as “Hacksaw Ridge.” Then using a rope and harness, he lowered them one by one to safety from atop the ridge that was 400 feet high. He did this all while under enemy fire and being wounded

himself. He was the only World War II “objector” to be awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest and most prestigious award in the US military.

In the Bible, there is a giant of the faith worthy of similar, if not more emulation. The apostle Paul dedicated his life to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the first century world. He established churches in Europe and Asia and wrote around half of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. He considered his life “worth nothing” to him and that his “only aim is to finish the race and complete the task” the Lord Jesus has given him—“the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.” Numerous historians have written that Paul was eventually beheaded. It is safe to assume this martyr for Christ received something far more valuable than a Medal of Honor – eternal life with the Lord.

In our walk of faith, it is not uncommon to experience a loss of meaning and purpose. Sometimes, the daily grind can suck the life out of us and we feel that God is so distant, silent or even unfair. When we look to the examples of Desmond Doss and Paul, however, we realize that we do have a purpose in this world and it is to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

We can do this wherever we are, whatever we do. We can choose to focus on our mission as Christians to show people the love and grace of Christ in the workplace, in school, in our homes, with family, friends or complete strangers. The truth is that we are called by God for a purpose and every one of us has a mission to testify the good news of the grace of Jesus.

In our everyday lives, how are we continually testifying to the good news of God's grace in the workplace, in school, in our communities?

PRAYER NEEDS:

- Pray for members of the church who are experiencing forms of stagnation in their faith and passion to serve the Lord.
- Pray that those who feel a loss of meaning and purpose can be inspired by the Holy Spirit to continue in His Light and testify to the good news of Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. When we feel that life has become too overwhelming and we are on the verge of giving up, how can we regain the strength and perseverance to continue in His light and "finish the race" God wants us to complete?

2. Are there any other exemplars of the faith you know of that are worthy of emulation? How have they shown courage, faith and perseverance?

3. What practical steps can you take to share the good news of Christ to those who are lost?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 14/40

Let Your Light Shine

By: Sis. Hanilette Castillo-Lema

Whenever I get to travel, I avoid evening flights to any destination. Such situation brings that feeling of uncertainty. Anxieties are greater. I remember the time when I had no choice but to take an evening flight. As soon as the plane landed, I realized it could be a wonderful experience. I saw the beauty of the city lights. My fear of darkness turned into amazement.

Most of the time, we fear the darkness. These may be challenges, sufferings, uncertainties, and the lack of anything. We often forget that Jesus is our light-- that His light shines in and on us. We must not forget that the light of Jesus is always enough for us to be contented and assured. It is always beneficial for us to be hopeful in Him.

Jesus' light is not meant to just stay hidden. It is also meant to be shared with others. His light also shines through us. We are called to shine His light in our lives so that others may see and experience God's love, grace, mercy, forgiveness and hope. We should not let the light of Jesus in our lives be hidden from the people around us because He told us to let our light shine that others may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. Light is meant to shine

especially in the darkness. The transformed life that Jesus gives us must be shared to others so that they, too, may be transformed and be saved.

Our growth in our relationship with God is not measured by how long we are in the faith, or how long we've been attending Sunday Services in our church. Rather, it is measured by our obedience to Him every day. We will never be perfect in this life in obeying God but His grace is perfect to cover our imperfection. His love enables us to rise again and still follow Him. David was called a 'man after God's own heart' not because he possessed anything that qualified him to be, but because of his repentant heart and his desire to always follow and obey God. Despite his failure to honor God, he still chose to humble himself, asked for forgiveness, and did not give up in obeying God because he knew that God's love and grace will always be sufficient to carry him through his journey in life. He knew that this life was not about him but all about God.

What hinders us to shine the light of Jesus is doubt. Or, perhaps, our own excuses based on our comfort. Maybe, it is also because of going with the flow of this world and not standing up on God's truth and standards – even justifying that others caused us to sin.

A lot of people just need to know that there is a God who loves them and that He is full of mercy and grace. They just need to see that light in us, though this light may be small. If ever we think that our light may be insignificant, this light of Jesus in us, if viewed from the dark, matters a lot.

Our life is a powerful testimony of how Jesus saved and transformed us. Let us not just hide and enjoy it within ourselves, but let us shine it! Share God's love to others in any way possible through the leading of the Holy Spirit. We never know how our simple ways could open the eyes that are blinded from the truth, free captives from the prison of sin, and release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. Always choose to shine Jesus' light in and through our lives!

PRAYER NEEDS:

- Pray that we will always be reminded of God's love and may it fuel us to share that love to others
- Pray that God will help us evaluate ourselves of what hinders us to shine Jesus' light
- Pray that God will give us the strength and faith to always choose to follow Him even if in times of failure and difficulty
- Pray that others will see Jesus' light and lead them to Him and have hope in Him

- Pray that God will help us share His love and salvation to others in every possible way, that we will be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading.
- Pray that we will grow in compassion and love for other people
- Pray that we will always be contented in God, but discontented until we see God's love be shared to others.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTIONS

- Am I aware of Jesus' light in me?
- Am I conscious to always shine Jesus' light by doing what is right and obeying God?
- Am I growing in compassion for other people who are still not saved and who are in the wrong path?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

Week 3

JANUARY 22-28

***“..to open eyes that are
blind, to free captives from
prison and release from the
dungeon those who sit in
darkness.”***

DAY 15 / 40

God of Miracle

By: Temi Padla

Scripture Reading: *Mark 5:34*

In our country there are many folk tales regarding miracles. To many, these are fondly called “kuwento ng mga matatanda.” At first glance, they seem harmless traditions and are even valued as opportunities to show respect for our elders, as well as avenues for bonding with them. Indeed, some have become part of Filipino culture and even history. Consider the festivities held by Catholic devotees every 2nd Sunday of October. This is the feast of La Naval. The feast is a celebration of a series of “miraculous” events in 1646, almost 400 years ago. At that time 18 Dutch warships came to our shores to wrest control of our archipelago from the Spanish. Against that threat, there were only a handful of Filipino and Spanish fighters on board two merchant galleon ships. The conclusion came after five naval battles were fought. Against all odds, the Filipinos and Spaniards won all five, enough to convince the Dutch never to try again.

A “miracle?” After all, our sailors did pray earnestly before the ivory image of “La Naval” before going to battle. Or was it a testament to the fighting prowess of our forefathers? Or was it something else altogether? Some say it was

because the two merchant ships were built of hardwood taken from our Narra forests which held up against cannon balls better than the material used on the Dutch vessels.

Who knows? People can argue until they are all blue in the face and they would still not reach agreement. Even after things have settled down, and people have the benefit of hindsight, people will still argue.

In the end, it is probably impossible to prove scientifically who is right. And perhaps, it is not really important to see who is right.

So, what is important to see?
It may help if you take a different time perspective. Instead of looking at the historical past, consider looking at the possible futures. When an approaching typhoon escalates into a signal #4 threat, what would you do? Board up your windows and doors? That sounds like a smart thing to do. How about pray for a miracle?

This brings up the whole point behind this piece. Your choice will not test our Lord's miraculous power. He is the Almighty God. Nothing you do can change that. On the other hand, your choice will reveal something about you. And the depth of your faith. Mark 5:34 tells us "And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease" as He

addressed the woman who believed that “if I even touch His garment, I will be healed.” A few verses on, in Mark 5:36, He told the ruler of the synagogue whose 12-year-old daughter had just died, “Do not fear, only believe.” And the little girl woke up as though from sleep.

Reflect on this: next time you find yourself in difficult circumstances and you seem to face impossible odds, what will your first reaction likely be? How much trust will you have on your miraculous God? Will praying to Him be your first option? Second?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 16/40

God Open the Blind Eyes

By: Sharra Mogol

Scripture Reading:

Last May 2017, the Anti-Distracted Driving Act was implemented in our country. All the drivers are required to clear out all their clutter on the dashboard that could hinder and distract them from being able to see clearly what is ahead of them on the road. This initiative can also teach us a lot about decluttering our own personal life.

FOMO, our young generation's term for "fear of missing out". This must be one key reason why a lot of people find it difficult to declutter their lives especially from things they don't really need. We don't want to be left behind that is why we accumulate and even hoard things that are not truly essential. If we assess ourselves, we tend to follow the latest trend, such as, new phone and gadget releases, fashion style, coolest mobile application, best new feature of social network so far, party, movie, restaurant and more. Even if we do not have enough time and resources, we find ways, our own way.

Everyday our patience is being tested if we can stand the pressure. Whether you are commuting or riding your own a car we all experience heavy traffic.

When ordering of food on site, we need to wait for our turn to be served, or online we have to wait for the food to be delivered even after an agreed specified time.

Even in our life stages, From Graduating high school – what course to take and which College/University to go to? After college – when and where are you going to have a job? Young Professionals at Work – are you in a relationship? When are you getting married? Married Couple – when are you planning to have a child? To having a grandchild?

If we allow these fear and pressure it will only stress us out, clouding our mind and our sight. Often times we are caught up on having a lot to do and we choose to multi-task, juggling the things around. We get distracted for we are focused on ourselves on what we can do, being unable to see what God's laid out plan for us day by day.

We can make use of the 5S in clearing out the clutter that is clouding our thoughts.

1. Sort – Let go of unnecessary and unhealthy things. Let God guide you by trusting in Him with all your heart. Provers 3:5

2. Straighten – Align your plan with God’s plan. Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. Colossians 3:2

3. Shine – Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:16

4. Standardize – Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2

5. Sustain – We will be able to endure these fear and pressure as we maintain our relationship with God.

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
Psalm 73:26

God already made a way, it is just a matter of how we are going to respond, in spite of and despite the circumstances we face each day.
Ephesians 1:18

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Instead of entertaining FOMO, learn to trust God with your whole heart- He will definitely give you the strength to declutter and let go of things you don't really need so you can enjoy the best He has for you.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 17 / 40

God Sets Free the Captives

By: Christian Pascual

Scripture Reading: *Romans 7 21-25*

So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Since the fall of Adam, man has found itself under a curse - the curse of the law of sin. Sin has deeply ingrained into our souls that it has become a part of our nature even at a young age. I would see my son unknowingly doing the very things I would tell him not to do. We are born to sin. It seems we are compelled to do it no matter how hard we try not to. Paul acknowledged that He is a prisoner and the law of sin is at work in him. Wretched indeed!

As we are under the chains of sin, we find ourselves in situations all too familiar - guilt. The accuser has a way to keep us in his crutches. He tempts persistently and once we fall, he

accuses us even more! The guilt brings shame and we try to make it up by paying up with our own version of good works and religiosity. This keeps going on and on until we numb ourselves dead. This is the cycle of sin and bondage. It makes us numb from God and others. We only think of ourselves and whatever feels good. We become selfish and deceive ourselves in our own echo chamber. We become lovers of ourselves and care less of others. We do this until we're no longer recognizable from what and why we were created for. Sin distorts our view of the world and all of creation. Sin distorts love and God. Sin begets sin. Sin begets death.

Even more tragic is finding out God's rich destiny for us and failing to live up to it because we have never gotten to free ourselves from the sin that had captivated us. Our shame blinds us from seeing ourselves the way God sees us. We hide behind our own pretenses hoping the guilt will go away. We live the rest of our lives preoccupied pretending we are not all that bad. Shame blinds us from our identity. It keeps us from seeing the future hope that God promised for us. As we are too busy with ourselves, we neglect to care for our neighbors and surroundings. We neglect the very reason God created us. We forget to LOVE.

What is it that the enemy is trying so hard to keep us from finding out for ourselves? Our Identity - who we are in God and how it relates to our destiny and purpose. Each of us have been created for a purpose! And once we are free from the chains and distractions, we can advance the Kingdom. The purpose we are called to by God is no empty promise. He has provided everything we need to fulfill our destiny! We are just not aware of it. He calls us to walk in confidence in our identity. He calls us to freedom, authority and power. He calls us to signs and wonders. Our God is a generous God of Biblical proportions. He is never limited in the Old Testament but still moves to this very day. As we move in our identity, we are also called to set the other captives free. To speak the truth in love. To love and correct. To encourage and edify.

As you seek God in this time of prayer and fasting, meditate and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Himself to you on this journey. We are in a season where God desires to uncover the gifts for His children. He wants us to walk in victory and freedom.

Freedom is not about doing what you want to do but being able to resist what the world and the flesh - it's desires - demand you to do.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 18/40

God releases us from darkness

By: Kristoffer John Tayco

Scripture Reading: *Ephesians 2:1-10*

Apostle Paul reminded the church of Ephesians of the reality of sin: Our sin causes us to live in darkness. The fact that all people, without expectation, commit sin proves that we all have a sinful nature. We are lost in sin and cannot save ourselves.

“But God” in verse 4, seems to be the most positive phrase in this passage. God could have left us spiritually dead in rebellion against Him and in bondage to our sins. But He didn’t, He did not save us because of... but rather in spite of our sin with His unconditional love.

Because of Christ’s resurrection, we know that our lives were also raised from the dead. From the death caused by sin, we have been given the power to live as Christians now.

God, with His grace for every one of us who is undeserving of His love and eternal life, chooses to love us and release us from the darkness of sin through His Son Jesus Christ.

The challenge for us is to have faith and to live for Christ.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

1. What are the sin that causes us to be darkened in our life that needed to be surrender before the Lord?
2. What is your commitment before the Lord that will cause you not to get back from the darkness of that sin?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 19/40

Believing that the blind would see

By: Sweitenia Tejedor

Scripture Reading: *John 9*

Sometimes, our perspective on spiritual blindness is pointed towards unbelievers and unchurched people. Consequently, according to our text, spiritual blindness and unbelief did not come from the people outside the temple. In fact, the Jewish leaders who have known the laws of Moses and have been temple-goers for a long time were the ones who failed to see and to believe in God's miracles. We, Christians or even Christian leaders, sometimes struggle in this through some aspects in life. In our text, Jesus taught some important lessons about our faith in Jesus Christ:

1. Believe in God's ways (v. 1-12).
It is impossible to treat a man who is born blind. It is even more impossible to treat him using saliva and mud. Yet, in this passage, Jesus used it so that the works of God might be displayed. He used "unqualified" tools to heal the man who was born blind. Regardless of the method, Jesus can heal the man. Yet, Jesus selected saliva and mud to perform the miracle. What we assume impossible is possible in Him whose ways are better than ours. We need only to believe!

2. Believe in God's time (v. 13-34).

The Pharisees could not believe the healing that took place and thus they interrogated the blind man many times. They couldn't believe that Jesus came from God because healing the blind man wasn't a good time for them. It happened during Sabbath where everybody should be resting from work. It seems that the issue here does not only involve the unbelief of the Pharisees in Jesus' miracle but also the time the miracle was performed. The Pharisees were too legalistic and narrow-minded to think that miracles could not or should not happen during Sabbath (even if these came from God). What they truly missed out is that God could neither be bound by time nor by their self-righteous traditions. God can heal anytime He wants. They just needed to believe!

If we keep on rejecting the power of Christ in us and through us, then we are spiritually blind to see what God requires and wants from us--to see and believe in Him everyday in every aspect of our lives and in every season in life. In good times and bad times, we have to see and believe in Jesus' way.

3. Believe in God's revelation (v. 35-38).

This is a conversation between Jesus and the man born blind who's now able to see. The man was asked by Jesus if he believed in the Son of

Man. The man asked Jesus who he is so that he may believe in Him. When Jesus revealed himself to the man, without hesitations, the man believed and worshipped Him. God has revealed Himself to us so many times and He continuously reveals Himself to us. We need only to believe!

For us to be a beacon of light and ray of hope to others, we must first believe that God is able to do miracles in His own ways, in His time, and with His revelation.

Sometimes, we wonder how God would be able to heal our blindness and brokenness or the people close to us. We may have been praying for the healing and restoration of a loved one for a long time now. Whether it's physical or spiritual blindness, God is able to heal in His own special ways. If Jesus healed the man born blind with saliva and mud, He can heal and restore anyone, beyond our wildest imagination. If Jesus healed during Sabbath, which is inappropriate for the Pharisees, He can heal or restore anyone in any such time beyond man's imposition. If Jesus revealed Himself to the man born blind who had received his sight, He can also continuously reveal Himself to anyone. We need only to believe and we will definitely see. Just like the man born blind, our response should always be a confession of "Lord, I believe" and an act of worship.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 20/40

True Freedom is a Choice

By: Julie Fuentes

Scripture Reading: *Galatians 5:1*

A ‘YOKE’ is the bar across the neck of the oxen’.

In the Old Testament, the word ‘yoke’ gave a picture of enslavement – God promised to set them free from their enemies that enslaved them. Isaiah (9: 4,6,7) prophesied about Jesus: “...You have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, ... and the government will be on His shoulders...”

Through Isaiah (58: 6 , 9, 13), God challenged them “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen; to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?” .In the New Testament, in Galatians 5: 1, Paul rebuked the churches for getting caught up in legalism – enslaved by the law, being ‘circumcised’ which is of no value.

Paul warned them: “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough (Gal 5:9).”They were deceived by something so seemingly insignificant that could ruin their faith in Christ. It is also a warning to us. Seemingly insignificant things can also enslave us and

cause us to live a life of bondage instead of experiencing freedom in Christ.

Hebrew 12:1 urges us: “Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles”. This is a picture of enslavement.

We need to ‘let go’ of anything that has become a ‘yoke’ that enslaves and hinders us from walking in true freedom in Christ. What might this include?

1) Any legalistic beliefs, superstitious practices, and unhealthy attitudes that have driven us since childhood and hinder us from growing in faith.

2) Unforgiveness and bitterness (Eph 4: 31). Blaming people who have inflicted pain and left us with bitter memories creates an invisible ‘yoke’ that enslaves us. Matthew 6:14-15 encourages us to forgive so we can experience true freedom and inner healing. This is not easy when the pain is very deep but emotional healing begins when we make a deliberate choice to forgive even when we don’t feel like it. Reconciliation might not happen if the other person won’t talk about the issue but when we’ve forgiven them, we are released of the burden and we experience freedom.

3) Unhealthy /Oppressive Relationships. Examples are co-dependent relationships which hinder us from becoming 'who we are' in Christ. We can easily succumb to co-dependency because we all need love and acceptance. When we lack love, affirmation, and recognition from parents or 'significant others' in our lives, our love tanks are empty from childhood. There is a longing in our hearts for love and acceptance so we become 'people pleasers' who manipulatively cling to someone who accepts us and gives us love. But because the other person is also longing for love and acceptance, and feels good about being needed and appreciated, you satisfy his/her need and he/she satisfies yours. This causes and perpetuates a co-dependent relationship. This mutual entanglement prevents you to say 'no' for fear of losing the other person's love even when you know that it's actually manipulative and destructive. The result: a 'yoke' around your neck!

Co-dependency easily happens between husbands and wives, parents and children, even between friends. God's antidote to co-dependency: Mark 12: 29 -30: "Love the Lord your God" and "Love your neighbor as yourself" without allowing ourselves to be abusers or abused by others verbally, emotionally, and/or physically.

4) Inappropriate love of anything (1 John 2:15-17). Love of any kind should be an overflow of intimate relationship with God.

Application: Do our relationships give room for us to grow and become all that God has made us to be? Or, are they ‘yokes’ that burden us, drive us and enslave us?

Are we living to love and please God rather than people?

Do we seek for anything more than seeking after God?

(e.g. accomplishments, gadgets, relationships, etc.)

Reflection: Matt 11: 28 -30. Let us live in the freedom that Jesus gives in increasing measure.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

ICS 40 DAYS PRAYER AND FASTING 2018

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 21/40

God Uses Us So That Others Can Find Him

By: Anniline Teng

Scripture Reading: *Isaiah 43:8*

In Isaiah 43, God declares Himself as Israel's only Savior. He was and still is the only One who has the power to deliver His people from the slavery of conquering nations and the slavery of sin. In this particular passage, He called for His people to lead out those "who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf." Who are the people being referred to in this statement and what does it mean to lead them out?

I recall one instance when the network connection of my phone malfunctioned. I had to survive through a week with a smartphone with excellent features, enough load, and sufficient battery life--but useless. The frustration of having to repeatedly borrow phones to communicate with people throughout the week really tested my patience. However, that experience allowed me the insight of the possibility for something to be fully operational, and yet not really serving the purpose that it was made for. In terms of people, these may refer to those of us who are of sound mind yet fail to see and to hear God because of sin. The oppressing power of sin can keep us blind and

deaf to God and His words of truth. Sadly, many of us live that way—they may look okay but they are chained to selfish desires and wrong motives. They have no freedom. These are the ones we are called to lead out.

How do we lead them out? First is to commit to the Lord, our only Savior. He is the only One who allows us to lead a free and righteous life. Second is to talk to others about God when the opportunity comes for us to share the good news. Third is to pray for others constantly.

God is the God of unity who yearns to draw everyone to Himself. He is the saving God who desires to break every chain of sin, to allow the blind to see and the deaf to hear. He loves us so much that He calls for His people to lead others out.

Let us allow God to use us to lead His people out of the life of sin and into His righteousness.

PRAYER

God our Savior, thank You for saving us and loving us. Thank You for giving us the freedom to lead a righteous life. Use us to lead people to see You and listen to You. Grant us the courage to lead a life that is pleasing to You so that they may come to know You.

Give us the opportunity to share the Word to others so that they can receive You. Break the chains of sin and let them come to You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

Week 4

JANUARY 29 – February 4

***“Beacon of Hope,
Ray of Light”***

DAY 22/40

God is our Encouragement

By: Zaida Calingo

Scripture Reading: *1 Peter 5:7*

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Peter wrote this scripture text in the midst of the Church being persecuted and scattered because of their faith. Though Peter knew suffering firsthand for he was beaten and jailed, he saw many of his fellow Christians suffered and died in the hands of the Roman soldiers. But in all of these sufferings, he was still steadfast in his faith in Christ.

During those times, the Church leaders needed to be reminded and be given special instructions in taking care of the flock---God's people. Sensing the need to help them get through persecution, Paul admonished them to entrust to God their anxiety, and resist the Devil.

We can also apply the same encouragement to us today. God loves us so much that He cares for us, whatever situation we may be in- may it be in grief, suffering, sickness, or in the worst of times. He encourages us to stand firm in our faith.

I remember the time when a friend took me to visit her friend who had Stage 4 cancer. She was struggling and was confused. We prayed for her, read scriptures to her, and massaged her back and arms to relieve her of pain. Something immediately changed. All then of a sudden, she said in humility and with peace that she wanted to surrender her life to God. She expressed that she was ready to meet her Maker any time. Before our visit, she was already struggling, questioning God, and losing hope to get her life back. When she decided to put her faith in God, she felt a new life had come to her. She saw a ray of hope shining upon her despite the circumstances she was in. At that time, I clearly understood this verse.

Trusting God with all our anxiety is not being passive. This is a call for action-- to believe and surrender to the One who holds our life and everything we have.

PRAYER

O Heavenly Father, we come before you. We give all our cares to you. In humility, we come before you because we believe that it is only You who can help us. We believe in your sovereignty and your great love for us. Keep us in your presence always. We praise you and we love you, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

REFLECTIONS QUESTION

- What are you anxious about today?
- What would you do about it?
- Cite an experience where the Lord had encouraged before?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 23/40

Out of Darkness, and Into the Light

By: Temi Padla

For many people, darkness is just a temporary experience. It comes when the sun sets over the horizon. In the tropics, this is but a brief event. Soon, the sun again rises over the opposite horizon and pushes the darkness away. Near the North and South Poles this darkness can last six months. Long by tropical standards, but still temporary. Just a passing part of a never-ending cycle.

Some people though, experience darkness differently. For the blind, there is no sunset, no sunrise, no cycle. Just an unchanging, permanent blackness.

This raises some disturbing thoughts. Think of the ever-beautiful rainbow. A popular song once said, “Red and yellow and pink and green; Orange and purple and blue. I can sing a rainbow.” Try explaining that to one born blind. Someday, medical science may be able to develop technology to let the blind see, but until then?

Some have suggested relating the range of colors to the range of temperature. After all, everyone, blind or seeing, can feel heat. Perhaps, those who cannot see could still relate to colors. Red can be explained by relating it to the experience of warmth. Blue, at the other end of the color spectrum can be related to the experience of cold. There is some worth to this, but a blind person's experience of color using this approach would still be nothing compared with the awe and wonder that those of us who see, so naturally feel when we catch a glimpse of a rainbow, or the glow of a sunset, or the brilliant combination of colors on a parakeet.

In the physical world, it is easy to know those who experience darkness and light intermittently as they go through day and night. This is majority of the people. There is a parallel in the spiritual world. These are the people, perhaps also the majority, whose faith in our Lord and Savior cycle through highs and lows.

The people in this group need help to stay strong in their faith. Indeed, you may yourself be one among this company. Pray for perseverance to help others and yourself.

Just as there are blind and ‘seeing’ people in the physical world, there is also a parallel in the spiritual world. In our jargon as ‘believers’ we would refer to them as the ‘unreached.’ They may not only have never heard of our Lord, Jesus, but worse, they are likely to have been steeped in the wrong teachings of ‘religions, kuno’ or the ‘world.’ They are truly ‘blind.’

So, how can we make the ‘spiritually blind’ see? We saw the futility of just talking about colors to the physically blind. Words fail. What then is the right thing to do for the ‘spiritually blind?’ Will just talking, do it? Before replying, it may be useful to pray in earnest for guidance before jumping into the battle. Wait upon the Lord to show you the way. Then go. Help bring people out of the darkness, into the light.

REFLECT:

- And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." (Jn 9:39)
- ‘... but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.’ (2 Cor 3:16)
- For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (2 Cor 4:6)

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 24/40

Sharing God's Light through Financial Darkness

By: Ariel Rodriguez

Scripture Reading: *Matthew 25:14-30*

Gary R. Collins, Ph. D, in his book, *Christian Counseling*, 3rd Ed., circ. 2007, in the chapter on Financial Counseling, cites the following as some of the causes of financial problems:

- devotion to money, possessions, pleasure, and the good things of life (whether or not they can be afforded);
- covetousness and greed (a desire for more at the expense of others) and a desire to get rich quickly/speculation (e.g. lottery, jueteng, gambling, etc.);
- impulse buying, buying on credit, buying things without consideration for quality, prices or whether the purchase is really needed;
- indiscriminate borrowing;
- lack of basic financial tools/knowhow (e.g. budgeting, savings, insurance, etc.);
- lack of giving

Further, I paraphrase that Dr. Collins says that as the believer's spending exceeds earnings, financial pressure and stress build up affecting one in the areas of:

- **Physical & Mental Condition:**
 - growing worried about money, unpaid/overdue bills, etc.
 - destroyed friendship due to money issues
 - family and marital problems
 - lack of sleep, illness and/or mental breakdown
- **Spiritual Welfare:**
 - sins like guilt, envy, jealousy, resentment, pride, lying, etc. arise or are stimulated
 - growing emptiness/unhappiness due to distorted values
 - absence of peace
 - spiritual decline or dryness

We are all familiar with the Parable of the Talents (NKJV/NIV) or the Parable of the Three Servants (NLT) found in Matthew 25:14-30. Towards the end of this story, Jesus, on one hand, commends the two servants who properly managed the entrusted resources; while on the other, he casts the one “unprofitable,” lazy servant into the outer darkness.

This parable tells us that:

- God is the owner of the resources that He is temporarily entrusting to us;
- God gives more of these resources to some of His servants than to others;

- God expects us to wisely invest and multiply what He entrusts to us; and
- God condemns laziness and mismanagement of His resources.

The forgoing spiritual principles should serve as a framework for a lifestyle that all Christians are enjoined to adopt which are characterized by:

1. **Simplicity.**
This includes a general resolve to renounce waste and oppose extravagance in personal living, clothing & housing, travel & church buildings, and is incompatible with living beyond one's means. A prelate said that simplicity is not hating possessions but excesses; it does not mean nothing but enough.
2. **Self-control.**
The word in Greek means to have control of one's appetite. A similar word is self-denial. This virtue applies not only to the reining in of our strong built-in physical drives, but to the wise stewardship of our resources. Remember: A person who controls his spirit is more powerful than the military conqueror.

3. Contentment.

A writer explained the meaning of contentment by describing the sin of covetousness. He said that covetousness is like a cancer; it destroys the one who covets and others as well. It is dissatisfaction borne of unbelief and ingratitude. It is the total lack of trust in God. Thus, he infers contentment as being healthy physically and spiritually. It overflows with gratitude for all that God has given and expresses trust that God will keep His word to provide our needs.

4. Generosity.

The Bible tells us that by the giving of our material possessions to the poor, we exchange it for heavenly wealth. Consider further these factors when giving: give sacrificially; give motivated by love; and give by faith (committing to give what you don't have). These are aspects of this virtue called generosity that God calls on all believers to have.

The way our God wants us to manage our financial affairs is totally different from the way we do it. We need the mind of Christ to understand the how and the why in the handling of our worldly wealth with the end view of a heavenly reward.

Let us always remember that God uses the hardships we find ourselves in to shape us into the people that He wants in His Kingdom. God is gracious in that He did not leave us to do it alone. He gave us the Holy Spirit, the wise counsel of the brethren, and our own experience--both good and bad--to enable us to walk through this time of darkness.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 25/40

Sharing God's light through Relationship Darkness

By: Zaida Calingo

Scripture Reading: *1 John 1:5-7*

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and blood of Jesus, his Son purifies us from all sin.

The Apostle John wrote these scriptures amidst a dark and compromising world. He taught who Jesus really was at that time. He also reassured Christians on those times of their faith in Christ. Here, John was comparing the light from darkness; light represents truth and reliability while darkness represents sin and evil. Light cannot co-exist with darkness as holiness cannot co-exist with sin. They resist each other. The light, which is also the truth, exposes the nature of things, whether good or bad. In darkness, good and evil are alike; in the light they can be clearly distinguished.

Up to now, Jesus still presents to us God as light, symbolizing perfect holiness and purity. He alone can guide us out of darkness of sin. This scripture verses are still true at this time of age, where in this century the good and the bad are the same. If God is the light, we should walk in the light through grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. There is no in-between. If light represent holiness and purity, we too should be holy and pure as God is holy. If we want to have a relationship with God, we must put aside our sinful way of living. To say that we belong to Him but then go out and live for ourselves is pretention. Christ will expose and judge such deceit. At the same, if we have fellowship with Him, we should have a sincere fellowship with our neighbors. As what the scriptures said in Matthew 5:23-24; *Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift.* A broken relationship can hinder our relationship with God. Our attitude towards others reflects our relationship with God. On top of it all, He cleanses us from all our sins by dying for us in the cross. Sin brings death. When we commit our lives to Christ and thus identify ourselves with Him, his death becomes ours. He had paid the penalty for our sins, and his blood has purified us.

REFLECTIONS:

1. Are you in right relationship with God?
2. Are there areas in your life or relationship that need the light of God? If there is you can ask Christ to help you to reconcile with Him or with your brothers and sisters in the Lord.

PRAYER:

O Heavenly Father I come to You with humble spirit and in need of You in my life. I pray that Your presence be in my life. May the light of Your scriptures help me to believe in Your word and be reconciled with You. I would like to ask for Your forgiveness and cleansing of my heart, my mouth and my mind that I may be pure in Your sight and that I may please you. O come, Holy Spirit, refresh me and search me if I have hidden sins that needs the light of Christ. If I have a broken relationship or wrong relationship that need to be restored and reconciled with You. I pray that the truth will shine on me as You are the God of light. I ask this in the Mighty name of Jesus.

Amen

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 26/40

Sharing Gods Light Through Season of Testing

By: Emi Padla

Scripture Reading: *1Peter 1:7*

The Bible assures us that Christians will experience testing. We normally refer to testing as trials or “pagsubok,” which are circumstances that God creates or allows to test and strengthen our faith.

Those of us who profess to love God should be able to do so in both the good times and the bad. If a Christian remains in love with and thankful to God in the midst of a debilitating illness, the death of a loved one, an unexpected financial reversal, or the loss of a job, one might say this person’s faith is strong. On the other hand, if a Christian faced with the same circumstances begins to question God, stops praying to Him, and eventually abandons his faith, then his faith has been shallow and superficial. Don’t we all want a deep and strong faith that will help us through life’s difficulties? Let me assure you, life will always bring difficulties, sometimes more than we think we can handle.

How, then, should we respond to our trials? Ironically, we don’t acquire strong faith by attending bible studies or care group meetings,

although these are important learning opportunities to expand our knowledge of God. Rather, we strengthen our faith by going through precisely the circumstances that try our faith. Early in my Christian life, I was taught that faith is like a muscle. Muscles develop as they are used. And so it is with faith – the more it is stretched in trying times, the more our faith can grow.

When a nephew suffered a near-fatal aneurysm two years ago, we were told that he could die any moment because his aneurysm occurred at the base of the main artery that supplied blood to the brain. During the next three days, we witnessed his deterioration which challenged our faith. There was no time to ask God, Why, Lord? I didn't dare ask. Deep in my heart I knew He had a plan and He was in control.

Nonetheless, we in the family, including sisters who came home from the U.S., experienced the most stressful days that followed as we searched for a doctor who could do the brain surgery and wondered if our nephew would still be alive when the doctor we chose would be available to operate on him. It was a test of faith to keep hanging on to God because every time the doctor called to meet us, we were silently anticipating the worst news, yet believing that the impossible was going to happen by the grace of God. For five agonizing days we went through the motions

of searching for the best doctor with the highest success rates, moving our patient through three different hospitals, and finally waiting for the results of the brain surgery. We were brought through a roller coaster ride of emotions – from fear, to joy when good news was shared, and a lingering anxiety about what my nephew will be like – will he be his usual self, or forgetful and disabled?

Where did we get the strength to weather this trial? There were times I thought we would buckle under the pressure of possibly losing a loved one so unexpectedly. But we drew our strength from God. We asked Him to help us believe in Him for a miracle of healing; we forgave each other of our past hurts and issues and were in constant prayer. We praised and thanked Him despite our situation because He was still in control. Phil. 4:19 promised that “God will supply all our needs according to His riches in glory.” Through this ordeal, we were very needy; we needed guidance and wisdom in searching for the best doctor and allowing the doctors to do what was necessary; we needed faith and strength to keep on praying, praising and worshipping Him in the midst of it all; we needed financial resources to pay all medical bills. Yet God provided ALL our needs. Will you trust Him, whatever your circumstances?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 27/40

Sharing God's light to the Hopeless

By: Kristoffer John D. Tayco

Scripture Reading: *Psalm 23*

When everything seems to be falling apart, and life seems hopeless, consider the Psalmist David who found help in God over all the hopelessness that he faced.

The devil wants us to lose hope and faith. The devil also instills lies that can destroy us but the truth that the love of God can never fail is our hope.

Hopelessness can lead to depression that is why it is crucial to set our mind to the truths of the Lord.

The Psalmist David experienced the truth about God being our Shepherd who is with us especially in times of our hopelessness.

- He will satisfy our needs. v.1
- He will give us rest v.2
- He will cause us to be fruitful. v.2
- He can restore us. v.3
- He is our righteousness v.3
- He is our protection and help. v.4
- He is our comforter. v.4

- He is our victory. v.5
- He is good and merciful v. 6
- He can be our dwelling place forever. v.6

With these truths from God's word, our hearts can be strengthened especially in times of our hopelessness. Every one of us will come to a point where the enemy can succeed in sowing lies into our minds. This can make us hopeless, depressed, and can also destroy our faith. However, this truth remains: God is our Shepherd.

As promised in this psalm, God will make a way when there seems to be no way. When the devil wants us to think we are lacking, our Shepherd comes to show us that He has the power to satisfy our needs. He will help you; just ask because He knows exactly how to meet your concerns. You will not be put to shame when you completely trust in the Lord.

In times of hopelessness, remember that God will guide you. . Lastly, commit to God, walk with Jesus, and continuously trust the Shepherd.

PRAYER

- Pray for God’s Spirit to help us to always hold on to His word of truth everyday especially in times of hopelessness.
- Pray that God can use you to be a light of encouragement to a person who may be feeling hopeless.

REFLECTION QUESTION

- What situations make you think that you are hopeless? What specific truth in the Psalms really help you face your hopelessness?
- How can you bring encouragement today for the people who are feeling hopeless?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 28/40

Sharing God's Light to the Weary

By: Kristoffer John Tayco

Scripture Reading: *Isaiah 40:28-31*

Even the strongest people get tired at times. But God's power and strength never diminish. Everyone may get to the point of getting exhausted and weary, but the Word of God reminded us that, at those times, we can find strength renewed as we trust in the Lord.

As ordinary persons, we are prone to stumble. We are weak. Though we are God's people. Nevertheless, in our spiritual lives as well as our physical lives, but especially in our spiritual lives, we are weak. We face the enemies of the world. We face the enemy of our own sinful flesh. And how many times do we fall before these enemies? We often stumble.

But then comes the wonderful message from our passage: those who look to the Lord will have their strength renewed. He is the One we should turn to. When we see our weakness, when we see how bad things become, we should not keep looking unto ourselves, and grope around in darkness, as it was customary for us. But, we should look to the Lord for renewed strength.

Look to the everlasting God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

Trusting in the Lord is the patient expectation that God will fulfill His promises in His Word. This will strengthen us to rise above our life's difficulties. Can we really trust God that He is there to help us?

PRAYER

- Pray that you will be reminded to look to the Lord at all times for strength especially when you are troubled and are getting weary.
- Pray that you can testify to those who are deeply troubled that God can strengthen them only if they trust Him.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

Week 5

February 5 - 11

***“Beacon of Hope to the
Families”***

DAY 29 / 40

Lord, Shine your Light to the Homes

By: Christian Pascual

Scripture Reading: *Genesis 1:27-28*

God created man with a purpose - be fruitful, multiply and subdue the earth. It is our first mandate and destiny. In His design, we have been equipped according to the identity that God created us - in His image.

He designed man to be physically stronger with an innate desire to hunt, to take on physical labor, to build, to provide, to conquer, to wander, to jump at the call of the wild - to be wild at heart. A hidden longing has been placed in the heart of men to rescue his beloved and to pursue. There is a desire - even in a child - to be a warrior, to dominate, to win, and gain the approval of his peers.

Yet women were made differently. God made woman to exemplify and showcase beauty. The artistry and creativity of God is epitomized in the creation of the woman. She is designed to be pursued and be won over. Her desire is to flaunt and to hide beauty and grace at a season. She was also designed to carry and spring forth life. This design is manifested on the physical and in the spiritual. She is described best as the

Proverbs 31 woman. She desires uniqueness and to be valued - like a diamond - as in His image.

Part of His wisdom in creation is the partnership of man and woman - the family. God made man to partner with the woman to fulfill His purpose. He created them differently for the purpose of complementing each other - in strength and in weakness. Man and woman were never created to prove who is better but to show that they are created for partnership. Each family unit is to build each other up and bring forth life. He desires submission of the wife to the husband so He can demonstrate how He desires us to submit to Himself. God desires the husband to love his wife so He can illustrate how He loves us - sacrificially.

And as a man joins a woman in marriage, life springs forth and we can see the demonstration of another mystery - the Image of God as a Father. Earthly fathers are called to reflect the image of the Father of Creation. Fatherhood is the only mantle of leadership given directly by heaven not accorded by man. Someday, each and everyone will take into account how God is represented to our families. The same is for mothers, who are called to raise and co labor with the fathers in building the kingdom through the children.

A kingdom-aware home helps bring about the fulfillment of the destiny that God has placed in each of us: to take dominion and authority. This was lost in Eden. This was taken back at Calvary. This is why the Cross is the centerpiece of God's purpose. Jesus said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given Him. And the same is available to us because we submit to His lordship. This same authority we have in Jesus is to equip us and enable us. To be the salt and light of the world. To move mountains. To slay giants. To walk on water. To take dominion of the natural world in signs and wonders. That is our destiny.

REFLECTION QUESTION:

- After reading the purpose of the home, how do you think satan is trying to destroy the family?
- What is the image of God that He desires to illustrate when He made siblings? What did Jesus mean about Mark 3:33-35?
- What is the relevance of sonship/daughters and inheritance in the Kingdom of God?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 30/40

Lord, Shine Your Light to the Fathers

By: Ardie Balderrama

Scripture Reading: *Job 1: 4-5*

Job's sons would take turns preparing feasts in their homes, and they would also invite their three sisters to celebrate with them. When these celebrations ended—sometimes after several days—Job would purify his children. He would get up early in the morning and offer a burnt offering for each of them. For Job said to himself, “Perhaps my children have sinned and have cursed God in their hearts.” This was Job's regular practice.

One of the reasons God called Job the finest man in all the earth was because he lived his life in complete integrity and in the fear of the Lord. Job, however, not only watched out how he lived, but he was also concerned about how his children lived. As a regular practice, Job would offer a burnt offering for his children especially after his children would organize parties and various celebrations. He did this because he was worried that his children might have offended God while partying. In doing this, Job was interceding to God for his children. In addition, he wanted to instill the fear of God in His children so that the next generations would

continue to know God and honor Him with their lives. He understood that as the head of the home, he was the chief priest who was supposed to teach his family the love and fear of the Lord.

Fathers must be a light to their children, encouraging them and teaching them to love God with their whole being and to seek His will and purpose for their lives. As fathers, we must be the source of stability and strength so that when trials and hardships come, our children will learn to remain steadfast and strong in their faith. As our children grow older, we will not always be there to correct and advice. That's why we must constantly pray for them, regardless of their age and status in life. Our children are a precious gift from the Lord--fragile and valuable. They are souls entrusted to our care--dearly loved by their Creator. When a child grows up in a loving and stable environment, he/she will learn to love others and be a source of blessing to those he/she encounters. But when the father forgets to fulfill his role in his child's life, the effect on the child's life can be devastating.

As imperfect individuals, we will not always know what to do or say to our children. There may be times that we become a stumbling block to their growth and maturity. Good thing we serve a perfect Father who we can turn to anytime, anywhere. He can make all things right and beautiful in His time. There is no heart too hard that God cannot reach. We must, like Job continue to intercede for our children. God hears, and He will honor the love a father has for his children, because He saw us at our worst and sent His only Son to save us so that we can become His child.

REFLECTION QUESTION

- How often do I lift up my children to God?
- Am I teaching my family to love and fear the Lord?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 31/40

Lord, Shine your Light to the Mothers

By: Nila Gomez

Scripture Reading: *Proverbs 22:6, Timothy 3:16*

When I became a mother, I promised to myself not to control my children's lives. I have to remind myself that, I was only there for them to be their guide. Admittedly, I have this tendency to be controlling over them. I thought to myself then, "I will give my all for them to become good and successful individuals". As the saying goes, "Mother knows best" for their children.

We were blessed with three beautiful children. My power over them was evident especially when they were still in their elementary and early high school years. Then came late high school age level, when they started having a mind of their own, they now learned to disagree and not follow our instructions. Somehow we allowed them to disagree with us. My husband and I think that this is a part of our training in raising them up so they can learn to voice out their opinions, and learn how to defend themselves why they disagree in order to develop in them logic and reasoning.

The Bible was and is still our main source of giving them guidance and to give us (parents) the wisdom to guide our children.

My husband and I are partners in this endeavor. We wanted them to grow in the knowledge and love of God. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it" (DSB).

Sunday school, family devotions, one Memory Verse each week, and letting them lead our family Bible study played an important role in molding their spiritual lives. The process may be challenging but with the help of God, He enabled us through His Word to raise them well. It really takes patience, perseverance, dedication, commitment, and love to train and raise up children for the Lord, for them to become good persons.

The truth is, we can never raise and train our children well without Divine help. God is our ultimate help in this endeavor. Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness". The Word of God is proven true and tested.

Seeing our children now, who they've become,
and how they serve the Lord in the ministry they
are involved in now makes me praise God.
Grateful always to our Almighty God the Father,
Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour and the Holy Spirit
for the help extended to us especially in raising
our children well. All glory belongs to Him!

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 32/40

Lord, Shine Your Light on Every Child

By: Adeline Ladera

Scripture Reading: *Psalm 27:1*

Most children are afraid of darkness. It is a natural response to the absence of light. Since young children have active imagination and lack the ability to distinguish between reality and fantasy, it is easy for them to imagine and believe that monsters are hiding in the dark, ready to swallow them once the light goes out. When there is a black out, children usually run to adults whom they trust for safety. Sometimes, no explanations would calm them down until the light comes back and drives the darkness away.

The Psalmist David faced dark moments in his life as well. There were times when fear seemed to overwhelm and threaten his well-being. Yet, he declared that the Lord was his light and his salvation, that there was no reason for him to be afraid. For David, God was the true source of light, salvation, and protection. He led and guided him through darkness. He was his salvation and protection. This confidence in God grew out of his own personal and real experience of His divine intervention from danger, preserving him from immediate destruction. David had been through several

dangerous situations. His adventure with God started when he was a shepherd boy watching his father's flock of sheep from wild lions and bears, to fighting the Goliath of Philistines, to being chased by a jealous King Saul, and then threatened to having been overthrown from his kingly throne by his own rebellious son, Absalom. Although, the passage does not specify which of these circumstances surround the writing of this psalm, the author strongly encourages the readers to put their full trust in God whom David served.

One can't help but wonder how David developed such ultimate trust in God. No doubt, his family and community played an important role in nurturing his faith. Jesse, his father, was a son of Obed and a grandson of Ruth and Boaz. The family line can be traced to Abraham, with whom God made a covenant to bless and multiply. God said of Abraham, "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him" (Gen. 18:19). Hebrew fathers, apart from providing food for their children, were to teach them the ways of the Lord. David's life was a living proof that his father had done this responsibility. David's mother, though not mentioned in the Bible, was described by him as one who served the Lord (Psalm 86:16).

The Jewish community has been known to have strong focus on family, and quite good in passing on their culture and religious beliefs to their children. Children today could be facing darkness of some kind. Darkness is often symbolized by distress, trouble, problems, anxiety of the unknown, or a sense of being lost. Light is the opposite and can make darkness disappear. Can one have Light within? If so, one can be a guiding light to lead children out of darkness. God is looking for caring adults to be His beacon of light to the children in every family and community. God can use people to shine His light on every child. There are many ways to shine God's light on a child today so he/she, like David, will confidently declare that God is his/her light and salvation and that he/she has no reason to be afraid anymore.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 33 / 40

Lord, Shine Your Light on the Youth

By: Jabez Kenneth Villapuz

Scripture Reading: *Matthew 5:14-16*

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

God is light and we, as God’s children, ought to reflect that light. Because God is light, we also become the light of the world. In John 8:12, when Jesus addressed the people, He said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” If we are following Jesus, this means that we can’t be walking in darkness. This also implies that the beams or rays of our light are our good works (Matt. 5:16). The context wherein we can be a light to others is in our own home and/or the people around us (e.g. those we interact with at work, in school, and in our local communities).

How can we let our light shine? We can do so through the words that we speak and the works that we do. According to James 1:26, when we speak, we must guard our tongue to utter words that bless other people and to avoid letting go of hurtful words. In addition, according to 1 John 3:18, our love should not only be in words but in deeds (or works) and in truth.

To reflect his light through our deeds means shining through the actions that we do during difficult situations. Conflicts, for example, may limit us from shining His light because of our ill feelings towards other people. However, as His children, even in times of conflict, we must still shine His light. In the book “Handle Difficult People with Love”, John Maxwell shares that when we find ourselves disagreeing with others 99 out of a hundred times and agree only once, we ought to focus on the 1% that we agreed with. Conflict is normal because we are all different; conflict is neutral which makes it neither constructive nor destructive in itself; and conflict is natural and universal—one that we all share as humans.

Let’s pray for God’s grace to help us change our feelings over those we are in conflict with. May we shine in such tough situations, never looking down or less on others but seeing them as valuable in His eyes, blessing people who are in

need without people-pleasing or compromising at the expense of our obedience to God.

There are lots of ways we can do to let our light shine for His glory. One thing, however is certain: our lights are not meant to be hidden, they are meant to be shown. The best place where we can shine better is in dark moments.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 34 / 40

No Spiritual Brownout

By: Sonia Sumcad

Scripture Reading: *John 8:12, John 3:19, Matthew 5:14, 16*

When the power cut-off that caused a brownout before the September 23, 2017 worship service was over, it showed and made us realize the importance of light in the natural--light even more so in our spiritual journey (John 8:12). Apart from a personal relationship with the Lord, we are in spiritual darkness (John 3:19). Jesus Christ has left the world thousands of years ago but thankfully, He left us with His Word which is a lamp to our feet and light to our path (Matthew 5:14, 16).

As Christians, we are to reflect His light. We are to be light bringers to those who do not know Him. How then do we let our light shine since we are not objects that can produce light? This declaration of Jesus that we are “the light of the world” has to do with our attitude and behavior in the way we relate to our fellowmen, regardless of status: young, old, rich, poor, etc. Jesus set us an example and the Bible tells us to be imitators of Christ.

Individually, we are to be the light that will bring a ray of hope to those who are blinded by the deceptions of this world. Let us not be distracted. Let us:

*“Turn our eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will
Grow strangely dim
In the Light of His glory and grace.”*

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 35/40

Lord, Shine Your Light Across the Generations

By : Letty Lee

Scripture Reading: *John 8:12, 1 John 1:5,
Ephesians 5:8-10*

Jesus, the light of the world, shows us that God Himself is light. By light, John means not just the blinding radiance of His presence, but truth, purity, and moral perfection.

No one who has known Him can live in the dark, dealing with sin, evil and lies- qualities that are opposed to God's very nature.

The searchlight of God's presence is now shining on us. Friendship with Him involves seeing ourselves as we really are, and constantly relying on His mercy, and asking for his forgiveness. We are not perfect but that is our constant aim: to behave and act just like Christ. Therefore, being a Christian means obeying God, doing what is right, and loving one another. For the Christian, the child of God, sin is no longer the master. Christ has really given us the freedom to choose not to sin, and we are, therefore, expected to live in His light.

Jesus lights the way through life for all who follow him. He proves in unique sense His claim to be God's son.

As light bearers, we should reach the people, especially today's youth, who would reach to the next generation. We must shine our light to this new generation, by leading them to read the Bible, pursue a right relationship with God, look to his power and deliverance. As the Bible admonishes in 1 Peter 5:1-2, "To the elders: Be shepherds of God's flocks that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must but because you are willing as God wants you to be. Young men, in the same way, be submissive to the elders. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another." Also, in 1 Timothy 4:2, we are instructed to "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction".

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

- What is Jesus really claiming in John 8:12?
- What does Jesus mean by light and darkness?
- How has the Lord been like a "light" in our life?

PRAYER

Lord, help me to stand firm in my faith as I walk with you. Shine your light through me as I share your Word. Your Word is life and powerful, help me to memorize and recall your words when needed. Touch your people to be light bearers across the generations. Thank you for choosing me and giving me a purpose. May my life shine brightly for you.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

Week 5

FEBRUARY 12-16

***“Ray of Light to the World
Around Us”***

DAY 36/40

Shine on Me, Shine Through Me

By: SJ Almanzor

Scripture Reading: *Exodus 25:8, Hebrews 8:2*

The bright idea of meeting together in one place to worship God was actually His idea. The Tabernacle in the Old Testament was like their portable church; it was the presence of God made into a physical sign. However, today, because of what Jesus had done on the cross which makes him our eternal High Priest in the real heavenly Tabernacle, we can gather together as His church anywhere and be able to experience His powerful presence nonetheless. It is in understanding that we are all part of His body that we realize just how important it is for us to let His light shine through us and not just on us.

In this world we live in, we can never create our own bright ideas—any bright idea is always because of Him. Whatever we can do as ICS is merely but a reflection of what goes on inside of us—a reflection of how God is dealing with us individually and as part of His entire church/body. This means that for us to be able to reflect His light as a part of His body, we ought to understand that He showed us His light individually first. We cannot let His light shine

through us if we have not felt His light upon us. In the same way, if we fully understand that His light is indeed shining down upon us, it is inevitable that we ought to reflect that light to those around us. God's light in us is too great to be hoarded by one person or one physical church alone.

Think about this: Isn't it amazing that when we keep doing things out of our own strength we end up burned out? This is probably because we think that our own strength is really because of our own effort when in reality, that strength is actually His great strength being given to us by His grace. We solely contained it instead of freely sharing it with the rest of His entire body thus we feel burned out. The fire to serve Him became a fire that distracted us to focus on what we can do instead of focusing on what He can do through us. The Son's light shining in us is much like how the sun shines down on us. We are made to bear His light but also to bear witness to His light in the lives of those around us. Let's not be burned out by His light shining on us by letting His light shine through us. Knowing our identity in Christ is already a step towards letting His light shine through us.

PRAYER NEEDS:

- May God open our mouths to speak of just how great His love is for us—so great that we won't think twice about loving others as He commanded us to.
- May God open our hearts to those around us—that our hearts will break for those we haven't ministered yet and break so hard that it will push us not just to pray for them but to intentionally reach them with His love.
- May God open our minds to new insights that humbly teaches us about Him so we can love Him more and that such love will drive our fears away and so we can share His light with those around us.
- May God bring us to people who are in need of His light—that reaching out to them will not just be done because our churches have asked us to but because we sincerely are burdened to do so.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Have you realized that God's light is shining on you today? Cite five things that happened today that make you see His love was gracefully given to you.
- It was God's bright idea to place you where you are in your life today. Think of at least five ways that you can let His light shine through you now and pray to commit to actually do them.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 37/40

Light of the World

By: Yolly Santos

Scripture Reading: *Matthew 5:14-16, John 8:12*

When we received JESUS CHRIST, we received life, and this life (Jesus) brought light to everyone (Jn. 1:4). God is light of the world, and there is no darkness in Him at all (1 Jn. 1:5). So, live as people of light. For the light within you produces only what is good and right and true (Eph. 5:9).

Jesus said “You are the light of the world, like a city on a hilltop that you cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead a lamp is placed on a stand where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way let your good deeds shine out for all to see that everyone will praise your heavenly Father” (Matt. 5:14-16).

Our light shines out, when we read, study, meditate, and pray the Word of God (Personal Devotion). Our light shines out when we worship the Lord, fellowship w/ other Christians, intercede for others. Our light shines out when we visit the sick & those in prison, feeds the hungry, & helping others. Our light shines out when we reach out to the lost by sharing the good news, and everyone will see our good deeds

that everyone will praise (glorify) your heavenly Father.

I remember this song:

This little candle light of mine
I'm gonna let it shine (3x)
Let it shine (3x)

PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to keep this light to shine out every day that everyone will see our good deeds, so that they will praise You, our heavenly Father. In Jesus' Name.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 38/40

Hope in the Lord and be renewed

By: Kristoffer John Tayco

Here are some of the truest, most beautiful words ever written: “Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God” (Psalm 42:5).

Hope is a small word, but it is one of the most powerful. Why? Because in hope lies the power of the human soul to turn to God and live as if His promises are going to come true. “Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the LORD” (Psalm 31:24).

Some people think hope is an emotion. “I’m feeling hopeful,” they say, but true hope is a discipline, a determination to believe in God’s reality and power, even when the world seems to be crashing down around you. That is the genius and the power of hope. It flies in the face of calamity, saying, “The world can do its worst to me. But still I will hope. Still I will know that this is the day the Lord has made, and He will take care of me.”

The key to surviving any challenge or crisis is hope. Hope that Jesus loves you. Hope that He is,

right now, working out a solution for you. Hope that the future you place in His hands will be better than the present you hold in your own. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11).

Practice this hope, even if you have to will yourself to do it. With its power, you will overcome all things. “Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

Source: <https://www.guideposts.org/faith-and-prayer/prayer-stories/pray-effectively/find-hope-in-any-situation>

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 39/40

Hope Bearers

By: Jing Ragaza

Scripture Reading: *Numbers 13:30*

Just as the Israelites were ready to enter Canaan, after having spent 40 years wandering faithlessly in the desert, God said to Moses to send some men to explore the land. Of which, He is giving to the Israelites as their full inheritance.

Each tribe was represented by a leader and two of those were Hoshea or Joshua, son of Nun from the tribe of Ephraim and Caleb, son of Jephuneh from the tribe of Judah.

But at this point, I would like to zero-in Caleb who was confronted by the 10 unbelieving spies. He was 40 years old by then when he went as one of the spies. He had faith and hope that the Israelites could take Canaan. While the others except Joshua were discouraged and felt hopeless when they saw that the land was inhabited by giants.

Having God's resources e.g. good health and strength (which some of the older people during the 40 years in the wilderness died) Caleb fully followed the Lord. Thus, he left a fine example for others to follow. He had great faith and

unshakeable hope on God's promises that they would enter and take Canaan.

What about us? Are we brave enough like Caleb to go forward and take possession of the land in terms of lost souls that need to be redeemed from the clutch of the enemy?

As Hope Bearers, we have the divine privilege of working with God to bring the Gospel, hope and healing to people around us. People who are dying spiritually and facing eternal separation from Him. We should tell them passionately about our blessed hope which is in Jesus Christ alone, the Son of the Living God.

A Hope Bearer can possibly do this through lifestyle or strategic efforts e.g. technology, communication, etc. Our lifestyle is the easiest way to magnetize people to God. We will just have to reach them out through our love in Jesus' wonderful Name and be ready to tell them how much He has done for us.

A Hope Bearer must be likewise sensitive to the need of others. With this, Gospel must be demonstrated in such a way that can be felt by the recipients. Through holistic approach such as addressing one's physiological aspect much more the spiritual need of the person. The Lord Jesus Christ is our perfect example in terms of ministering the needy.

Be then a part of God's plan! Be a beacon of light and ray hope in this darkened world. The Lord Jesus Christ has swung open the doors for us. He is inviting us to be His messengers and Hope Bearers of compassion, to open the eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. (Isaiah 42:6 -7)

Bring hope to the hopeless and Christ's love to the people of your community, city, or the country and even to every nation, culture and race in the power of the Holy Ghost! As we go and do our part as Hope Bearers, we must be brave enough like Caleb because Jesus Christ our Lord promised that He will be with us "Lord, I am with you always even to the end of the age." – Matthew 28:20b

PRAYER

- That God will give us the burden for the unsaved souls;
- Pray for the opportunities and consider ways to become Hope Bearers.

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION:

- Identify the people near you who need to know God's compassion, salvation etc.
- How can you demonstrate it?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER

DAY 40/40

Jesus, My Living Hope

By: Zaida Calingo

Scripture Reading: *Titus 2:13*

Paul was confined behind bars when he wrote this letter of encouragement and teachings to Titus. Titus was a Greek believer. He was taught and nurtured by Paul. Subsequently, he became a living example of a godly leader among the Church leaders in Jerusalem. He was sent by Paul to the church of Crete to organize and be a minister. He was also a trusted with a traveling companion of Paul and closest friend. Later on, he became a special ambassador of Paul to different churches that the apostle had established. Slowly and carefully, Paul nurtured him into a mature Christian and a responsible leader. Thus, this letter to Titus reflects a process of discipleship.

During that time, the people of Crete were lazy, glutton, lying, and evil. Paul urged the Christians to be self-disciplined and must be orderly as people who formed one body, the church.

Paul was urging not only Titus but the believers in Crete to live their lives worthy of God's calling, diligently, zealously, and faithfully doing the works of God. At the same time, having in mind and waiting for the blessed hope—Christ's second coming and his millennial kingdom.

Paul emphasized two aspects of Christian living; LIVING for God and WAITING for Christ to return. These two are also inspirations for us in our Christian walk. These two admonitions also make life bearable in this present evil age. As we live and look forward to Christ's return, we can expect three great benefits:

1. We can expect Christ's personal presence. We look forward to being with Him.
2. We can expect complete redemption from our sinful nature. We long for the end of our battle with sin and can look forward to perfection in Christ.
3. We can anticipate the restoration of creation where we will be ruled by God and the peace and order in creation will be restored.

These stirred the saints who went before us to continue and never give up hope. They worked hard like Paul who labored day and night to bring the gospel to Jerusalem, to all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Even in their time of persecution and death, they were looking forward for this blessed hope.

Almighty Father, give me the grace to redeem the time, to live for You, and dwell in the secret place of the Most High. That I would endure and not give up, and continue to be faithful in the works You have given me. Lead me through all

my struggles and concerns in my life, and cause my heart to hold on to Your promises. Even in the face of death, I hope to come face to face with You and see Your splendor and greatness. I may not be a good fighter, but I look forward to being with You. Help me fight the battle for they are yours. Help me to gain victory and to reign with you forever more. Amen

REFLECTION QUESTION

- What inspired you to live for God today?
- At this point, what does the Lord wants you to do?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

PERSONAL PRAYER
