

DRIVE INTO THE NEW YEAR WITH INTENTIONALITY

21 DAYS IN 2021



JAN 2021

21 DAY FAST DRIVEN



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**OVERFLOW PASTOR,
KORY CASSELL**

Hello Overflow Church family! Thank you for joining us for 21 days of prayer and fasting to kickoff 2021! We are DRIVEN to see God's glory more than ever this year!

Prayer and fasting are never a last resort, they are our first response. So as we start out this year together, after all we've been through last year, we want to put God first in every way to position ourselves for his blessing in our lives. So for 21 days we've provided

a prayer guide, a devotional authored by your very own Overflow family. Each day is written by a different person from Overflow. Each devotional comes from the heart and is meant to jumpstart you to drive full speed into the day God has for you.

Along with prayer and reading scripture we are inviting you to fast with us for this 21 days. Now fasting can look many different ways, but is traditionally where we give up food for a length of time to draw closer to God. We invite you to join us in fasting. You can fast from a type of food like in the Daniel Fast or you can fast from something entirely different like social media or television. The point is to give up something you regularly use in your life, and every time you want to go to that thing or substance, you go to God in prayer. For more information on fasting as well as ideas on different kinds of fasts you can check out our website or talk with one of our leaders.

Overflow Family we are truly excited to journey into this year with each of you and I am personally praying that God will meet you and that He will be the force that guides you as we are driven into all that He has in store for us this year!



DRIVEN 21 DAY FAST



DAY 1 COLOSSIANS 3:10 CHAD SCHEPERS

Welcome to a new year! This past year we've had a myriad of unexpected challenges, new obstacles to climb over, and fascinating ways to watch God work through it all. As 2021 opens, we have a great opportunity to start the year off devoting ourselves to Jesus through our 21 day fast. While we're at the start of this journey together take some intentional time to pray to the Lord that through this process he would make us a little better than we were yesterday. Then the next day pray the same thing... and the next day... and the next.

The theme for this fast comes out of Colossians 3:10 which says, "Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him."

Quick question: what drives you?

What excites you to get out of bed in the morning and attack the day? What is your goal? What do you want? Our hope and prayer for this time of fasting is that we'd be changed into people who desire Jesus more than anything else. To be like him, to love him, to obey him and to chase after everything that he's about and leave the other stuff behind.

For today, day one of the fast, I encourage you to spend some bonus time in silence with Jesus. Sit there quietly and wait for him to speak to you or bring something to mind. Then chat with him about that thing, whatever it is.

Dishes and laundry? Great- do those things to the best of your ability. A friend you had an argument with? As far as it depends on you, live at peace with them. Some situation in your life that distracts you from Jesus? Pray for the renewing of your mind. Whatever he brings to your attention, chat with him about it.

Prayer: Lord, help me be a little bit more like you than I was yesterday.

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DAY 2 COLOSSIANS 1:1-2 LIBBY EGLE

The book of Colossians was written about 60 AD by Paul, a man who followed strict Jewish teachings until he met Jesus. He was in prison in Rome because of his bold teachings about Jesus. He had travelled throughout much of the Roman Empire and had started a number of churches. On much of his travel, he was accompanied by Timothy. Timothy had a Jewish mom and a Greek dad and was one of the people who became a follower of Jesus during Paul's missions.

It is thought that some of Paul's other converts, Epaphrus and others, started the church in Colossae. Paul had never been there to visit, but had learned that the church was not very healthy. They were mixing religious ideas from Christianity, Judaism, and Greek thought.

In this book, Paul emphasizes the deity of Christ, his sacrifice on the cross and connection

to the Father. He is unique, and the only way to Heaven.

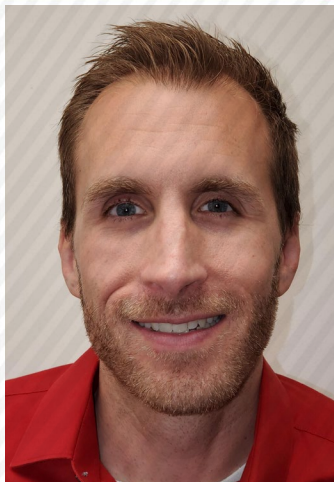
As Paul starts out this bold letter to strangers - strangers he knows he does not agree with on some fundamental theology - he introduces himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus and Timothy as 'our brother.' In doing so, he asserts his role as teacher, as an apostle chosen by the will of God. Can you guess what comes next? It's not a harsh rebuke of their idolatry or criticism of the Colossians as people. Instead, he greets the Colossian brothers and sisters warmly, referring to them as God's holy people. He commends them as faithful brothers and sisters in Christ. He also begins with a blessing for them, extending grace and peace from God our Father.

There are many ways that we choose to categorize (which is sometimes just a polite word we use instead of "judge") the people around us. Maybe we categorize on the basis of race or nationality. Maybe we categorize people based on their commitment to church, or how long they have been a believer, whether or not they come from a Christian family.

However, at the end of the day, all of Jesus's followers belong to One body. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ. We are all seeking to be faithful in Christ. Even Christians we have never met are our brothers and sisters in Christ. So in all our interactions with brothers and sisters, and even in our exhortations when we clearly have more spiritual maturity or wisdom than the people we are addressing, may we start as Paul did, wishing our recipients grace and peace from God our Father.

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DAY 3 COLOSSIANS 1:3-8 NOAH ZELVIS

What does hearing good news do for you? Think about that for a moment. The amazing thing about good news is that it always leaves you in a better place than where you were. For instance, hearing that a medical test came back negative for a disease, finding out you got the job promotion you've been working so hard for, or learning you've got sunny, warm weather for your day at the beach makes us feel good inside and sets a tone for the rest of the day. And perhaps even more impactful than all of these is simply hearing that you're loved by someone you care about.

Good news leaves you with a feeling of happiness and joy. When we're feeling good about something, it can be hard to keep that feeling to ourselves. Whether in person, by text, or perhaps shouting it from the rooftops, we want others to share in those same sentiments. With our own spirits lifted, we have an innate desire to pass that good along to others.

Who doesn't like seeing a friend, family member, or even stranger smile as a result of the way you're feeling?

We just left a year that wasn't so full of good news, so hearing some good news, whether big or small, probably had a positive impact on your mood, behavior, and attitude. When nothing else in the world is going your way, hearing even the smallest piece of good news can make all the difference. It can be the one thing that keeps you going when all else seems lost. How, then, can we remain joyful as we head into 2021 and beyond?

As Christians, we are fortunate to always have access to some Good News that will never go away. No matter how we're feeling or the circumstances we're facing at any moment in time, we can always return to this Good News to find the hope and the strength to continue on. It will never diminish or run dry. No matter where life's journey takes you, this Good News will always be there. We are extremely blessed to have access to this because of the sacrifice Jesus made while on this Earth.

The message of Jesus (and the gift of eternal salvation) is the best Good News we could ever hope to receive. This Good News is God's premiere way of telling you that He loves you. Do you remember how it felt to accept that Good News for the first time? I'd wager it was a life changing moment for you. The Good News bore fruit in you that day, and as long as you allow Him to, God will continue tending to it. Remembering that God loves us enough to give such a gift is all that we need as Christians to keep going.

God doesn't stop at just your eternal salvation, though! He wants this Good News to cause changes in your life that bear good fruit. Even after we have "heard and understood the truth of God's grace", as Paul puts it, God has a plan to help you continue to draw closer to Him. He desires you to be more Christ-like each day. While God's Kingdom benefits from it, choosing to grow closer to God benefits you as well! Believing that God loves you is the beginning of an amazing walk with Him that will continue for the rest of your life!

The joy of salvation and a life of walking with Jesus isn't even meant to stop there! This is Good News that is meant to be shared with anyone and everyone around you. That may seem daunting, but aren't there at least a few people out there that you love sharing good news with? Paul tells us the Good News was going out all over the world two thousand years ago, and that still needs to happen today. It is up to us to plant some seeds in other people's lives by sharing this Good News and allow God to bear some fruit in their lives!

DRIVEN 21 DAY FAST



DAY 4

COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

JOEL TORRES-NEGRON

In November of 2020, I needed my Apple computer fixed. There was an issue with the volume button not working so naturally I did the logical thing and I took it to the Apple store. As I explained to the “Genius Bar” what the issue was, we agreed that I would leave the computer at the store so that they could take a further look. Long story short, I returned to pick up my MacBook that was “fixed” from what I was told. When I returned home I quickly realized that was not the case.

Anger. Frustration. Those were the two emotions that instantly took over me. So here I am, writing a devotional on a computer that was not fixed and having to write about Spiritual growth. WOW. Tough pill to swallow. Even as I dive deeper into Colossians 1:9-14 I quickly get slapped in the face with conviction.

So now I find myself asking God to forgive me for the thoughts that ran through my head due to the anger and frustration. (Who can relate?)

Isn't that funny? Isn't that life? Isn't that many of us going through life getting slapped across the face with let downs and expectations not being met? But instead we are to be filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding, which is where knowledge comes from.

Paul's prayer in this passage was that the believers at Colossae might walk worthy of the Lord so that all their conduct would please Him. Christian behavior that pleases the Lord involves the performance of good deeds; continuous spiritual growth; dependence on His power resulting in endurance, patience, and joy; and expressing gratitude for all things because God enables believers to share in the saints' inheritance.

That is also my prayer and I hope it is yours as well.

Be Blessed.

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DAY 5

COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

CANDY GADDY

As we begin a 21 day fast, there may be a plethora of reasons why you may believe this is the time that you desire to draw even closer to Christ.

In the book of Colossians the Apostle Paul contrasts appearance and reality. Paul identified those who looked presumptuous to their fellow man as having the appearance of wisdom, false humility, and the harsh treatment of their body, but yet they lacked value in restraining pleasure.

Paul reminds us of how we are the DNA of Christ. He shares with us that self indulgence & our own self practices, seeking personal pleasures must be done away with.

Paul urges us to 'put to death whatever belongs to our earthly nature'...i.e Sexual immortality, impurity, lust, evil desires & greed, rage, slander

(even with our mouths), idolatry and filthy language from your lips.

Hence we may ask, how do I even begin the journey?

FASTING entails denying our fleshy desires so that we may be spiritually closer to God. Fasting pleases the Lord.

Has too much television, too much time on social media, too much time on your cell phone, too much time at the dinner table or too much of anything that's pulled you further into your worldly desires and away from God's heartbeat?

As we enter into our fast, let's be mindful of our WHY. Fasting promotes intimacy in communing with God.

In the book of Matthew chapter 6 beginning at verse 16, gives us biblical instructions on how to fast.

I encourage you to seek God through His Word. There you will find God's love for you ♥

NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

DRIVEN 21 DAY FAST



DAY 6 COLOSSIANS 1:21-23 GARY PERRINE

You are not good enough. Neither am I. We will never be able to be "good" enough for God. Colossians 1:21 states that we were God's enemies because of the sin in our lives. Period. But our loving God provided a means of RECONCILIATION, a way to restore this broken relationship- through the physical death of His son, Jesus Christ. Jesus did this so that he can present us as holy and unblemished - free from the curse of the sin in our lives. Then verse 23 throws in a condition..."IF you continue in your faith, and do not move from the hope of the gospel.

All of this can be difficult to understand, so let me share with you the parable of THE WONKA GOSPEL.

Willy Wonka and the Chocolate factory is a movie remembered fondly by many (the GOOD one, with Gene Wilder). Mr. Wonka (the God

figure) lives in his magnificent chocolate factory and has everything one could want. He desires, however, to be able to share his wonderful kingdom with others. He invites five children to come in, hoping to find one who is "honest and loving" - worthy of his factory.

Alas, however, they all fall short of the glory of Wonka. Each one of the five fails to live up to his standards, giving in to their gluttony (Agustus Gloop), pride (Violet Beauregarde), greed (Veruca Salt), hedonism (Mike Teavee), and envy (Charlie Bucket). My favorite 'falling' was Veruca. "She was a bad egg".

Each of these sinful natures is a barrier to the children experiencing the relationship that Wonka offers. Only when Charlie shows his repentant heart through the act of returning the Everlasting Gobstopper is he able to be RECONCILED to Wonka (relationship restored) and be free from the accusation of his "sin". He is now seen as being "honest and loving" in Wonka's sight. Did he steal the Fizzy Lifting Drink and contaminate the laboratory? Yep. Will he make some other mistake in the future? Probably, but Wonka has seen Charlie's changed heart and his hope for the 'good news' (gospel) Wonka has for him.

(You can watch this reconciliation at the end of the movie here. <https://youtu.be/NrZMdqi2D1Y>)

Of course, this reconciliation was much easier for Wonka than for God. All he had to do was print out some golden tickets to invite others into his presence. God had to sacrifice part of himself - His son, Jesus, to become our "golden ticket". We can't just show up at the gates with our ticket, we have to accept the death of Christ as our only chance to cover our sins and provide that reconciliation for us.

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DAY 7

COLOSSIANS 1:24-29

ANDY WANG

Gotta catch 'em all! Lots of folks at church have heard of Pokemon, Yu-Gi-Oh, or Magic: The Gathering. They're popular card games, involving collectible cards, which you build into a personalized, custom deck. Then you take your deck to a friend's house, Topps, or even a gaming convention, and you play your deck against an opponent's deck. There's some strategy to the game, and a bit of card collecting (you get more cards by buying them second-hand, or buying booster packs from the store).

Now in your deck, you'll include a number of "Hero" cards, which fight for your team when you play them from your hand. But a hero card can't do much unless you play energy (or mana) cards along with it. Without energy, the hero is useless.

Our relationship with God has a similar dynamic. Colossians 1:29 says, "To this end I strenuously

contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me."

Similarly, Philippians 4:13 says "For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength." In John 15:5, Jesus says, "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."

As believers in Christ, we represent the heroic characters in God's narrative. We gain all our strength, and all our energy from Christ working within us. Now, one believer's acts may look different than another believer's, and our challenge is to show love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness in whatever context we may find ourselves in. God's church is certainly a church for all people.

To this end, I see an unreached people group that's not often addressed in the church. I'll call it the Gaming Culture. The Comic-Con Crowd. Trekkies and Tolkien Folk. Chances are you know someone in this demographic, but it's not the first thing they'd reveal about themselves.

Jesus needs to be represented in this culture. No, this doesn't mean your username should be SEEKJESUS on your Steam account. But a Christ-follower needs to understand the lingo, the vibe—much like a missionary would understand Swahili or Bengali—to show folks that you care. A Christ-follower needs to be at that tabletop game of Catan, and bring His light to that opening night of Star Wars or Avengers. I want to be there, and represent Christ well.

Maybe you'd like to come along. We're starting a Connect Group focusing on Gaming Culture, which we're calling "The Edge." We'd appreciate your prayers, as we hope to engage seekers, agnostics, and all-out anti-Christians to be in our fellowship. God has a heart for ones such as these.

May God give us the power to make an impact, and to be effective fishers of men. Gotta catch 'em all.

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DAY 8

COLOSSIANS 2:1-5

SAM & VICTORIA FELTON

Reflecting back on this past year and as we get into the midst of our fast, it is easy to fall victim to the unknown and insecurity that comes with change. We often find ourselves tempted to question God's presence in our world and in our daily lives, however, as these verses of Colossians begin we are reminded of the agony that God experiences for those who do not have a personal relationship with him.

How often do we find ourselves in need of a plan? How uncomfortable are we with the unknown? God reveals to us in these verses that Christ is and always will be our plan. To turn to Jesus in times of uncertainty not only can bring peace and hope, but allows our faith to grow.

God calls us to study His word not only for understanding, but to ground ourselves in the truth. By asking questions about assumptions we often make, we grow deeper in knowledge

and wisdom. God has given us each a mind for understanding. By turning to Christ, through prayer, we are given the chance to realize the full potential we have to love our neighbors and bring peace to our world around us.

Together, in community, we can support each other through faith and love to carry out His mission.

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DAY 9 COLOSSIANS 2:6-15 DAYLAND BOWSER

Paul and Timothy address pitfalls that the Colossian church, and even the church today, fell into. The Good News of Jesus was taught to the people of Colossae (v.7) yet there were alternate beliefs and/or theologies throughout the church. Between Greek mystic polytheism, Stoicism, and even the religious upholding of the Jewish law from the Jewish Christians, Paul uses the term *taken captive*, or *to carry one off as a captive (and slave)*, to describe these beliefs (v.8): essentially being sold short of the REAL DEAL.

We're told that **in Him** all the *fullness* of Deity dwells in bodily form. **In Him** we have been made *complete*, and the reminder that He, being fully God, is the source of all rule and authority. I want to draw attention to the words *fullness* and *complete*. The Greek word of fullness is *plērōma*, or literally "that which has been filled", like a cup that is about to overflow. Now check this out: the Greek word for complete is *plēroō*, or literally "to make full". To make full with what? The same thing Christ is full and in-dwelt with: Deity, or the state of being God (Holy Spirit).

In Him we're "circumcised with a circumcision made without hands" and through that the body of the flesh is removed, that we have been buried with Him in baptism, raised up with Him through faith. The word *circumcised* means "to cut around", and that the body of the flesh is the thing being removing in that cutting. While we were *dead* in our sins and the uncircumcision of our flesh, **In Him** our flesh is removed, our flesh is buried in baptism and we are raised to life into eternal life: we are no longer under the rule and authority of our flesh and our sins are forgiven! The certificate of debt that is very condemning and against us has been taken by Jesus and nailed to the cross. Our debt was paid in full and the debt-collectors humiliated!

So why do Paul and Timothy warn us to not be carried off as a captive by other beliefs that are not according to Christ? Well, **In Him** we are:

- filled with the source of all rule and authority (God, Holy Spirit)
- the flesh that used to rule us and bind us is removed and put to death
- we are raised from the dead and death is no longer something we face
- our sins are completely forgiven and our accusers defeated

These beliefs and traditions were all in conflict with the Gospel, which is why we're told to walk **in Him**, to be firmly rooted and built up **in Him** and established in our faith, overflowing in it with thanksgiving (v.6-7). Fun fact: the Greek word used for thanksgiving is *eucharistia*, the root word for the eucharist which is the ceremony of taking communion; do with that what you will but be thankful in your walk!

We still face beliefs today that are like a pandemic in the church, tempting us when they appear wise, or they are popular in today's culture, or they may match up better to your own fleshly desires. We are called to have a foundation built on the life of Christ. If we face a belief that goes against what Christ taught, or against what God's word says (which is also revealed in Christ's life), then we are missing all of the wonderful things that we inherit when we are resurrected with Jesus. What thoughts and beliefs do you currently hold that just might not be according to Christ? You never know, maybe you even learned one of those beliefs in church growing up.

Let's use this time of fasting to put the flesh in subjection to the rule and authority of Christ in us and remove the beliefs in our own life that are not **in Him**.

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DAY 10 COLOSSIANS 2:16-19 JEANNE DUNHAM

When Jesus came to earth, He kicked the "Works" doctrine to the curb and preached a new, radical covenant based on grace, faith and obedience through love. This infuriated the Pharisees and opposes every other religion that I know of today.

Paul tells the church in Colossians to not listen to people who try to pressure you into religious practices of the day. Spiritual disciplines are good, but these were rules made by people who had no love of God or relationship with Him. Those things were just shadows or pale reflections of things to come. The substance, the real thing is Jesus.

He further warns them not to let anyone cheat you of your reward by an outward show of religiosity. False humility, worship of anyone or thing other than Jesus, will get you nothing.

Paul also exhorts us to let everything go that doesn't support Jesus as the Head of the body of Christ. That's us, we're all knit together in that wonderful metaphor of the human body. We grow or mature in Christ as God gives us the increase, or wisdom, heart, desire to know and love Him more. Bottom line, it's not about what we do, or who is impressed or trying to control us; that is all for naught. It's all about Jesus; He is the vine, we are the branches, He is life, and the metaphors could go on for pages. He is the source of all that is good and holy, AND NOTHING ELSE. I think Paul would like the caps. "He is the Head and we are the body. We can grow up healthy in God only as he nourishes us." Not by religious rules or practices made by man, only by an intimate relationship with Jesus. And if we as the church, put Jesus first in our lives, His love, wisdom and power will flow through us. We will function, each in our own God given gifts for the glory of God and His kingdom work. "We are better together."

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DAY 11 COLOSSIANS 2:20-23 JARVIS JACKSON

Christ has freed us! Indeed, this is good news not only for the person anticipating it, but also for the person who has experienced one hardship after the next. There are no strings attached to obtaining such a freedom as the one Christ gives. There is now direct access to the Father because of the redemptive work of His Son. There is no authority, no power, or disqualifying agent that can separate you from the love of God. *“There is more mercy in Christ than sin in us”.* – Richard Sibbs.

God is and has always been at work within human history. Colossians 1:18 tells us that *“He is the head of the body, who is the beginning, the first born from the dead, that in all things he may have the preeminence”*. In other words, He is supreme yet, He chooses to commune with us...his creation. He is that vigilant and caring person that is concerned with the details of our lives. Many people in today's society are

trapped in a mindset of beautifying themselves before making an appearance before God. I can tell you for certain that God is less interested in what you look like (rules to follow) verses what the posture of your heart is.

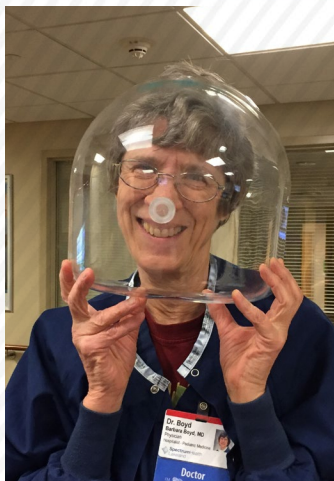
The people in the City of Colossae found themselves under a wave of false teaching(s) that diluted the believers understanding of the gospel. Paul (author of Colossians) warned the church to not give room for false teachers to come in and corrupt the growth that Christ had started. Like any form of communication that seeks to harm a group or community of people, false teaching during this time period was destroying the believer's perception of God. Paul was in lockdown in a prison in Rome and knew that believers in Colossae needed encouragement.

Paul challenges the church in Colossae by asking them if they had died to “elemental spirits” (demonic spirits) through Christ, why were they still following the directives of the world (Colossians 2:20)? He warns back in verse 8 of chapter 2 that they were not to allow anyone to take them captive. Since they were alive in Christ, they were also freed from the captivity of sin. Since they were established in faith, walk. Paul is candid about pleasing the Lord above all else (Colossians 3:17). There is something attractive about self-glorification and self-denial but they are of no value. In fact, Paul goes on to say that there will always be a craving for more of the world's wisdom which will lead to more flesh satisfying behavior (Colossians 2:23).

Paul asked an important question in verse 20 of chapter 2. Why were they still following the directives of the world? Do you know Christ well enough to not be taken captive by human traditions and pointless philosophies? This type of behavior leads to more sin and the cravings are never satisfied. Jesus uses Paul to not only encourage the believers of that time but also our generation. There are many societal dysfunctions and algorithms grabbing at our attention. We must cling to Christ during this season and allow Him to lead us. Our lives should be fixed on knowing and growing in Christ and not self-made religion and regulations. Christ has freed us!

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DAY 12 COLOSSIANS 3:1-4 BARB BOYD

Have you ever heard the saying, "It is hard to soar like an eagle when you are surrounded by turkeys!"

Consider the majestic eagle, riding thermal updrafts in beautiful mountains, surveying miles of territory. Compare that to the turkey, scratching around in the barnyard for grain or puffing himself up, strutting around and spreading and shaking his tail feathers to impress the girl turkeys.

But is that saying really true? No turkey farmer wants an eagle nest near his farm. The saying is only true if the eagle sits in the barnyard and forgets what God made him to be!

Paul tells the Colossians to "set your mind on the things above." In other words, remember what God has called you to.

In Colossians 1-2, Paul prays for their (and our) spiritual wisdom and understanding, he details the supremacy of Christ, tells of his (Paul's) ministry to the Gentile church, and then exhorts the readers to live by faith rather than falling back into religiosity, rituals, legalism, and various philosophies.

In Colossians 3-4, Paul tells what it looks like to be a follower of Christ.

Colossians 3:1-4 is the pivot. It reminds us that becoming the true follower of Christ is accomplished, not by knuckling down to try harder to follow the religious rules and regs, but by doing a complete reboot. Reset your mind. Set it on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. You are raised with Christ to the right hand of God. You have died to the old ways and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. Christ is our life, and when He is revealed, we also will be revealed, shining in His glory.

For now, we still live in this world; we still have to maintain a home, earn a living, do our work heartily as unto the Lord. But Christ has called us to live for eternal values, not for worldly pleasures. In fact, He calls us for more than just soaring like an eagle. He calls us to be like Christ.

PRAY: Father, we confess that we get caught up in the things of this world. We confess that we do not act and think as we should. Thank you for sending Jesus to buy us back from all that is not of you. Thank you for sending your Spirit to live in and through us and to bring others back to you. Help us to always seek first your kingdom and your righteousness, and to trust you to provide for what we truly need.

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DAY 13 COLOSSIANS 3:5-11 JONATHAN EGLE

The Gospel has a simple message: Jesus died to pay the price for our sins, and if we accept His sacrifice on our behalf and confess that He is Lord, we will be saved. When you make that decision to accept Jesus as Lord, it's not like dying your hair, or getting a new suit. It's not like being in the mood for pizza one day and being in the mood for Chinese food the next.

It is a big, life-changing event. We are born again (John 3:3)! We are new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17)! We are justified – made righteous – by Christ's death on the cross.

It's easy when you first make the decision to follow Christ to feel "on fire" for God. There's a lot of emotion and a lot of passion. Everyone celebrates your decision. It's a really exciting time, and it should be (Luke 15:10)! But what comes next?

The answer does not feel as glamorous or momentous, but it is just as important. We are to be transformed into the likeness of God Himself (2 Corinthians 3:18)! We are sanctified – changed to be more like Jesus – by the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

This passage in Colossians describes some of the nitty gritty of what it looks like to be transformed. And to sum it up, you basically need to not tolerate sinful desires (2 Corinthians 10:5), and not do sinful things (Matthew 5:48).

Paul gives two lists of what not to do. The first is a list of sinful desires or temptations, such as sexual immorality, lust, evil desires, and greed. He doesn't hold back about these things. He doesn't say, "You can fantasize about these things, as long as you don't act on them." Instead, he says you need to take those desires and kill them.

Humans have an uncanny way of not being satisfied with what they have, so what can start as a simple desire, such as wanting to be rich, can lead to evil acts such as cheating or stealing in order to try to satisfy that desire. Paul wants us to nip evil desires in the bud, killing them before they ever have a chance to blossom. And the stakes are huge! This isn't an optional suggestion that Paul makes as part of some self-help program. No, it is because of those evil desires that the wrath of God is coming (v. 6).

The second is a list of sinful actions: anger, wrath, malice, slander, filthy language, and lying. It's not rocket science that those are bad things, but it's also not meant to make you feel guilty about your past. Paul points out that the Colossians used to do these things (v. 7). But now it's time for sanctifying change – to put those things permanently behind you.

And it is in that change that we are to find our identity. When we finally devote ourselves to fully following Christ, nothing else matters. Whatever you built your identity upon before – whether that was your ethnicity, or whether you grew up in the church, or how educated or uneducated you are – that no longer matters. Christ is all that matters, and as we gradually make our way in life, being transformed into His image, the image of what we used to be matters less and less. That is what it means to journey together as a church and passionately follow Jesus.

NOTES

[illegible]

DRIVEN 21 DAY FAST



DAY 14 COLOSSIANS 3:12-14 ANN BRAINARD

A wonderful memory from my teen age years replays of-ten...It's Saturday afternoon, I'm sitting in the dark musty balcony at the Liberty Theater in Benton Harbor with my BFF Beth. We're slumped in the best seats—front row, red velvet lined, gripping our box of Milk Duds, staring over the brass rail at the bedazzling stories on screen. Between whispers of “I dare you to do it!”, many Milk Duds disappear. The dare—eat a milk dud...then ping a milk dud...giggle...eat a milk dud...ping a milk dud...giggle. Very fun. Truly exciting for the people below!

A similar scene I envision almost daily. I go up in that imaginary balcony and sit down with my Creator. He listens to MY perspective, which is usually rather one-sided. We look down at the “my-world-movie” below. I talk about it. Then I listen to HIS perspective – the BIG picture, and what He thinks about the movie. Sometimes He wants me to sit and wait, learn more, and watch the movie, and sometimes He wants me to get out there and play my part. Mmm. God's a slow talker. Sometimes I want His way, sometimes not. He takes the time to “clothe” me—He wraps a toasty blanket of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, woven with a great deal

of forgiveness. He does even more. He wraps an oversized coat of Love around the two of us. We're swaddled up like silly humongous Burritos. I giggle inside. When I depart, He whispers, “Hey there kiddo, I got your back. And keep that coat, you'll need it.”

The problem with me is me. Today, my unedited journal reads: “I've lost a Christian brother, a tragic unexpected death. Burdens are heavy. I carry them, clutching tightly. I expect certain outcomes, of others and myself. I fill my brain and consume time. What do I do? I question after the fact. Anger!!! Lord you know it! Society's systems that serve up injustice, the hurting, dying, and people, too many looking just like me, looking the other way. Leaders! Entitlement? Habit? Deception? Greed? Individuals, proclaimed “wise,” but acting our their God given “rights” versus their God given acts of “protections?” Really! God “gives” us a choice in the matter.

The Truth? The past and present sins mount up to a spitting volcano screaming for forgiveness.

Truth? Fresh eyes seeking GOD's perspective and OTHERS perspectives in the human story begins a new day. We ALL want our basic needs met, a heart-felt priority for us and our loved ones—a home, a job or business, peaceful communities, healthcare, an education, clean environments, access and opportunities. But do we want this for all people? Really? Opportunities for ALL PEOPLE? Can we sacrifice? Can we seek to understand, forgive, and offer resources for all people? Can we begin to use our power of choice to unite and love All People and live out Jesus's Ways? We ask for change and we see with fresh eyes. Our virtuous actions speak volumes when they are aligned with Him. Actions will light the way TO Him.

THE CREATOR sees us, knows our hearts and the truth within. He forgives us. He clothes us and transforms us with His love and His qualities. He leads us and others to Him. That's what Jesus did on earth! He hates the sin but loves the sinner. He made the time and effort for a RELATIONSHIP. He chose disciples as leaders who learned His ways, not perfect, but passionately committed. He met all people right where they were—rich, poor, hurting, happy, privileged, and those oppressed. He met basic needs first. He called out truth to them to change and transform. He sacrificed. He made PEOPLE His cause. He wrapped them with love and his virtues, and it drew many to seek and follow Him. Jesus was radical! The forgiveness element as a part of all these virtues is crucial. For us humans, not forgiving can stand in the way of virtues flowing out of us. We ask for healing. We walk HIS walk.

The Choice? Think about it. Go up in the balcony. Sit with HIM. He will love and gently clothe you, He'll share His advice. He wants YOU to make the choice. And if you ask, He'll give you even more—probably an extra box of sweetness to savor, ping, and giggle.

NOTES

DRIVEN 21 DAY FAST



DAY 15 COLOSSIANS 3:16-17 TONY FLORES

When I read this I am reminded of my old boss. By far this was one of the most impactful interviews I have ever had. It was hard not to notice this odd glow about him. We somehow ended up talking about scripture, which was very impractical for an interview. He was very upfront about being a man of God. God definitely brought this example into my life to wake me up.

Immediately after getting the job I had car problem, and my boss was more than willing to pick me up. One day on our drive, he asked me if I was saved. He must have seen something inside of me and took a crack at my stubborn heart that day. I think that day my eternal salvation became his goal. For months he would make it a point to tell me prayed for me. At first I found it a bit abrasive, I couldn't understand why he was so sure I needed to be saved. Why he was so grateful to god.

Or why he was always so at peace. But after months he broke any stereotype I had of him.

Nothing ever scared him; he tackled every problem in life with the guidance of Jesus Christ. For months he would ask me about my relationship with god. Even though we always seemed to disagree on something. I came to realize he was at peace because of his spiritual wealth and not his worldly wealth. And slowly he guided me to wanting a new life. It says in 2 Timothy 2:25-26, "Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devils trap. For they have been captive by him to do whatever he wants."

We must remain thankful to our lord and always live as representatives of Christ. Because when we do we emit an inner glow or peace that people are attracted to. I now realize that he was a huge factor in my salvation. Colossians 3:16-17 "Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to god with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to god the Father"

NOTES

DRIVEN 21 DAY FAST



DAY 16 COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1 CHAD SCHEPERS

Unfortunately, this passage has been widely abused over the course of Christian history. Largely, that has been because of a lack of engagement with the cultural context and, even worse, taking small segments of this text and trying to prove a point that someone already thought up in their mind. But, should we take a brief look behind the cultural curtain, we will see what Paul and Timothy were after when they wrote this section of the letter.

This paragraph is a set of “household codes” that the writing pair offer to their audience. It was expected that teachers of their day would do this and just about everyone who wanted to teach anything to do with religion, ethics, or philosophy had at least one of these types of passages that they wrote (Paul actually has two – see Ephesians). What’s shocking about Paul’s writing is not that he has this list but how much different than the others his list is.

Here are the cultural expectations:

- Only speak to Men, Masters, Fathers, and Landowners.
- The first party mentioned (when paired) is the one with more honor.
- The list should affirm power structures of society in that day.
Note: the slavery in the Roman world was wildly different than American slavery. In many cases one was better off a servant in a household than a “freedman” due to economic and personal protections being a part of a household offered.

But look at Paul and Timothy’s list:

- Women, Children, and Slaves are all mentioned
- Women are mentioned before men, Children are mentioned before fathers, and slaves are mentioned before masters
- The list rejects the abusive nature of the power structures of the day (e.g. Masters are held accountable for their actions).

When looked at in this way we realize that, rather than putting women, children, and slaves down, the authors are actually lifting them up and showing honor to them. This is actually one of the foundational moves that the New Testament makes in women’s rights and the abolition of slavery. Everyone in the Christian community is treated with honor and not as inferior or “less than” someone else.

In what ways have we been considering others less than ourselves? This can’t be a thing among believers. Where there are Christians there should be love, not rankings. Humility should take the place of entitlement.

For us, what would it mean to show honor to those around us? For one thing we could all afford to be more encouraging of those around us. Beyond that we ought to stand up for one another, show honor to those who others won’t, and look for ways to lift others up. We rise by lifting others up.

May we be people who honor everyone.

NOTES

DRIVEN 21 DAY FAST



DAY 17

COLOSSIANS 4:2-4

ANDREW ROBINSON

If we desire to walk in the same power that Jesus and the early church flowed in, then prayer is not a recommendation or suggestion, it is a lifestyle... it is a requirement for our spiritual health and growth. For our very lives depend on it

Prayer is indispensable to the life of the believer. Throughout Scripture, we see the role that prayer plays in connecting the believer to God and refueling our soul. The gospels record that Jesus often withdrew to pray for spiritual nourishment, comfort, and strength to conduct His earthly ministry. In the early church, prayer was an essential component that unlocked jail cells, healed the sick, and changed lives. So it is no wonder that Paul encourages the believers in the city of Colossae to pray. And not just pray... pray relentless, feverishly, without ceasing as if our lives depend on it. This devotion to prayer can change us in ways we least expect it. It can restore us, reconcile us with God, strengthen us, bring us comfort in the middle of a storm, and give us the power to overcome our daily obstacles. How often should we pray? The answer is as often as possible because prayer provides results.

NOTES

DRIVEN 21 DAY FAST



DAY 18 COLOSSIANS 4:5-6 AL FONNER

What is wisdom? If you look in a dictionary, like Merriam-Webster, you find all sorts of thought provoking tidbits like “ability to discern inner qualities,” “accumulated knowledge,” or “a wise attitude.” Solomon might say, “For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.” (Ecclesiastes 1:18 NIV)

I’m not much into wisdom. My life is riddled with a lot of unwise things. Poor decisions have resulted in much that I regretted. Failed relationships, broken marriages, wasted money, shattered dreams. No, wisdom has not been my forte. I mean, I know a lot of useless information, but it’s that “ability to discern” and “wise attitude” kind of wisdom that gets me. Solomon was right; when your wisdom is limited to “accumulated knowledge,” life can be miserable. Accumulated knowledge is fleshly, worldly. It doesn’t satisfy.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” (Colossians 4:5-6 NIV)

I am certain that Paul was not referring to the “accumulated knowledge” kind of wisdom. The wisdom he spoke of had to be “discernment” and “attitude,” otherwise how could you “make the most of each opportunity” and “know how to answer everyone?” Possessing a cornucopia of useless facts and figures will not let you convincingly do these things, no matter how clever or articulate you are.

Elsewhere, Paul wrote, “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:20 NIV)

To be Ambassadors of Christ, as Paul says, we surely have to have that “discernment” and “attitude” kind of wisdom so that we will be able to “make the most of every opportunity” and “know how to answer everyone.” But where do we find such wisdom? Not in this world, for as Jesus said, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:33 NIV) There lies the source of true wisdom: seek first the Kingdom of God.

NOTES

DRIVEN 21 DAY FAST



DAY 19 COLOSSIANS 4:7-9 DALYNN HOLLING

Are you familiar with a Midwest Goodbye? My family members are professionals at it. They probably should have named it after us.

If you're unfamiliar, it starts with a good old fashioned "Welp" as everyone stands up. Hugs are given, then the family moves to the doorway. It takes about 20 minutes to get there, followed by a 5-45 minute chat at the door. Someone says, "We really should be going". But since so much time has passed, it's time for a second round of hugs. Someone places their hand on the doorknob. Conversation continues as everyone walks down the driveway. Once in the car, you roll down the windows to keep on talking. And as you pull away you shout last goodbyes, wave, and honk. Someone usually calls out, "Drive safe! Stop if you get tired! Don't forget to eat!"

I must admit. When I get to the end of some of these New Testament letters and see the Final Greetings heading, I tend to just assume they're a long-winded Midwest Goodbye. It's there to say farewell, give a shout-out to some people with hard-to-pronounce names, and tie it all up with a bow. But I was wrong.

After some digging, I learned some helpful history. As we know, Paul was in jail for preaching about Jesus. Tychicus was likely the messenger carrying Paul's letter to the believers in Colossae. Onesimus was also being sent by Paul to share his message. While Paul never visited the church in Colossae, he did missionary work in the region and was the spiritual father of Epaphras (who was the first to bring the Good News to Colossae) and so he was considered the spiritual grandfather of the believers there.

He cared about them. He was concerned about them. It was personal to him. So as Paul is wrapping up this letter, he is likely feeling a tug on his heartstrings. "Did I say everything I needed to say? Are they going to be okay?"

The believers needed encouragement. As we've seen in the rest of the book, the believers are surrounded by distractions and false teachings.

So why the long goodbye? The same as my Midwestern family: Love.

Paul, waving from the driveway, reminds them: Stay connected. Look up to these trusted leaders and friends of mine who are focused on God's work and are keeping Christ in the center. Be encouraged that it's not about this rule or that. It's about Jesus. He fulfills our spiritual needs and is our ultimate source of spiritual growth. He is what makes all things new.

Who are you staying connected to? Are they encouraging you and helping you keep your eyes focused on Christ? Are they modeling dependency on Jesus for fulfillment and spiritual growth? Pray today about your connections and ask God to reveal how He feels about them to you, or ask Him to bring a Christ-focused helper into your life.

NOTES

DRIVEN 21 DAY FAST



DAY 20 COLOSSIANS 4:10-17 STEPHANIE KLINE

As believers, we are deeply connected, or ought to be. Paul, the devoted, single-hearted follower of Jesus, was writing to the believers of Jesus in Colossae. He had such deep love and care for the believers that he was ministering to and guiding from a dank, cold, 2,000-year-old jail cell. Paul's friends, that were near him and able to visit, were both **laboring** with him for the sake of bringing God's peace and Gospel and **providing comfort** to jailed Paul. They loved and cared for one another, but even more impressive, they deeply loved, with a God-given love, the believers they hardly knew or perhaps only knew from Paul and Epaphrus sharing about them, the Colossians. Paul's friends were devoted to praying for the Colossian followers and wanted them to know they think about them, pray for them, and care that they are following hard after the gospel.

Paul and his friends, from afar, desired for certain individuals to receive encouragement – to keep focused on the ministry the Lord gave them.

What does this mean for us? It means that our purposeful encouragement toward others lifts them up, provides comfort, and helps compel Kingdom focused love and ministry. It means that our prayers for fellow believers, near and far, make a difference. Imagine knowing that a handful of people are approaching God on your behalf; they care and more so, they know that God listens and comes to your aid. How would it feel to receive personal words of encouragement and affirmation – keep going, may God strengthen you and make you perfect, may God give you confidence that you are following His will. May Christ set your eyes on heaven. May you be renewed as you learn to know your Creator. I hope your heart heard that. My soul is encouraged in those prayers. Now, imagine praying this over believers and friends in your circle. **Be encouraged and encourage.** May God's grace be with you.

NOTES

DRIVEN 21 DAY FAST



DAY 21 COLOSSIANS 4:18 KRISTIN PERRINE

Have you ever walked through one of those seasons where life gets busy, work becomes exhausting, and God feels distant? Where you know that God is good and has a plan for you, but it seems more like a distant memory than something you're convinced of in the moment? It is so easy in those darker moments to forget. We forget God's faithfulness. We forget his goodness. We forget the transience of the dark times and the eternity of his joy.

Paul closes his letter to the church at Colossae by asking them to remember his chains. It's a deceptively simple request. Although he has never met them, he is intimately acquainted with their situation, and they with his. He doesn't need to explain his chains, he simply asks the church to remember them. He is probably asking them to pray for his chains - he is in prison, after all! But he is probably also asking them to be encouraged and inspired by his chains. To see how much he is willing to sacrifice for the gospel and be bold themselves.

To see how God is using his time in prison, as dark and hopeless as it seems, to allow him to minister to others and share the gospel. To see God's faithfulness even in chains.

Sharing your story with others is one way to remember. You may end up encouraging somebody else as you share the ways that God has been faithful to you in your journey. But even more so, revisiting those times when you were in darkness and God faithfully brought you through it into the joy of his light reminds you that he can and will do it again. When God seems distant and silent, remember the times you have heard from him. When all seems hopeless, remember the times that he rescued you and restored your hope. When you are in the pit of despair, remember that God is above all things and can break all chains.

In a women's group a few years ago, the leader asked us to take turns sharing something we were joyful about in that moment. This was a terribly dark time for me, and I could not think of a single thing that I was joyful about. When my turn came, I opened my mouth to speak, but all that came was tears. In that moment, these women didn't need to ask what was wrong. They were familiar with my struggles because we had been meeting regularly and sharing our journeys. They remembered my chains. They surrounded me with prayer for my circumstances and reminded me of God's grace and love.

This is why it is so important to not only remember, but to remember in community. When we live in community and share our journey with others, we don't have to explain ourselves. We can keep it short and simple: Remember my journey. Pray for my journey. Be encouraged by my journey.

As we conclude the fast, remember your journey. Maybe God has spoken clearly to you in this time. Hold onto that. Remember his voice, his faithfulness, his goodness. Or maybe God has been silent and you are wondering where he is and what his plans are. Remember the times that he has been faithful and good in the past. Speak those memories out loud and cling to them as a witness to God's love and care for you. Share your journey with others so they can pray for you and be encouraged. Ask others to share their journey with you. Gather together and remember the journey.

NOTES

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