

*Christ*  
**21**  
**DAYS**  
*Surrender*

2nd Edition



**21**  
**DAYS**  
*fasting & prayer*

“Has your relationship with God changed  
the way you live your life?”  
— Francis Chan

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# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of fasting is to change our lifestyle in a simple and sacrificial way to allow more room for God to work in our lives. This 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting offers us the opportunity to experience God's work in our lives individually and corporately as we yield ourselves to Him.

Many things can happen in a person's spirit when they fast. A grip can be broken, hope can be restored, sin can be faced, a new life rhythm can emerge that helps us walk with God every day. The possibilities are numerous. However, one thing will be present in all of these scenarios; awareness. Fasting and prayer can heighten your awareness of the power and nearness of Jesus Christ. We can gain an awareness of our own habits and hopes and how they match or don't match the Holy Spirit's path for our lives. We can also become more aware of others, how we are called to live with others and love them the way Christ does.

As you prepare and engage in this time of fasting, this booklet is a gift to you. It is a collection of meditations, scriptures, and suggestions that may help you focus as you listen for Him. As North Carolina Yearly Meeting, let us invite God to loosen the outer garments of our routines and mindsets so that His glorious Presence can awaken our souls.

Randy Quate

# GETTING STARTED

## *Why should we fast?*

‘Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:

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

Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.”

Isaiah 58:6-9

## *How should we fast?*

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting.

Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Matthew 6:16-18

# Just a Suggestion

## Day 1

No caffeine,  
eat vegetables  
after 5pm

## Day 2

Only liquids until  
tomorrow

## Day 3

Daniel Fast,  
no internet for  
pleasure

## Day 4

Skip 2 Meals

## Day 5

Water and  
fruits all day  
until tomorrow

## Day 6

No foods with flour

## Day 7

Only liquids  
until 6pm

## Day 8

No tv, light  
breakfast,  
skip 2 meals

## Day 9

No caffeine,  
100% juice,  
eat vegetables  
after 5pm

## Day 10

Daniel Fast

## Day 11

Skip 2 Meals

## Day 12

No sugar,  
white flour,  
rice, or potatoes

## Day 13

Fruits all day

## Day 14

Only water  
until 6pm

## Day 15

Skip 2 meals

## Day 16

No red meat

## Day 17

Daniel Fast

## Day 18

No tv, games,  
facebook,  
newspaper,  
magazines

## Day 19

Liquids sun up  
to sun down

## Day 20

No sugar,  
whiter flour,  
rice, or potatoes

## Day 21

Your Choice

**Note:** You could also choose one of these days as your single focus of fasting, ie. no TV for 21 Days. Whatever you might choose, it is our hope that your sacrifice will allow you that time to then praise and glorify God. Let that moment now be replaced with time for Him.

# Daniel Fast

“So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting.”

Daniel 9:3

“Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ‘Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink.’”

Daniel 1:11-12

“In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.”

Daniel 10:2, 3

## Do's:

- All fruits and vegetables
- All legumes
- Whole grains
- Nuts and seeds
- Quality oils
- Herbs and spices

## Don'ts:

- All dairy products
- All deep fried foods
- All solid fat
- All meats and animal products
- Wine
- All sweeteners (including honey)
- All leavened bread

Note: If you have any allergies or special medical needs, please be sure to speak with your doctor before starting any new eating habits. The suggestions above are simply that; suggestions.

# Personal Goals

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# 3 Worship Services

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Please join us for one or all of these times of fellowship and worship as we seek God in our devotion!

Tuesday, Sept 10th @ 6:30pm  
Trinity Friends Meeting

Tuesday, Sept 17th @ 6:30pm  
Back Creek Friends Meeting

Tuesday, Sept 24th @ 6:30pm  
Nahunta Friends Meeting



**T**

**WEEK 1**

*Thirst*

“He that has satisfied his thirst  
turns his back on the well.”

Baltasar Gracian

# T

## Day 1

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Tuesday, September 10

### Thirst

Thirst. It is the most powerful of all human needs. A little boy was put to bed by his father and the little boy yelled out, "Daddy, I want a drink of water." The father answered, "Go to sleep." The boy cried out a second time, "Daddy, I want a drink of water." The father yelled back, "If you ask for a drink again, I am going to come in there and spank you." The boy cried out a third time, "Daddy, on your way in here to spank me, can I have a drink of water?"

In Psalm 42:1-2 David wrote, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" David was a shepherd and he knew the power of thirst. He knew how the sheep had to be taken out each and every day so they could have access to brooks and streams of water so their thirst could be satisfied. He also knelt down to the water so he could get a drink as well. David knew the power of thirst and he knew the only thing that would satisfy his thirst was water. It is the same thing with his need for God. As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. David wanted his thirst for God each and every day to be as strong as a deer's need for water. He wanted to have his spiritual thirst satisfied each and every day by his relationship with God.

As we embark on this twenty-one days of prayer and fasting, may we have a thirst for God each and

every day. May we awake in the morning with an overpowering need to have some time with God. May we go through our day with a yearning to have some time with God. May we end our day with a craving for God so strong that nothing else can satisfy it but our prayer time with God.

Thirst . . .

Thirst. How can it be satisfied? It is satisfied only with my quiet time with God.

Mark Tope, Cane Creek Friends

*Notes*



# I Day 2

Wednesday, September 11

## The Gift of Thirst

Thirst is a universal experience. We all experience being thirsty. Sometimes it's because we have been working outside on a hot day. Other times, we simply have neglected hydrating ourselves well. Conventional wisdom says that the average person needs to drink at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water every day. Whether we do that or not, the fact of the matter is our body needs water. Our body needs to be hydrated on a regular basis. When we are dehydrated we get thirsty. Our thirstiness is an indication that we are lacking the necessary amounts of water. It's time to get a drink.

Not only is physical thirst a universal experience, but so is spiritual thirst. Our spiritual thirst manifests itself through our seeking and our desiring. In other words, we are seeking and desiring meaning and connection at the soul level. The Psalmist describes this experience very succinctly: "God! My God! It's you – I search for you! My whole being thirsts for you! My body desires you in a dry and tired land, no water anywhere." (Psalm 63:1, CEB) In this case, the Psalmist knows who he is seeking and searching for. Many times, though, we are not as aware.

In his book, *A Way Through the Wilderness*, Jamie Buckingham writes: "Spiritual thirst, the need for living water, is the dominating factor in the lives of all human beings. It begins with a deep longing for

something to satisfy inner cravings." Buckingham goes to add: "...we are often shocked to find we are thirsting for the wrong things. We don't want righteousness; we prefer selfish gain and pleasure." When we are physically thirsty, we will sometimes drink things that are not as good for us as water. It may satisfy us for the time being, but we will continue to be thirsty. The same goes for spiritual thirst. We will often try to satisfy our cravings with materialism, achievement, titles, or superficial success. But, our souls continue to thirst and long for something more meaningful. Jamie Buckingham addresses this well when he writes: "...while it is thirst that drives us forward, we are never satisfied no matter how much we drink, until we drink from the fountain of Living Water."

In Psalm 63, the Psalmist recognizes and acknowledges God as the one who can meet his spiritually thirsty soul, and he writes: "I'm fully satisfied..." (Psalm 63:5, CEB) How many of us can say that? Are we fully satisfied or are we looking to quench our thirst with things and experiences that will continue to leave us thirsty? We may spend a good portion of our time avoiding intimacy with God, but eventually our thirst catches up with us and our parched soul returns to the One who can truly satisfy.

Are you thirsty? Get a glass of water. Are you spiritually thirsty? Drink deep and long from the well of God's grace and mercy.

Scott Wagoner, Deep River Friends

# I Day 3

Thursday, September 12

Where are you God?

When I was a little girl, I remember a couple that visited our Meeting a couple times a year. I would draw up when I saw them there for worship, because I knew someone would ask them to sing and play piano. They never failed to sing *The Solid Rock*, a song I grew to dislike because as a child I thought it was dull and ugly.

Now, I am an adult, let me tell you about a trial in my life that happen about a year ago. I couldn't find God. I could not sense His presence. I cried out to God, "Please let me know you are here with me!" I felt an inner darkness; an absence of the Holy Spirit in my life. I attended church on Sunday and taught Sunday school with a mask on my face. I felt emotionless. I read scripture daily and it seemed like I never read anything new. The lack of emotion felt like death.

What can I do in this Season of not feeling God? In my head I knew "God will never leave or forsake me." Hebrew 13:5. I searched and prayed for forgiveness and asked God to show me anything I needed to repent. "God show me my sins and forgive me." I didn't stop praying or reading scripture. Satan tried to tell me I wasn't saved and worked in the darkness to gain my soul. God was always with me even when I didn't feel Him. Well, asking for forgiveness wasn't getting me anywhere. I still had no feeling of change.



I tried reading Psalms to find words of praise to God. My prayers became only praise, nothing for the sick, family, or myself. I read Psalms and praised God every day. One morning I started to Praise God in prayer and I started to remember lines in a song I had learned earlier in my life. "My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus blood and righteousness; On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand - all other ground is sinking sand." The hymn, *The Solid Rock*, I learned as child now gave me comfort as it came forward from my subconscious. The flood of tears was joyful, and finally after months I could feel God again. He is the most glorious, awesome God and He loves me so.

My continued faith, praising God and reading Psalms brought the relationship with my Lord back. I could sing, cry, feel my heart grow and pump out of my chest. Hallelujah!!! God saw I needed to grow and He would not give me rest until I sought after Him in a different way. When you lose the peace and personal relationship with God your heart aches for Him until He prompts you to try new ways of talking to Him. Sometimes God chooses to be silent. In the silence He never left me.

Gwen Headen, Plainfield Friends

*Notes*



# I Day 4

Friday, September 13

## Thirsting For God

Read: Psalm 42:1-11, 63:1-5, 107:8-9

My mother was raised on a farm in southwestern Kansas, a place of few trees and many humble weeds. It is also a region where rain is scarce, creek beds are dry, and the land is parched. Yet, it is surprising to see farms with luscious green fields. In fact, much of the nation's wheat harvest comes from these fields. The saving grace for these farmers is the Ogallala Aquifer, which lays deep underground. Farmers invest thousands of dollars to drill into this reservoir, to pump life-giving water to irrigate their crops, and this transforms the arid land.

The Psalmist compares his soul to parched land and his longings to a deep thirst, which only God can satisfy. We see this in several of his heartfelt prayers: "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." (Psalm 42:1-2a) "I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water." (Psalm 63:1)

Our prayers may not have the poetry of the Psalmist, but we can identify with his thirst. Thirst for God becomes evident when facing challenges beyond our capacity to resolve or handle; life's pains and disappointments become too much to bear; during seasons of spiritual dryness and God seems distant; when we've tasted the goodness of God and

long for more. While we may not stay still long enough to recognize it or become vulnerable enough to admit it, there is a thirst within each of us only God can quench.

We do not know the circumstances that caused the Psalmist to confess his spiritual thirst, but certainly his soul was in crisis. Further study of Psalm 42 gives insights how he tapped into the reservoir of God's mercies to quench his thirst:

1) He prayerfully recalls the past graces of God (vss. 4, 6). Remembering the ways God offered provision, protection, and guidance in the past is a wonderful way to bring stability and a rightful perspective into any situation.

2) In prayer he becomes mindful of God's enduring love in the present moment (vss. 7-8). While he questions God and complains he is forgotten, in a moment of insight he becomes aware of God's loving intentions toward him.

This awareness is transforming. Such love anchors us and strengthens our souls to carry-on, to remain faithful regardless of the present circumstances.

3) The Psalmist praises God for the hope to come (vss. 5, 11). It takes trust to declare, "I will yet praise Him." However, the Scriptures assure us that life's struggles are not eternal. Through praise we draw upon our future hope and this gives us courage for today.

In prayer God offers us blessings that come from tapping into the reservoir of His mercies and allowing Him to satisfy our souls. "Give thanks to the LORD for His unfailing love... He satisfies the thirsty...with good things."  
(Psalm 107:8-9)

Kelly Kellum, High Point Friends

# I Day 5

Saturday, September 14

Psalm 63:1

"You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water."

Just reading this verse makes me thirsty. Several weeks ago I set out on a bike ride of about 22 miles that interweaved through the hills and valleys of the Uwharrie National Forest that borders my house. As a newbie I did not anticipate how much water I would consume. I realized early on that one 20 ounce bottle would not be anywhere near enough. I conserved the water and managed to make it last two-thirds of the way through my ride. An interesting thing happened right about the time I ran completely out of water – it began to rain! Not just a sprinkle, a down pour. Riding, thirsty, covered in water, surrounded by water, I was struck with the irony of the whole situation.

As refreshing as the shower was on a searing July afternoon, I needed a drink. The lack of water began to affect my energy level. I knew the situation was going to get worse because the longer I went without water, the lower my energy level would get, the longer it would take to finish my route, the longer it would be before I got anything to drink. To make matters worse, the quick but drenching shower left behind a dreadful humidity. The desire for a drink overcame my thoughts and excluded every other

desire. I was desperately thirsty.

I wonder if we have the same desperation when we thirst for God? Do we crave His presence? Does that one desire overcome and surpass all others? My favorite analogy for craving God is one that I have shared before, in fact, I shared it at Yearly Meeting the year I was recorded. (1999) Imagine yourself at the end of a long winter being forced to eat those tomato-shaped objects that bear no resemblance in taste to the homegrown variety that are currently growing in your back yard. You patiently watch the new sprouts grow and your mouth begins to water as they begin to change from green to that most magnificent red! You can imagine the day when you pick the first one, carrying it as you slowly walk inside admiring your skill as a gardener, slice it, and lay the slices on a piece of your favorite bread. Add a little mayonnaise, some salt and pepper, and there you have it! Lunch, simple yet satisfying. Very satisfying.

The problem with this analogy is that we are not created with an incessant need for tomatoes like we are for water. While a tomato sandwich might fill a temporary craving, water fills an inborn need. Do we see our need for God as a consistent and constant, everyday and everywhere kind of necessity, and not as a nice, once-in-a-while wish? Do we long for God with our whole being? Do we thirst for God and earnestly seek Him?

Daniel Thames, Hopewell Friends

# I *Day 6*

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## Sunday, September 15

As a runner, there is nothing more satisfying than a cold drink after a long workout. When my body is weak, exhausted and longing for replenishment, water always satisfies my thirst. In the gospel of John chapter 4, Jesus reveals that He is the Living Water that satisfies our spiritual thirst.

There is, I believe, more to this Living Water image than meets the eye. Much more. We are thirsty for more than earthly water. We are thirsty for spiritual satisfaction, justice and the righteousness of a Holy God. By claiming to be Living Water, Jesus is telling us that He is the spiritual satisfaction of our heart's desire.

It is impossible to read the scriptures without noticing how active (or living!) water is throughout the Bible. These water images point to Jesus and His power and authority in the world.

In Genesis 1, we see water covering the earth before God summons the dry land, allowing life to flourish. Creation, life itself, is formed from within the water. But, just a few chapters later, the flood water was the means of destruction for an unrighteous generation. Noah and some others rose above the watery condemnation on an Ark of Salvation. A new covenant is made, signified by light refracted off water: a rainbow. These stories show us that life comes from water, but water can destroy life.

In Exodus, the Hebrew people are liberated by walking through parted waters, while the Egyptians are condemned to death by those same waters in their pursuit of God's chosen. Water was used to

release and condemn.

In Revelation 20, Satan is cast into the Abyss (a name for chaotic water) and locked away for 1,000 years, while in Revelation 22, a beautiful flowing river proceeds from the eternal New Eden. Water is a means to both punish evil and to reward God's faithful with an eternal, satisfying drink.

In every corner of the Bible, "Living" water is used at the behest of God to create and destroy; to condemn and release; to punish and to satisfy. Water is an active character that executes God's action as He sees fit. Perhaps Elihu said it best to Job: "He brings the clouds to punish people or to water his earth and show his love" (Job 37.13).

By calling Himself Living Water, Jesus is not just offering us something temporal and immediately satisfying. Jesus the eternal Living Water is telling us that He is granted the authority over all Creation to liberate and condemn, extend grace and punish, satisfy and denounce (John 5.19-24). Jesus is the authority over the entire cosmos and the instrument of all God's activity throughout history.

Shouldn't we, as His spiritually thirsty disciples, ask Jesus the same question that He asked the Samaritan woman, "Will you give me a drink?" (7). In an increasingly parched world, full of spiritual darkness, injustice, and prejudice, our thirsty souls must cry out for the satisfying drink of our Savior. We don't long for this water simply because it tastes good. We long for this water because we are broken, the world is broken and all creation is crying out for restoration. Jesus alone is the drink that truly satisfies.

May we, every day, thirst for this true, blessed and satisfying Living Water.

David Mercadante, Poplar Ridge Friends

# I Day 7

Monday, September 16

## Which Vulture are You?

"Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the Days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day of Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from Heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the Day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife! Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night, two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left." "Where, Lord?" they asked. He Replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather." Luke 17:26-37

Christ is pretty candid here. He is delivering a warning to His disciples, a warning against "false security."

It is a warning to abandon false confidences, such as possessions, attachments, or worldly values, so as they do not deter anyone from His return; the return that will take all to what they truly desire: eternal life, eternal love, eternal wealth, and eternal family. It is a warning against the temporary.

To answer the disciples' question, Jesus quotes a then, famous proverb.



The proverb details something we, who have grown up in a rural environment know something about too. That if we see one vulture circling overhead, it does not mean much. The vulture could be just simply checking something out, something that turns out to be nothing. Then again, the vulture could see a wounded animal, but not dying. The vulture is a scavenger, not a predator, and it only consumes what is already dead. If it is just one vulture, then the animal may "be down, but not out." But, if there are many vultures, then the animal is more than wounded, and is dying. And they will wait until the animal has died, before they descend.

The Point of Jesus Using this proverb is that if someone sees what he or she believes is a Sign from God, maybe it is, maybe it is not. But once many Notice, then the Sign is Real, and then all should Gather to Notice.

Oh! So the vulture proverb is not a negative one?! No, its not, because, Jesus is Inviting His disciples to See what they have Seen already to be the Signs of the Day of the Son of Man, and that Salvation is at hand. You see, Jesus will be the "Dead Body," and we must as the "vultures" descend when we See the Signs to Eat, but when we do, we will Find Him not Dead, but Alive. There He Becomes not a deceased body to consume for the temporary life, but the Living Bread that Sustains Forever.

So, as odd as this is going to sound, which kind of vulture are you?

Are you the vulture that ignores the Signs, or one who Gathers with others to Descend and Consume what God has Provided, and Live forever? Will you be the one who is Taken, or the one left behind?

Michael Fulp Jr, Sciene Hill Friends

*Notes*





**WEEK 2**

# *Surrender*

“One does not surrender a life in an instant. That which is lifelong can only be surrendered in a lifetime.”

Elisabeth Elliot

Tuesday, September 17

I Know Who I Believe

Because most folks are not as familiar with the Society of Friends as some other religious groups, when I tell people I am a Quaker, I am often asked what I believe. Coming up with a quick answer is never easy and I suspect the same is true of most other denominations as well.

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul takes a somewhat different approach to explaining his faith. Leaving the what question unanswered, Paul simply says, "I know who I believe." I am not sure we completely grasp the significance of that statement.

For a major portion of his life Paul was Saul. In his own words, a "Pharisee of Pharisees", an expert on the beliefs and customs of the Jewish religion. He was a man who knew what he believed and was so sure that he was right that he actively persecuted those who disagreed with his beliefs. Scripture tells us he was on his way to Damascus with arrest warrants to round up Christians when his life was radically changed by an encounter with the Living Christ.

As a result of this new and living relationship, Paul was forced to re-examine everything he had believed up to that point. His first real ministry was among the Samaritans, people with whom Saul the Pharisee would have had no contact. Next, God sent this man, who had once believed that God only cared for the Jews, to the Gentiles. And when his ministry was called into question by the church elders in Jerusalem, he stood his

ground. In the end it was clear to everyone that God did intend for these unclean foreigners to be welcomed into His kingdom. What Paul found in his relationship with Christ was that what he believed was changed and re-ordered as he grew in faith and experience. The constant in his life was not WHAT he believed, but WHO he believed.

In many ways the experiences of George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, parallel those of Paul. By the time Fox came on the scene, the Protestant Reformation had nearly run its course leaving a variety of new religious groups, all claiming their beliefs and practices were the right ones. As a young man, Fox spent time traveling around England trying to find meaningful answers to some of life's most basic questions. He went from one group to another and was given all kinds of advice about what to do and what to believe. When he was at the point of giving up, when all his hope in these churches and religious leaders of his day were gone, he records in his journal, "Then I heard a voice which said there is one even Christ Jesus that can speak to thy condition."

Fox discovered the answer was not a what, but a Who. And although the two are not mutually exclusive, the what we believe must never take precedence over the Who. Now as throughout our history, concentrating on what we believe creates division and sets up barriers separating us from one another, but Who we believe tears down the walls of partition and makes us one. What we believe does not have the power to change the world, but Who we believe is in the business of reconciling all things to Himself. So, which is more important, for people to know what we believe, or as Paul said, to know who we believe?

# Day 9

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Wednesday, September 18

## This 'Self'

In order to save our life, Jesus tells us, we must first lose it. Richard Rohr, Thomas Merton and others have interpreted this "self" that must die as the false or ego self, the self separate from God. If we want to live and move and have our being in the Risen Christ, this ego or separate self is the thing we most have to surrender, and it is a very subtle, deceptive and manipulative survivor. And there is one in each of us.

Surrender is about relinquishing the hold of this self when we can. I have begun to hear the myriad ways we say daily, "my will be done." This is where suffering arises for us and where we create it for others. "You shouldn't do that [thing that offends me/that I wouldn't do]", "Nobody should ever [do something I don't want done/wouldn't consider]", "You ought to [follow my excellent advice to get your messed up life in order]", "I/you will/won't..." Anger [that car had the audacity to pull out in front of me!], irritation, frustration and hurt [find the implicit should or shouldn't statement] are all indications of "my will be done." How often do we say, "God wants you/me to..." when it's really what we want, and if we've talked to God at all about it, it was to direct, not to surrender?

Life simply brings things daily that don't fit the ways we would script it if we were God. Every time we say "my will be done" we are putting ourselves in God's place—and face it, we say this all the time. A daily practice of saying "Your will be done, Lord, not

mine" helps loosen the bondage of the self that enjoys—in different ways from person to person—playing god in our own lives and in the lives of those around us. Try saying, "Your will be done, God, not mine" when attached to certain outcomes with family members or at meeting or work. Try saying, "Your will be done, Lord" over and over in loaded situations—and then afterwards when what we thought should have happened didn't—or even if it did. "Your will be done, not mine" said regularly creates amazing spaces for God to work in ways we never dreamed. "Your will be done" said regularly will become an attitude of the heart and blur for a time the separateness from God of our smaller selves.

Sara Beth Terrell, *First Friends*

*Notes*



# Day 10

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Thursday, September 19

## Only To Be What He Wants Me To Be

When asked to write an article about surrender, there were many thoughts that immediately came to my mind. My first thoughts were of a series of sermons written by Andrew Murray in Absolute Surrender where he states ". . . the condition of God's blessing is absolute surrender of all into His hands . . . if our hearts are willing for that, there is no end to what God will do for us and the blessing God will bestow." Other thoughts were focused toward the hymns of the church such as "I Surrender All", "All for Jesus", and other hymns of invitation to salvation and commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

As I thought more and more, it occurred to me that there is a simple way of understanding all that is meant and is required for the Christian to be absolutely surrendered into the hands of God. There is a chorus that was well known to an earlier generation that sums it all up quite nicely. It is entitled, "Every Moment of the Day".

"Only to be what he wants me to be, every moment of every day, Yielded completely to Jesus alone every step of this pilgrim way. Just to be clay in the Potter's hands, Ready to do as His will demands. Only to be what He wants me to be, every moment of every day."

Each of us has hopes, dreams, desires for our lives. Hopes and dreams for ourselves and for those whom we love. We strive each day to make those dreams a



reality. If my prayer is however, to be what He wants me to be, my first priority must be as expressed in another song, "My Desire to be Like Jesus!"

Is the deepest desire of my heart to actually be like Jesus? Not just occasionally, but in every moment of every day?

Other questions I need to answer personally are:

1. Am I yielded completely to Jesus or does my own will hinder His will?
2. Do the hands of God mold my life and make me, as I ought to be?
3. Am I ready (prepared) to do as His will demands?
4. Is my desire to truly be like Jesus?

My Prayer:

“Lord Jesus, do in my life and through my life as You will. Fill me with Your Divine love, grace, and power that I might become increasingly surrendered to You with each passing day. – Amen”

Jon Reece, Back Creek Friends

*Notes*



Friday, September 20

He Won't Work Against You

One of life's simple pleasures is free time and a good book to read. I ran across both not too long ago. I was reading about the nature of surrender by Dr. Charles Stanley. In his teaching, he was talking about the relationship between water safety courses and surrender.

He said, 'A cardinal rule is never swim out to a drowning man and try to help him as long as he is thrashing about. To do so is to commit suicide. As long as a drowning man thinks he can help himself; he is dangerous to anyone who tries to help him. His tendency is to grab the one trying to aid him and take them both down in the process. The correct procedure is to stay just far enough away so that he can't grab you. Then you wait. When he finally gives up, you make your move. At that point, the one drowning is pliable. He won't work against you. He will let you help.'

I have been drowning in a sea of disease this year. For the second time in twelve years, I have been fighting cancer. I've discovered yet again that God can't save me till I give up and let Him make his move. Surrender is when I resist the urge to make something happen and when I stop looking for ways out of my difficulties. It is telling my Lord, I am powerless to help myself and I need you to step in and take over.

Perhaps you are drowning in a sea of debt or regret, failure or some other struggle. Rest assured,

there is One swimming out to help you and He is waiting on you to be still before He makes His move.

Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 64:8

Eric Woods, Nahunta Friends

*Notes*



# Day 12

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Saturday, September 21

## Submission as union with God

Submission – not a word we like to hear or read, even in the religious/spiritual context of submission to God's Will. We all like to have control, or the illusion of control, even in our faith lives. Submission is neither surrender nor giving up, both of which connote an imposition by some outside force or being. Surrender (and giving up) is a relinquishing of autonomy or the taking away of freedom and power by an external force or being.

A few years ago, I found myself continually struggling with the concept of submission, most especially submission to God. As my life in the Spirit deepened, it seemed that regardless of where I turned I was continually faced with the word SUBMISSION. It would come up in conversations, even with strangers; the word appeared in readings, jumping off the page at me in both sacred and secular writings. Therefore, I knew I had to get to work – the internal work of submitting.

Submission, because it is willingly letting go of control of desires and of self, takes time. That time can often seem agonizing as we experience many "little deaths and resurrections (or births)" as the old passes away and the new comes into being. There were many false starts and missteps, and often backsliding, on my way to feeling progress. At first, the progress brought celebration, as I thought I had accomplished something. Instead, I learned that it

was God at work in me – it wasn't anything that I had done. This slow transition or transformation of self, and union with God, is as brother Lawrence states, "...to completely abandon [self] into God's hands." Submission is becoming all that God created us to be, satisfied only when we are in God's Presence, knowing God's Will, and giving God all the glory.

I now understand John Woolman's use of the word "convicted." When he became convicted that slavery was against God's will, he sought to change, from the inside out; to become a new person in Christ where he, Woolman, lived each day from that internal place where the Inward Christ is the fountain of Living Waters. Like Woolman, I know that submission of self - the total turning over to God of all that I do – is seeking to live in that knowledge that only God's presence is essential to spiritual life.

Submission is a slow, long process of letting go – letting go of control, letting go of anger and fear, letting go of the need to "always be right." Moreover, God is gracious as God forgives, gives untold opportunities and chances, and always welcomes our small steps toward the "union with God" where we know our true self, and our true relationship with God. With submission, we do not respond to some outward "command" or "law"; instead, we turn slowly toward God because of that inward compulsion, that inner desire, to know God and to please God.

Submission is the response of a heart longing for that intimate relationship with God – freely chosen. Welcome to the journey.

"All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well."

— Julian of Norwich

Frank Massey, Jamestown Friends

# Day 13

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Sunday, September 22

## We Have All Surrendered

'For the one who was a slave when called to Faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person; Similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ's slave.' I Corinthians 7:22

We have all surrendered to something. Whether it is to God, ourselves, our parents, our children, a job, or our desires, we have done it. We have surrendered and are now being held captive to that master in our life.

When I was still in college, I felt that I had finally been 'released from my parents' captivity', as many would call it. I was free to be myself, to discover myself and to chase the desires of my own heart. It didn't take long before I quickly surrendered to a new master.

We can call it whatever we like (selfishness, peer pressure, insecurity, sin), but I believe that we are creatures that cannot live without a master. Even "self-mastered" to me means we have surrendered to some self-customized version of what the world would have us be.

I had done this myself. I had measured my value, my worth, my ambition and success with that of the world's. I allowed my pride and my insecurity to rule my thoughts, beliefs and actions. I had become a slave to myself and to the world. Before Christ, I believe we are all ruled by at least one of these two masters.

I am thankful today that God didn't allow me to 'hit rock bottom' before I realized my situation. All that I chased had not given me freedom.

When I finally found my way back into the loving arms of Christ, I did know freedom. I was stripped of chains that held me captive; both outward bondages and those of the heart and mind. I found freedom in Christ's work on the cross.

I discovered over time that freedom in Christ is much different than the world's definition of freedom. As I gave more of myself to the work of God's Kingdom, I realized that I was still a slave to several masters. I struggled, trying to share control of my life with God. There are just too many uncertainties simply let go.

I found myself reading many of Paul's letters to the early church and was struck by how often he referred to himself as a slave to Christ. I had always been told that there is freedom in Christ, so why was the Bible conflicting with itself? The last thing I wanted, in my mind, was to become a slave again.

Then I found this passage,

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:1-2

What I feared was condemnation; the judgement that I knew I deserved. I feared the bondage that my earlier choices had created. I feared losing the control I had over my life.

But in Christ, my freedom is from sin and death. My slavery is to the One that defeated it all. Our Father is just and righteous and holy. The Holy Spirit provides conviction and guidance. What better master could we have? In whom could we have better assurance?

# Day 14

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Monday, September 23

## Let Go and Let God

Throw up the white flag, and lay down our swords of fake smiles, crude jokes, and negative influences. Walk away from the norm and the flow of life that we've been stuck in aside the general population. Move from the world and succumb to the presence that has been waiting in the background patiently.

The Spirit waits for us. Either He has already come into our lives or He has been suppressed by everything else we're trying to squeeze in next to it. He waits and surrounds us, but do we feel Him as we move through tasks in our day, unlikely to hear such a still, small voice with all of the other clutter. Would we hear the thunder if it came or has it been too long time since we've been shaken like that. Are we afraid? Do we fear that letting the Spirit lead would take up more time in our day? Are we embarrassed of the true, new being we have become through Christ, so we bury him in work and idle chit chat.

Let us break through, folks. Let the Spirit lead us through the most mundane areas of life. In Romans 8:5-6 Paul says,

“Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance



with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.”

Romans 8:5-6

Maybe you don't feel like you've been 'living in the flesh', but have you felt the Spirit stir in awhile. What would happen if He took over? Couldn't we all use a little more peace in our day? And who doesn't want that life more abundant?

Let Jesus Christ transform your day today. Let your day be infiltrated with God moments and feel the difference of not going at it alone.

Abbie Inman, Concord Friends

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**WEEK 3**

# *Grace*

“Our worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God's grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God's grace.”

Jerry Bridges

## Tuesday, September 24

### The Grace of God

One cannot experience God on any level without realizing His grace was a significant part of that divine interaction, for it is the grace of God that enables every aspect of ministry to mankind. It could be salvation to the lost sinner, comfort to the grieving, strength to the weary, and wisdom to the seeking, hope to the desperate, or restoration to the broken. God's grace takes on the form of our need (whatever it is) in order to interject His supernatural love and power to that specific area. By definition, that grace is freely given to us without merit or reason other than that's who God is and that's what He wants to do for us.

Many times we view God's grace and God's mercy as meaning the same. Although they have similar characteristics, they are manifested differently. Grace is when God gives us what we do not deserve (such as His love, joy, favor, etc.). Mercy is when God withholds what we actually do deserve (such as more severe consequences, eternal separation from God, etc.). In both cases, we are ultimately the beneficiaries of His timely interventions.

The grace of God has powerfully affected me personally. Because of His grace, I can truly testify! He rescued me and delivered me from Satan's control, He protected my family from permanent damage resulting from domestic violence, He has faithfully provided for all the needed finances, He blessed me

with a great wife and marriage, He has helped me change from having several problematic character issues to a lifestyle that is Christ-like, He has forgiven me of a multitude of sins, and He has chosen and anointed me to be in full time ministry. Those are just a few examples of His grace poured out to me.

Friend, as you make your way through this time of prayer, I believe today could be a special day for you. Perhaps Almighty God is planning to manifest His grace to you. That which looks so big and complicated to you is, in reality, subservient to God's grace! As He encouraged Paul in Second Corinthians chapter twelve, verse nine; "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness". God is ready, willing and able to bathe you in His grace today. Receive it and be blessed!

Gene A. Moser, Pilot View Friends

*Notes*



## Wednesday, September 25

### The Great Grace Place

Hanging on the wall just behind an old pot-bellied stove in a country store in a small southern town not far from where I live is a little plaque that reads, "There is no place anywhere near this place like this place, so this must be the place to be."

The plaque reminds me of the great grace place where early Christians gathered for a 'discernment summit'. Their purpose-filled conference manifested a consonance of spirit. Dr. Luke, physician as well as early church historian, characterized these gatherers as being in one place, with one heart, one mind. He noted this unique unity and that 'great grace was upon them all.' (Acts 4:33b)

For the Christian, Grace is the unmerited favor of a loving God. We do nothing to earn or deserve it, but when we get to that great grace place, perhaps not so much a physical venue, a dispositional place of the heart, it is transformative.

The great grace place reveals to us that the light is always greater than the darkness. Our darkness is finite; fleeting. His Light is infinite; forever. Darkness is incapable of defeating "Jesus, the light of the world." (John 8:12) There is nothing small about grace. Grace brings us to the Light and brings the Light to us! That light is always, always, always greater than the darkness.

The great grace place informs us that life is not a problem to be solved, but a gift to be enjoyed. The

words of the Psalmist reminds us that Grace manifests itself in the gift of 'This is the day the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it.' (Psalm 118:24) Roy Putnam advocates for a grace-laden life in his book, Life is a Celebration, declaring "God never intended that we just muddle through life, but master through it." Again, being in that great grace place enables us to see life not as a problem to be solved, but as a gift (of grace) to be enjoyed.

The great grace place propels us to see that the future is as bright as the promises of God. God speaks through the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, saying "I know the plans I have for you; to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11) Peter encouraged Christians to 'grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (II Peter 3:18) He knew, as Alan Redpath would write to believers centuries later, 'The conversion of a soul is the miracle of a moment, the making of a saint is the task of a lifetime.'

No one knows what the future holds. However, believers can affirm that while I am not all I am going to be, or all that I want to be or all God wants me to be, by the great grace of God, I am not what I used to be!

In difficult personal times, Paul's consolation was 'His grace is sufficient for me' (II Corinthians 12:9) Paul claimed grace-sufficiency when God's providence left it in tact. Grace says to us, "Greater is He that is in me than (what) is in my world." (I John 4:4)

Grace means God loves us just the way we are, but He loves us too much to let us stay that way. As individual believers and as a church community gathered for worship, there is no place anywhere near that great grace place like that place, so that great grace place must be the place for us to be.

Steve Wood, Forsyth Friends

Thursday, September 26

## Grace

Baby girls are often given virtuous names: Joy, Hope, Faith, Constance. According to the US Census, the name "Grace" was as popular in 1880 as it is today.

A girl may be graceful, moving with ease. A mealtime prayer is "saying Grace." A benediction may include it: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you." (Numbers 6:24-25 NIV)

In Latin, "grace" or "gratia" means favor, or free gift. In the New Testament, "grace" (used over 150 times) takes on a special redemptive sense in which God makes available His unmerited favor on behalf of undeserving sinners. It is Divine forgiveness. There is nothing we have done, nor can ever do, to earn this favor. It is an unconditional gift from God given through the atoning work of Christ on the cross. It has been explained at times with an acronym:

God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

Martin Luther referred to sola gratia: we are saved by grace alone. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2: 8-9 NIV)

All that we are, all that we might become, and our eternal end is bestowed upon us firstly and lastly through God's gift of grace.

We cannot create out of nothing. God creates and sustains our lives in countless ways, until we return to Him. Our surrender to Christ as Lord and Savior begins



a new work. We become astounded by this grace. We delight in God's goodness. We desire to please Him by raising up the good in our families and communities. We draw closer in likeness to the beauty of Christ as God's spiritual gifts deepen and mature within us.

All that is true and just, pure and lovely, honest and good -- all come into being through the grace of God. With loving gratitude and joy, we strive to give back. There is no limit to this creative impulse expressed through honest labors, acts of charity, and artistic endeavors.

God's grace is observed in lives better lived through an increase of the disciplines of worship, prayer, devotion, and loving care of our families. Theologian Robert Barron calls this "the loop of grace."

God gives graciously, gratuitously, superabundantly -- and then we are called to respond with a similar exuberance. The more we give back to God, the more we get, and then we must give that back again, so as to get even more in return. This is the loop of grace which is spoken of from beginning to end of the Bible.\*

Countless stories are told of God's grace breaking through at just the right moment, changing everything. In retrospect, they seem incredibly unlikely to have happened. And yet they do -- every day! Our thankful response is to join the great cloud of witnesses who tell the world of God's love, goodness, and grace.

Former slave ship captain John Newton knew of this grace. His attempt to express this newfound joy has become one of our most beloved hymns:

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound!  
That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost, but now am found.  
Was blind, but now I see.

Linda B. Selleck, High Point Friends

\* Dr. Robert Barron, Sermon 551, "The Loop of Grace" July 30, 2011 ([www.wordonfire.org](http://www.wordonfire.org))

Friday, September 27

Beyond Our Expectations

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 3: 14-21

When the phone rang, I knew who was calling. Walter, a fellow teacher, had told me he'd call about a particular student. What I didn't expect was how Walter opened the conversation.

"How's the family?" he asked. "And how is Dick enjoying his work?" For several minutes, while I was mentally preparing to get down to our teaching business, he went on inquiring about our family's health and happiness. And he seemed truly interested.

It had been only a few weeks since we had moved to North Carolina from the North. There I was accustomed to using the telephone for business -- or the occasional chat with family or friends. But when it came to telephone conversations, I didn't often mix the two.

That call was nearly forty years ago, but I still remember it vividly, because it was a good hint about the way things were done in the South. Before moving, I hadn't known what to expect of Southerners. In fact, I was pretty anxious about the move. My childhood family vacation trips had taught me little about Southerner customs. So when we moved here, I had expected people to act like my Northern friends -- a little less formal, and quick to the point.

What Walter taught me was both a surprise and a delight. It may not have been because he was a Southerner, but it was a tender way of being with people -- a gentle way of showing friendship and care. Walter may not have cared more than our friends up North cared, but he had a kind way of showing it.

How many times have we been surprised by another person's expression of concern? And how many times have we been surprised by God's love?

Look back at your life and consider that God may be, after all, the Master of surprising and delighting -- the Master of exceeding our expectations. God, "who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine," has a way not only of anticipating our needs, but of providing them in ways we could never have predicted.

God's grace has a way of being unexpected. How many times, when you have prayed for a door to open, did a different door open -- one you had not seen before? At other times, when the future has looked bleakest, with no solution in sight, how often has a newsolution appeared?

There's a saying among the faithful in times of crisis: "Expect a miracle!" But even that beautiful exhortation of faith may not be enough to convey the nature of God's grace. God's love is always deeper, broader, and wiser than we expect it to be.

Let us pray: Gracious God, God of overwhelming love, help me to trust. Help me not to be bound by my own expectations, but to know that in your boundless wisdom and your steadfast love, your grace is sufficient for my every need. Amen.

Kathy Coe, Jamestown Friends

Saturday, September 28

Let Grace Abound Amongst Us

"...but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' "

II Corinthians 12:9

Our local meeting – First Friends in Greensboro, NC – hosts about a dozen Twelve Step groups. Among them are Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous and others. If you are a participant in one of these groups, you have to admit that you are helpless to deal with your addiction on your own. You need the help of God or as some say the "Higher Power". You confess your weakness before God and the others and declare, "I am an alcoholic" or "I am a drug addict." To stay sober one is dependent upon the grace and strength of God as Paul was in the verse from II Corinthians quoted above.

You could say that many of us have an addiction and that is a tendency toward self-centeredness. We place ourselves and the things that best serve our interests at the heart of the universe. God gets pushed out to the edge. A word for it that has fallen out of fashion in many circles is "sin". Quakers used to call it "walking in darkness rather than in the Light of Christ." Maybe our gatherings in our meetinghouses and churches should be the coming together of "Sinners Anonymous" as we yield ourselves to the grace and light of the Living Christ which empowers us to overcome the darkness.

Grace is the wondrous gift of a loving God who cares for us much more deeply than words can ever express. There is nothing you can do to earn it or deserve it. It is a mysterious gift like the gift of your life. How can we

describe it? It's like the taste of peaches or blueberries early in the season or the invigorating smell of ocean air if you haven't been near the sea for a while. It's like holding your first-born child. It is the feeling that someone loves you. It is yours for free and all you can do is accept it. That is why one of the best known theologians of the last century said salvation is accepting the fact that you are accepted.

When Jesus wanted to tell us about a gracious God, he told a story about a young adult who wandered into a distant land and squandered a large chunk of the family's resources on wild living (Luke 15:11-32). At last he was reduced to sleeping in homeless shelters and standing on street corners with a sign that proclaimed "Will work for food," but even then the jobs and food were hard to come by. One morning he woke up and said to himself, "I'm going home and apologize to my family and see if they will just let me work on the farm like the rest of the hired help. Those who work for my family have it pretty good and at least know where the next meal is coming from."

As he neared home he became quite nervous and wondered if they would tell him to get lost. His carefully rehearsed apology began to get stuck in his throat. As he rounded the bend he saw his dad standing at the gate looking up and down the road. To his total surprise his dad ran toward him, embraced him, ripped off his fine robe and placed it on the young man's shoulders to cover his grubby clothes and with tears in his eyes his dad declared, "Welcome home! Welcome home!" That night they invited all the neighbors in for a big barbecue.

Jesus tells us that is what grace looks like—a parent waiting at the gate looking up and down the road for lost daughters and sons to come home. And when they come home there is a big party! May grace abound in our local meetings and throughout North Carolina Yearly Meeting. May we freely share the grace that has been extended to us.

## Sunday, September 29

### Meditation on Psalms 18: 16 & 19

Psalms 18:16,19: My favorite scripture. Why? It reminds me of two very important principles: God will rescue me and for no other reason than that he delights in me. Both are pretty astounding, when you stop and think about it...

Vs 16 clearly establishes that God is somewhere I'm not. He's above me; he's separated from whatever I'm doing that has gotten me into so much trouble. What is implied here that if I were where He is-I might not be in "deep waters". Regardless, He takes the trouble to reach down for me; He takes hold of me-securing my release, my redemption, my salvation. He grabs me in his firm grasp and takes me out of harm's way. Such imagery brings to mind many other comparisons - a parent snatching a wandering child from the path of a car, the edge of a decline, the very jaws of danger. Such our Father does for us. And just as we parents allow our children to "test" boundaries, to get very close to mishap, misfortune, and mistakes, we are there, hovering, ready to rescue our beloved. So our Father allows us to test, try, tempt fate, until the last minute, when He reaches down and draws us from the very deep waters that swirl around our shoulders, threatening to take us under and pull us down to our very death.

But the biggest attraction for me to this scripture is not just the assurance that God will and always has saved me. I have depended for years on this fact-that God will not abandon me, that God will come to my rescue (however that may be defined), and that God is my constant companion. He may be at the top of the cliff looking down as I venture into that fascinating, tempting, mesmerizing whirlpool. But he is there. He is watchful, faithful, constant. No, the assurance of my rescue is not

the surprise. I have believed this since my early days. And I was reconvinced, reassured when I accepted Him as my savior.

The surprise is the "why". Vs 9 makes it clear that I have done nothing to deserve this impressive rescue. My deeds, my personality, my accomplishments have not caused God to watch over my exploits, my wanderings, my tiresome experiments. God rescues me because he delights in me. Me-ordinary, infuriating, disobedient, arrogant, critical, difficult me! This is what I find hard to believe,. Years ago, long after I accepted Christ, I came to understand that I didn't have to be perfect. I finally understood with great relief that I didn't have to earn my salvation. I didn't have to "bat a 1000" in the words of a contemporary Christian writer. I dissolved into tears when this reality finally penetrated my Type A, self-motivated and independent sense of self. And even though I let go of the expectation that I would ever, ever be "Christlike", I have always operated under the assumption that God would love me better if I were "good".

This is why this scripture speaks-no screams at me. It reminds me of the simple truth that Gold not only loves me-he delights in me. When he has pulled me to the shore and wrapped me in a towel, he smiles. When He sets my feet firmly on that rock, he breathes a sigh of relief. When I am tucked warmly in my bed at night, He can relax. Why? Because He delights in me. He wants me to be safe, comforted, and happy. Yes - the me that you know. And I'm shaking my head in amazement, just as you are. Her? God delights in Her???

God's character, full of Grace and forgiveness is a constant source of puzzlement and amazement to my understanding. But though I don't understand how he can overlook my imperfections, I believe and accept that he does. He teaches me what His grace is like and sets the standard for the kind of forgiveness and love I should model. Oh, that I might always look up into that adoring face, and grasp the hand that reaches out to me!

Monday, September 30

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. (1 Timothy 1:15 NIV)

God's grace pierces my heart in this verse. I do not question the statement "Jesus came into the world to save sinners." I trust His grace and accept it with a grateful heart. I love to sing of His amazing grace and celebrating other people's experienced grace in a worthy fashion. I fully believe grace is amazing.

Unlike Paul, my struggle with grace is I rarely stop to re-apply His grace to my own experience. Unconsciously, I believe I have everything together and don't need as much of God's grace as the next person. In essence, I feel I have little in common with Paul's declaration since, by my actions, I have never been as detrimental to the Church as he had been prior to his conversion. Then, I look at the standard Jesus set in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:22, Jesus says, "I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment." This one statement brings me back to reality. My anger often makes me a repeat offender before God. Compared to the standard of perfection, I fall miserably short. I am once again thankful for the overwhelming grace, forgiveness, and acceptance I continue experiencing through Jesus.



After being restored by His grace, this is the reality I hope to live: I am being saved by the grace of God as much as anyone else. When I live this way, I am incapable of believing I am above any other individual. God disarms my pride by reminding me "I am the worst" sinner. I continually find myself a sinner, just like my neighbor, in desperate need of the Savior. As I grapple with the reminder of my own depravity, I know God is instilling within me a heart of compassion and grace for those who feel outside the love of God. In this way, I do not enter other's lives in superiority, where I am the one bestowing the grace of God. Instead, I cherish the grace of God in my own life and invite them to join me in the shared experience. As I know myself through His grace, I am set free and see others through the same lens of grace.

Prayer:

Lord, your grace covers my sins in the same way it covers everyone I encounter in life.

Andrew Needham, South Fork Friends

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# *Suggested Reading*

# 21 DAYS

*fasting & prayer*

**SEPTEMBER**  
**2013**

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Greensboro, NC 27407  
Tel: 336.292.6957