

40 DAY  
**PRAYER**  
CHALLENGE

**Day 25: Game with Minutes**

*Pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5:17*

One key to the Vision for Bethany is changing how we view church in general. If we change our view of Bethany from a destination church to a sending church, it changes everything. Instead of church as a place to ‘go,’ she becomes a group of people who share a common purpose. Instead of a series of programs to attend, she becomes an equipper for domestic missionaries. In this more biblical understanding of church, you become less a consumer of religious goods, and more a minister with a daily ministry. Which turns prayer into the instrument by which God leads you into your ‘priestly’ work.

Batterson speaks to the prayer routine for every-day priests. He writes, “the key to praying without ceasing is turning everything into a prayer. It usually starts with big things like problems and dreams. Then it graduates to little things like chores and routines. And eventually, your entire life becomes a continuous prayer.

Personal Growth: Pray through your day as if your number one job is to reflect the love and power of God. List your worries, whether it’s in your work environment, school, volunteer activity or family life and offer them as a sacrifice given to God’s control.

Church Growth: Pray that Bethany might send out more people and groups who are equipped to serve God in the world.

**Day 26: Double Circle**

*“This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.” Matthew 17:21 KJV*

There is a popular and trendy school of thought in the health and weight management industry that intermittent fasting is a helpful and healthy approach for curing our unhealthy guts. Intermittent fasting is a daily fast of up to 16 hours designed to cleanse and ‘reboot” the digestive system and allow your body to restore itself at the cellular level.

According to the text in Matthew fasting for spiritual purposes can help unlock the mysteries of the faith. Fasting is difficult because who doesn’t love food. Jesus fasting in the wilderness is the most profound example; most have a willing spirit, but the flesh is weak. But fasting is a profound way to say to God, “I crave You more than I crave food.”

Personal Growth: Batterson writes, “We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, but we have to empty ourselves first. And one of the best ways to empty ourselves is through fasting.” Circle one prayer today and fast from one meal today. Pray through the challenge by calling on God to fill you and nourish you with the Holy Spirit.

Bethany Growth: Each day our staff prays at 9 am for the mission and ministry of the church. Join us as we pray that the Holy Spirit fills our community with a love and power that is so contagious that the peaceable kingdom breaks into our daily lives in tangible ways.

## **Day 27: Quit Praying**

*"Well done, good and faithful servant!" Matthew 25:23*

If there is one key take away from our 40 Day Challenge, it might be the wisdom found on Day 28 of Mark Batterson's devotional book *Draw the Circle*. He asks a telling question, "I wonder how many of our prayer requests are within our own power to answer? Yet we ask God to do what we can do ourselves. And then we wonder why God doesn't respond."

Then Mark goes on to speak into a deeper problem. "Certainly, we are to pray about everything, and then some more. But at some point, we must quit praying and start acting. "One of the great mistakes we make is asking God to do for us what God wants us to do for Him. We confuse roles. For example, we try to convict those around us of sin. But that is the Holy Spirit's responsibility, not ours. This is where we can get stuck. We can't just pray like it depends on God; we also must work like it depends on us."

Personal Growth: Which prayer are you praying that needs to be followed through with an action item? When everything is said and done, God won't say, "Well said, good and faithful servant." He won't say, "Well thought," "well planned," or even "well prayed." There is only one commendation He will give: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Bethany Growth: As a church community our prayer requests on Sunday morning should manifest on Monday morning. Pray that the gathered church might become the scattered church, that we may live our faith out-loud between Sundays.

## **Day 28: A New Prayer**

*Sing to the Lord a new song. Psalm 96:1*

In the last few months, our staff has been revisiting the question of why. We spend so much time working on the how of our ministry environments; how can we best serve our children, how can we best create worshipful environments, how can we best steward God's resources, that we forget our why. This is true for faith communities, organizations, businesses alike, and it's true for you and me.

Our routines are good, but as Mark Batterson notes, "But once the routine becomes routine, we need to change the routine. Why? Because sacred routines become empty rituals if we do them out of left-brain memory instead of right-brain imagination."

Personal Growth: God doesn't want us to worship and pray out of empty obligation, you need a new song! That is why both worship and prayer can be hard work. Like worship, we need to approach prayer with our imaginations and to do that requires all our heart, soul, and mind. Today lift up a prayer of imagination. One that would garner all of God's power and might to meet. Give God a big dream for His Kingdom.

Bethany Growth: Each spring our staff enters a season of review, evaluation, and planning for the following program year. Pray that we might have the imagination to think big and give God all the glory.

## **Sunday**

### **Day 29: Abide in Me**

*"If my words abide in you..." John 15:7*

My favorite bible is the one I bought when I was just out of college. It was a study bible and I loved spending time reviewing the study notes that were at the bottom of the page. I love that bible. I love it because it has seen me through many peaks and valleys. There were seasons of my life where it stayed on a bookshelf and even though I didn't use it as my primary study, knowing it was close by made a difference. It was and is like an old and loyal friend.

It has been said that God's Word is for everyone, but not every word is for everyone. I believe what that means is that when we open scripture the story of God's salvation history and plans include you and me. Therefore, we can see our story in it. Scripture also has context, so we must be able to view each book through the proper context; which is Christ. If you are going to abide in God's Word, I recommend starting with the New Testament.

Personal Growth: As Batterson points out, "One of the surest ways to get into the presence of God is to get into the Word of God. If we get into God's Word, God's Word will get into us. It will radically change the way we think, the way we live, the way we love. But it requires more than casual reading." After this 40-day challenge, keep going by spending time reading the bible each day. Get through the New Testament first and see what gets into you!

Bethany Growth: Pray for our Easter morning services. We expect to have more people in attendance than we can accommodate without overflow. Pray that all might be given a Word of grace, mercy, and hope.

### **Day 30: Spell It Out**

*"What do you want me to do for you?" Matthew 20:32*

What if Jesus asked you the same question? Would you be able to spell out the promises, miracles, and dreams God has put in your heart? We have no idea what we want God to do for us, and then we wonder why it seems like God isn't doing anything for us. Batterson writes, "If faith is being sure of what we hope for, then not being sure of what we hope for is the exact opposite of faith, isn't it?"

Today's devotion is another reminder that "God does not answer vague prayers." We can pray in vague terms because it means we don't need to go out on a limb and risk the prayer not being answered the way we pray for it." I know this is true for my prayer life. Because I am afraid God might not answer, I didn't even give God a chance to answer.

Personal Growth: Don't worry about when God answers or how God answers. Our responsibility is to simply discern what God wants, and then humbly yet boldly to ask Him for it. Go ahead, get specific.

Bethany Growth: Please pray that we will find a team of five people who want to help us start a special needs ministry at Bethany.